

# CULT

by

William Howell

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[www.sanctuaryhouse.org](http://www.sanctuaryhouse.org)   [Vishnudatta108@yahoo.com](mailto:Vishnudatta108@yahoo.com)  
719.256.4420 / 719.588.4258 (cell)

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To the many who have given themselves  
to what they thought was the highest good.

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## Author's Forward

I never thought I could be involved in a cult, yet ended up in the inner circle. I considered myself a kind and loving person, sincere, understanding, intelligent—non-bizarre in every respect. Perhaps I was. I and those you are about to meet never dreamed that our sincerity could result in deadly entrapment.

You are about to journey into the center of the human quest for meaning. Much has been written about cults, but while sociological studies give mainly information, what fascinates people about cults is part and parcel of what it means to be human. If understanding cults were a required part of our schooling, it seems obvious to me that social ploys of all kinds—from governmental to religious to familial—would not only no longer seem mysterious, but we would also be equipped with the knowledge that could prevent them.

The story before you is a true one, despite the name changes, a few events foreshortened and the large cast of characters cut to a manageable number. The world you're about to enter, so like your own and yet so charged and polarized, may well prove the adage that 'Truth is, indeed, stranger than fiction,' and remove all sense of cliché.

This book is offered as an inoculation, a bearable dose of poison administered so as to prevent an intolerable outbreak of disease. No book can cure the addictive tendencies—to security, to approval and esteem, to power and arrogance, to the longing for knowledge—that constitute the soil into which the seeds of speciality and grandeur are dropped. If you have not been in a cult, you are likely certain that you could never be lured. I certainly hope so. But if you believe you know all you

need to know about cults and consider them irrelevant to your life—you are in for many surprises.

The standard label for those in cults is naïve, unstable, fringe. Yet cults go after the intelligent, the successful, the sincere, anyone anywhere seeking meaning and depth. The bait used is precisely what we seek: love, belonging, advancement, vision, salvation, trust. Whether Eastern or Western, fundamentalist or occult, conservative or progressive, religious or secular, artistic or political, philosophical or psychological—cults form around any avenue of discernment for truth, for depth, for prestige, for power.

The degree of involvement depends on the closeness to the inner circle. All cults are layered events, the higher levels reserved for individuals deemed ‘purer’ and ‘more advanced.’. All cults are destructive, though not usually immediately so. The strange thing is that cults deliver, which is why their adherents are so committed. Yet the way they deliver is filled with great ups and even deeper downs. One thing for sure: cults can never be fulfilling.

There are, thankfully, real teachers among us. Yet more often than not a gifted soul becomes the hub of a group of like-minded individuals and, as a result, a community or organization forms around a charismatic character. While cults are often led by charlatans, most are developed by people of real talent whose urge for power is or becomes corrupted as a result of their hearts having not fully opened.

What is a cult? Enshrined in our collective psyche lies the urge for truth, for reality, for myth-making. Historically, ‘cult’ was not a pejorative, but rather signified a circle of advanced and committed seekers. Yet each circle has a leader, and when attachment and devotion are offered to someone of less-than-divine qualities, such a person, no matter how well-meaning, generally allows his or her actions to be blindsided by

idealism and desire. Maybe such a person falls from grace, yet all too often such a leader simply digs deeper in toward becoming a false teacher, growing in power given by his or her followers.

It is about such a teacher and his band of aspirants that I write. The cult you are about to enter is spiritually based. Since the spiritual realm is subtlest of the realms within us—subtler than politics or art, for example—it is, therefore, the most potentially glorifying and the most potentially devastating. To enter into such a cult is to realize that *Here is the great highway—the widest, straightest and most enticing road to exactly where I have always wanted to go*. While such a voice may well be unspoken, its longing is the elixir that makes it so devastatingly easy to get into such a trap and so damnably hard to get out. The hold of a cult is fixed on the infinitely complex psyche and soul.

If you have been in a cult, you may well be concerned that the cult I was in won't mirror your experience or that it is a specialized event incapable of standing for most cults. Yet all cults are virtually the same. Robert Jay Lifton, MD, in his book, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China*, points out the eight commonalities of all systems espousing 'totalism.' His book is not about cults, per se; and yet the thousands of known cults in North America all profess totalism (meaning they claim to be 'all you'll ever need') and operate by pressing the following eight levers:

- 1) **Loading the language:** Cults use specialized words, whose lofty or esoteric connotations expand all meanings into absolutes, thereby taking events out of the ken of normal feeling and discrimination.
- 2) **Milieu control:** Cults put newcomers in close contact with long-timers who often claim to be

novices, quickly sensitizing neophytes into the internally consistent world of the cult, both mentally and environmentally. Expressions of love and community, even sexual lures, establish an emotional involvement powerful enough to override rational inconsistencies. Isolated living can seal the community from a society which most cults term 'sinful' or even 'evil.'

- 3) **'The sacred science'**: Cults employ a closed system of thinking, which, to their members, seems all-inclusive, ultimate, open and makes perfect sense.
- 4) **Mystical manipulation**: 'Planned spontaneity' is a common tool that elicits seemingly spontaneous responses from the group; yet such responses belie a pressurized system of well-governed behavior.
- 5) **Dispensing of existence**: Enforcing cult dynamics largely by insider-versus-outsider thinking means that members feel specially chosen to fulfill the cult's mission. The spiritual health of any member is determined by the cult leader or authorized organization.
- 6) **Doctrine over person**: Employing an absolutist dogma which is always more important than any member, cults thrive and members become expendable once they doubt the dogma.
- 7) **Cult of confession**: Having some sort of personal confessions of sins, often public, whether or not a member has actually committed such offenses, keeps members vulnerable and subservient—easily achieved with anyone whose self-worth is not totally intact. Control is accomplished by dangling



the highest rewards while simultaneously chaining members to unworthiness.

- 8) **Demand for purity:** Demanding various degrees of purity—often in the form of abstinence and austerity—from members, the cult leader can determine who becomes worthy of promised spiritual graces.

Cults, though a majority are not militant, are by no means passive. Their nature is to polarize: member/non-member, cult community/world, obedient/disobedient—to name but a few poles of tension. To get out of a cult and separate from what one believed to be the true path to excellence can mean the loss of assets, reputation, community...even the loss of one's sense of self. The higher the journey, the higher the stakes, and the farther a traveler can fall.

Yet, in dealing with groups that could be considered cultish, if we do not look at each individually and without assumption, we fall into the same black-and-white thinking that cults use to control the mental processes of their members. There is, we must note, a difference between cults and cultish groups—for individuals can make a cult out of an organization that may have only slightly cultish tendencies.

Let us look with compassion behind the menace of cults and recognize their very human cause: individuals wanting more from life, seeking the source of love and truth rather than mere surfaces, looking desperately for greater meaning in daily experience.

The realm of the human psyche is the stage where the heart of the human drama is enacted. Terrifying and far larger than our objective reality, it can also at times

appear more beautiful. Most of us never consciously journey into that arena, fearing the unknown. Those who do are the ones who feel that human dignity and freedom are worth great risk.

Here, then, is the story of five individuals who had the courage, foolish as we were, to enter the 'The Context,' whose 200 members demonstrated the struggle, folly and glory of being in any cult.

I wrote to free myself from the experience that nearly claimed my life. Soon, I realized that this project was not just personal, but also for the others whose spirits were bound with mine. I now offer it to all who have been in a cult, that you may understand, and to those who have not, that you might be spared.

Many are those who helped unchain me, and to them I offer each of these pages. It takes 2-5 years to get free of a cult. May this book contribute to healing what is likely the wound of a lifetime.

PART I:  
THE SCRIPT

*The more impossible the story,  
The greater the truth it holds.*

—Maimonides—

## CHAPTER 1: GALE

The hour was late, most of the stars erased by the fullness of the moon. I was driving through turbulent oak-lined streets on my way to an old-schoolhouse converted into apartments where those closest to Justin Snow lived. The trees were thrashing in great outrage, or great applause.

The night air felt fertile in Victoria, the 'Garden City.' Passing flower-lined walkways curving to grand homes, I felt nothing was linear in this landscape rolled by wind. I found myself stopping by a golf course and walking across fairways to cliffs above the Straits of Juan de Fuca that separated two nations. On the edge of some precipice I could barely define, I had to angle my slight body into the gale.

Recalling my arrival, driving all night only to miss the Port Angeles ferry, I had called the Snow Man Press and spoken to Roland Reeves, Justin's closest friend, to tell him I'd be late. Roland's voice had blown sultry and gay, making me feel already part of...what? I was here to find out. I remembered saying to Roland that I was tired of leading a boring life. I wanted authenticity, to round out my Phi Beta Kappa intellect and ideals with the power of what I was leaning into. I would have gone to jail during the Vietnam War, but had stood up for my beliefs and served as a conscientious objector instead. I had been self-employed, founded a day-care center, and just finished an MFA in Creative Writing, but most importantly had been meditating for 12 years. I wanted to be conscious. Tonight, as I drove on, life seemed suddenly urgent.

Having been 'enlightened' in the Swiss Alps and said to loom larger than any mountain, Justin had named my destination 'Annapurna' after a striking Himalayan peak, conveying to all those near him and especially those living in

Annapurna that the journey of life was an arduous climb to all-sweeping vision. He would be the first to say that such ascent risks more than life itself. Those assaulting the summit and their comrades had better be damned fit. As willing adherents to The Context, their observance of its constant pressures was both their map and their proving ground for their ability scale and conquer the height of what it meant to be human.

I laughed to recall how I had imagined being met at the ferry dock by Justin's friends in a long greeting line, how I would look deeply and lovingly into each pair of eyes, the World Teacher's not included. No, I had not imagined Justin's eyes.

Actually, Roland alone had met me, in the rain just past midnight. Yet I felt important when the man closest to Justin had said, "So this is Bill Howell." His face had been bright and full of energy. His eyes, as if just for me, were intense despite wet glasses. He was well-aware that I had met Justin in Switzerland six years before, that the most mysterious man I had known had sent me three of his books, and that we had exchanged letters. I told Roland that Justin, who never let any of my assumptions go by unnoticed, was onto something, something big.

"I wish I could see all the gardens and the shoreline," I had said as Roland drove me to Annapurna.

"They're all available on the feeling level," had come the cultured, cryptic reply.

Now, as I pulled into a parking space at Annapurna, the wind suddenly died. All day I had been pondering the marvel of how Roland could perceive what was hidden through the fine attunement of his heart, like a secret way of knowing the world. I longed to feel this also, though I doubted my talent in this area. I had heard of 'pure feeling' and knew, through Justin's writings, that this was the rope whereby one assaulted

Annapurna. “It’s the name of a book Justin once taught to his high-school English students,” Roland had said the night before; “Justin is helping those close to him scale their own personal peaks, each involving a unique and heroic inner conquest.” I had been struck by Roland’s effortless ability to articulate the mysteries of *The Context*.

The tall pines and trim lawn with azaleas bordering the porch were flooded with cool light from a dozen windows, though it was after midnight. Roland was in the front room, having invited me to see the videos of Justin Montclair Snow in action. Not wanting to waste any time, I had accepted, gladly, and found Roland on the deep blue sofa in front of a television whose setting was the very room we were now in. His slender body was not much taller than mine, yet he felt much larger. His eyes seemed to diminish the distance between us, increasing the power of his words in a confidence that made his movements effortless. He paused the video, asking beneath a brushy mustache and wire-rim spectacles if I would mind his watching with me.

“Ready to plunge into life? he asked with outgoing sobriety mixed with an enticing playfulness. His poise suggested that his words and the motions of his hands held meaning. I was soon to find him athletically awkward, but here he was a dancer.

I didn’t know where to sit, and went to a matching couch. Roland stopped me with his eyes, saying, “That couch is Justin’s. We save it for him so that he doesn’t have to sit in the stress of people in ignorance.”

So I took a nearby chair. I’ve read *Enlightenment Is*, I said, perhaps to not appear as an utter novice. Roland’s eyes deepened, sparkling as if such a response far excelled words. Still, I felt I wasn’t quite catching on. I looked about the room, otherwise bare, yet tasteful, the ceiling ornate above the large

oriental carpet of reds and blues. Over the fireplace was a Monet of dawn trees blazing purple and orange.

“It’s called Poplars,” Roland explained. “Monet could paint only seven minutes a morning when the light was exactly right. The man who owned the land they stood on was going to cut the trees down, so Monet bought the property—just so he could finish his painting!” The intimation was that I should be equally invested in life.

Roland unpaused the videotape of Justin’s day-long seminar held the preceding Sunday just for the Annapurnans. “Life is always happening around Justin Snow,” Roland had told me the night before, “but the seminar is the arena where his power can be expressed.”

The video was a piece of performance art, in which Justin spoke, joked, read poetry, moved the energy around in the room and in individuals, cajoling them, drawing them out, kidding, acting childish, then suddenly plunging into seriousness that the room grew taught as a sail. Roland stopped the video every so often to ask my perceptions.

Soon the tape presented a far less magnetic Roland being called to the microphone. There, in front of all his fellow climbers, he was being assailed by the man he called his “divine friend.”

“The microphone,” Roland whispered to me, “is where everything happens. Every motion in confrontation is meaningful. All of us around Justin want to be transformed—again and again, as long as it takes. Confrontation’s the key. It’s how we become aware of our beauty—the divine, and of our obstacles—the demonic.” He added that the results of confrontation were total: attitude, perception of the world, feelings, inner reality, behavior—all became “charged with divinity.”

I was definitely interested, though Justin was laying into Roland hard enough to make me think, “The Context is for heroes.” Yet, I told myself, that’s what I wanted.

“Every moment holds a divine/demonic tension,” Roland explained, his words fading as the camera panned a room full of people, every eye fixed on the World Teacher—as if each onlooker could just as easily have been the object of Justin’s completely unpredictable intensity. Justin had begun with loving words, completely confident and warm, but he had suddenly stepped up to a kind of vocal surgery as his wry smile became the augur of a grimace. His loving plea now incisive, his eyes just inches from Roland’s huge eyes, the World Teacher roared a demand for his friend to change. Even through the video, I felt the constant pressure growing scalpel-sharp. I watched transfixed, yet terrified that the transformation I knew I longed for meant a complete surrender of ego-bound self-centeredness.

Just then, as Justin surprised Roland with a pitcher of water between the eyes, grabbed his friend’s wet tie and pinned him to the wall, my companion whispered, “Justin will do whatever is required to get us to be real.” His wire-rim glasses having fallen to the ground, I watched Roland try to maintain eye contact. Then Justin let him go and, having seared into his being the seriousness of the moment, pushed verbally, “How are you, Roland? How are you! Roland! Answer me!...until his friend was in a fight of tears. Roaring, “Your demon’s gaining strength with each moment you remain silent!” Justin was a bulldog.

“I...I’m...I’m good, Justin,” Roland finally answered with whispered gut simplicity, which I could see required great energy. He was struggling with something.

“Good. Now sit down and don’t indulge in weakness!” Justin ordered.



“Thank you, Justin,” Roland said softly, straightening his tie as he turned to take his seat, where someone handed him his glasses.

I sensed that Roland, who had not interrupted that part of the tape, was guarded about what I had just viewed, wanting to make sure I understood. And so he said in words that pronounced themselves in his eyes before they were spoken, “It was as if a whole shell cracked around me. I let Justin into a part of myself I never thought I could reveal. He gave me just what I wanted,” Roland whispered, “just what I wanted.”

I, who during high-school in Chicago had cowered from football players and guys who wore Italian t-shirts under black leather jackets, was in awe that Roland could face such a challenge and then say it was just what he had wanted.

“You have a unique face, Bill. Justin says the entire story of a person’s soul is written there.” After what I took to be a compliment, Roland added, “Justin’s full of love, a blinding love stronger than even our demonic.” Then he became quiet, sober, staring his blue eyes into my own.

Still wondering how I would have handled the force of Justin’s demand, I paled to see that Roland’s gaze was now speaking to me in silence the same requirement just dramatized on videotape. I couldn’t move. To look away or frown or make a face was obviously not allowed. Getting up would have meant failure, an opportunity gone, a defeat—subtle, powerful, of unknown depth, unknown consequences.

Roland looked into me for a full minute, then said directly but quietly, “No. No. No, no.... No, no, no, no, no.... No, no, no, yes, no, no. No. No!. No...”

How this person I hardly knew could make such intimate commentary about the inside of my mind, which I myself could not see, I did not know. Yet, I felt his adjudications held inexpressible precision.

“No, no, no no no no no. No. No. No. No no. Yes, no. No, no, no, no, no....”

Though not avoiding his eyes, I was mystified, as if he and I were two birds closely darting together. I couldn't evade him. Though I experienced no change from the solitary 'yeses' to the countless 'no's', after a final long series of “No, no, no no no....,” my eyes dropped and I felt as if a great dark breath had sucked me down a shaft. There, for a moment, I perceived a definite blank black square.

In that instant, Roland's voice said, “There!” And he asked, “Did you see that?”

I could not reply, so afraid of the implications of what I assumed we both had seen. Confused and exhausted, I sat shattered at two tiny 'yeses' in a million moments of 'no'. I had no resources to even ask what had just happened or what he had seen. As he rose and I dumbly followed him into the large wallpapered foyer with its two chandeliers, I could only wonder, if the closest male to Justin for the past seven years was such an adept, then who was the person who had taught him such tricks?

I found Roland in the library, where Justin's editors were busy. Jason Rivers, classically proportioned and just as handsome, possessed an obviously well-honed reserve. Tall, broad shouldered, this expert cricketer did not raise his face. Carefully chiseled lips, a bit on the thin side, held a conservative air, sensitive but without sensuality. I had heard that he had several years ago given up his last year at UBC to explore Africa, a vast territory he had strangely fallen in love with. His brother Tobin, the philosopher of the Annapurnans and possessing an endearing if stiff English demeanor, was less ruggedly individualistic but more keen of insight, having just poured over galleys for Justin's third book on his Iran travels.

Tobin looked up, white shirt buttoned at the neck, asking in a friendly way, “You’ve been watching a seminar tape, eh? How was it?”

I was able to nod only a stunned, “Good.”

Three voices perceiving my bewilderment were suddenly kidding me: “Kitchicoo, Billy, kitchikitchicoo...”

“So this is the famous William Howell, the great climber on the mountain with Justin the day he got enlightened...”

“The poet abstract as clouds until Justin got him to write about mosquitoes, stale sandwiches and his biggest stress...”

“The fair-haired boy who...”

Having all I could bear, I finally barked, “Okay, okay; bug off, you guys!”

To my surprise, Roland gave me a friendly slap on the shoulder and Tobin called out, “Hey, you got it!” Jason gave me two thumbs up.

I basked in having been briefly authentic. But I was still spinning.

The white phone rang. Roland answered. From the change in his voice and demeanor, I sensed who was on the other end of the line. I had been wondering when I would see Justin. “Not now,” I hoped.

“Lydia is to bring you over to Sunnyside.”

When I had first entered Annapurna, Lydia Smith, demure and with an obvious yet subtle radiance, had come out of the front room to say hello. Having been on the mountain during a walk-and-talk with Justin on a meditation course in Switzerland, I was mentioned in the book he had written about his first three years of enlightenment. So Lydia, an emerald blue cashmere shawl draped as flowingly as her long bright hair over her left shoulder, conveyed to me with elegant eyes and a voice coming out of spring fields of rye, that she indeed was glad that I had come to Victoria. Soon she was walking with

measured steps down the winding staircase, exhibiting, it seemed to me, not only her own ambience but that of The Context itself. Her skin smooth, her voice lively and gay while maintaining a distance, I felt I was in the presence of art.

It seemed dreamlike that I was being driven across town in Justin's gold Renault by the epitome of elegance who, along with Eva St. John and Roland, was the closest to the World Teacher. I didn't know then, but came to learn that Roland and Eva had been married, Justin having told them they couldn't remain together if they wanted each to climb their inner Annapurnas.

Lydia was low key, as if she knew I had been through an ordeal. We talked somewhat casually, yet it was obvious to me that she could not be more even and fragrant if she were made of the most costly lotion. I couldn't imagine her in a sweatshirt and jeans. The many questions I wanted to ask drowned in the comfort of just sitting and being easy. As we crossed a drawbridge to "the other side of the tracks," I had to know what had happened earlier between Roland and myself on the blue couch.

With delight, my driver laughed, "Oh, that's tracking." She went on to define it as "the main weapon we have when confronting our demon." She spoke these words as if mentioning a prize recipe for devil's food cake.

Tracking. Yes, I had been followed, down every turn of thought and feeling, not knowing where I was going. But Roland had known.

We pulled onto Sunnyside Street, to "Snow" on a white mailbox with a red flag. The white clapboard house was nestled between two apple trees behind a tall hedge. My palms were sweating as we stepped onto the quaint low porch and entered without knocking through a front door whose oval of beveled glass was curtained in lace. Down the narrow hall, we entered

by a French door into a room empty but for a canvas director's chair, an end table and incense.

"Let's meditate," Lydia's silky voice suggested.

Before I closed my eyes, I managed to take in details: unostentatious cedar paneling, stucco ceiling, glass table holding a clear vase of red roses. Then I saw Eva come soundlessly in from behind and, through half-closed eyes, caught the pleated black suit she wore. She was lovely.

It had been this woman whom I had found most intriguing my first night. She had said the least, yet had clearly been the center of attention. Reserved and mysterious, Eva had shared a hint of the deep light in her eyes and countenance in an intimacy both veiled and unveiled. Something rare, far out of the ordinary, backed up her easy, well-chosen words, the intoxication of her smile, the greenness of her eyes. Though on the porch of Annapurna we spoke for an hour after others had gone to bed—about writing, theatre, the journey of the soul—under a nearly full moon, I was most drawn to this woman whose every word suggested the effortless depth I desired but had never met. While we spoke, there was no one else in the world. I had heard that she was remarkable. And I realized, even while talking to her, that secretly I hoped something could develop between us. But she and Justin, I had been told, were deeply in love—an incredible and purely spiritual love, I was certain.

More silence. In some minutes, through a side glass door backed by a white curtain, Justin entered. He walked in front of me to sit cross-legged on a deerskin draped over his chair. The room was suddenly polarized, filled with expectation. His face was benign, handsome, just as I remembered, though his nose reminded me of a gull's beak, and I recalled the wildness of a bird in his eyes. His teeth weren't perfect, one incisor slightly behind its mate on the left, but most

intriguing was the narrow groove lending strength to his forehead. It started between the eyes and rose like a steady flame. The furrow was new, not there six years ago when I had last seen him. Not to be caught watching, I closed my eyes when he, never looking my way, closed his. But meditation was out of the question. Images of being with him in Switzerland flooded through me— his confidence, the crispness of his words, the lack of hesitation, and how around him life held invigorating possibilities. With one more peak, I noticed his white silk pullover with light embroidery around the crew neck, and that from matching pants his right foot wiggled a prominent big toe. Even his foot held power.

A Miro print hung on the right wall and Roualt's *Two Clowns* backed the brick wall behind the seated author. The air felt charged, precisely balanced. Then came Justin's soft but not delicate voice, emerging from a depth, "Okay." His words—"Okay, okay, you guys"—grew in volume, evoking countless memories. With a sweeping motion of his right hand, he made sure the front of his slightly thinning hair was in order.

"Well, and you've taken good care of our guest, Roland?" Justin's voice was playful, intoxicating, without diluting the tension in the incense-laden room. Roland, who nodded, must have come in with Eva. Evidently, none of the inner circle wanted to miss this. After Roland and Lydia were asked a few questions about me and a half-dozen other matters—giving the impression that, if all hadn't been done properly, a probing would begin until the matter was rectified, Justin laughed three times and turned to me in candlelight.

Head slightly bend, he nodded—I lost count at twenty—to himself, still not yet looking up. When his eyes did raise, his voice rose out of the quiet, as if edges between silence and voice overlapped.

“Glad to be here in Victoria, William?” After his words—smooth, not polished, yet glass-like—my non-descript reply earned a head-lowered “Hmmm.”

There had been no real greeting. After my three days in Victoria, this was our first meeting. It was becoming clear that our former friendship had new parameters. He addressed questions on random subjects to me, followed by a brief review, directed to his three friends, of the short but significant relationship that he and I had had over the past decade, of our letters back and forth. He praised my intelligence.

Then came words I would never forget: “Of all the people I have dealt with—and they number in the thousands—I’ve never seen anyone, Bill, with as much light as you have.”

Then he kidded, “Now you see why I got enlightened on the mountain, eh, Roland!” who laughed in agreement. “Which of us got enlightened? Was it you?” Justin asked, pointing to me, playfully adding, “Roland, I think it was William Howell who got his head opened up there! Like to have a walk with him, Roland? Maybe each of us should!”

Whatever humor followed was but an introduction to something else, as if the wind had stopped suddenly and a cloud now covered the moon.

“Pardon the observation, Bill, but it’s as if something in you is missing, as if an entire element is lacking.”

Something had been unleashed. But what was I supposed to say? I froze, thinking that Justin expected me to know which element it was.

The depth-of-feeling connoisseur went on with serious questioning, his smooth, seamless confidence holding me as his voice betrayed not the slightest uncertainty. I was lost and he was the mountain tracker who knew all the back country, the ins and outs of weather and could find the way home.

At one point, I interrupted to correct and comment about my lacking sensitivity. Justin, deftly polite, his voice subtly pained in ethereal softness, cut my response short by refuting not what I said but the way I had interrupted and the tone of my attempted rebuttal.

This was the beginning. Taken aback, I was silent. Was this a chance missed? If so, it had come more softly than a breeze. Justin's insights, beginning as a sweet rain, were building into a storm, his words sounding like the Word. I said nothing. Brilliant, so sensitive, he wouldn't hurt me. I trusted him. I felt he knew me—perhaps completely.

I had not an atom of a notion that the amount of strength required to have resisted even this first breeze would have been astronomical, given the mild weathers of my life. I would have had to be willing to let everything go: my spiritual path, my poetry, perhaps my life. His almost audacious probing, however, had struck an unexplored place inside me that I couldn't refute. It held the aura of truth without many specifics.

“Something in your soul is begging me to speak to you this way.”

Afterwards he looked down. The interview was over.

Roland ushered me out. I cast a quick look back at Justin, now in animated conversation with Eva. I was to take Roland's car. He said the keys were inside. “It is very significant to be confronted right off. You're very fortunate, Bill.”

The wind had risen again, and the moon, at 3:30 in the morning. There was a distant feeling of my having survived. I felt fresh and, above the myriad sensations blowing through me, joyous. The million 'no's' and the two 'yeses' had been overshadowed by my sense of having entered a great adventure. My relatively uneventful life had suddenly catapulted me into a



magnificent challenge that been offered to only a handful of individuals.

“The greatest adventure,” Eva had said that first night as we stood outside the white door of Annapurna.

I started the engine, turned on the lights. There had been little welcoming warmth of personal friendship, far from what I had hoped for after being with him on the mountain, yet I felt inexplicably wonderful. I sensed my life held a destiny. And Roland, his eyes piercing and kind and smiling all at once, had said I was fortunate, very fortunate.

## CHAPTER 2: ROPE OR SNAKE?

On my fifth day, I was invited to dine at Annapurna. Perhaps I had seen enough videotapes of Justin that I wouldn't disturb the 'acoustics' of the group. I was still awed by the dignity I witnessed in the Annapurnans. When several of the women had asked me to recreate the day of Justin's enlightenment, I gladly shared my experience with them. We were upstairs. I had wondered when I would tell the story that only I had witnessed. But I hadn't realized that what I would share held the key to the most important day of their lives, the day that Justin became not just their friend, but the one capable of taking them to enlightenment.

I told them how I'd met Justin on a TM Teacher Training Course above Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, and had felt him to be someone genuine—that I came to love this man, whose silence had texture and whose words held a deepening tension, an invitation into a kind of traction and important strength. I said I was deeply sad the day a bus took him away, back to Canada, that I had run alongside that bus, silently pouring out my heart to him who from his window seat looked down on me: Something had passed between us as I wondered if I'd ever see him again. Then, three years later, on a six-month meditation course, I thought I saw him in the lecture hall where we were all waiting for Maharishi, the great yogi who had developed Transcendental Meditation. I had come up to him and, realizing that he was indeed Justin Snow, I was all smiles, saying how glad I was to see him. He acknowledged me, but evidently felt my familiarity was overdone, or not earned. But, as the course went on, I suggested that we take a walk. While it kept not happening, not happening—one day he said okay.

We walked out of the Hotel Pratschli, up the road, and then I suggested a right on a trail that went to an 18<sup>th</sup>-century chalet. We were arguing about poetry, me for a poetry of the ideal that could point the reader to truth, and him advocating a poetry of the real. The sun was brimming over clouds. Suddenly, beyond the sturdy chalet, where the scenic path curved back to our hotel, the clear air was filling up with his voice. He began shouting his poetic position, and I knew instantly that something powerful was happening. Then came his pointed cry, “Those rocks, Bill! Look at those rocks!” My eyes had followed his gaze to the next bend of the path, to a small rock quarry, the most unaesthetic sight on our after-lunch walk. He was definitely seeing something I was not seeing.. Then he motioned to the mountain above us, “And the mountain!” What vision must he be having! I wondered. And when his left arm arced like a dancer’s over the valley below and he sang out, “And those mountains!” I knew I was watching him suddenly realize that he was everything no longer separate from all that he saw. I knew I was witnessing what Maharishi called ‘Unity Consciousness’, especially when Justin fell to his knees for maybe a full minute, then looked skyward, saying, “God, don’t ever take this away from me!”

“I watched him bow, raise his head, finally stand up and walk off: simple, unadorned, enlightened.” And so ended my rendition of the enlightenment of Justin Snow.

Lydia’s response came first: “I feel my life on a fundamental level mysteriously started when Justin got enlightened.” She spun her words like linen, uplifting my story.

For Justin’s friends, the whole universe changed that 19<sup>th</sup> day of September at 1:25 in the afternoon—Justin’s true birthday, and the birth of that power and intelligence they all believed could transform mankind.

There was more to the story, and I added details as I told it a second and then a third time: how Justin, back in his room in the Pratschli Hotel, had said, “I’m myself. I’m just Justin”; how later he had told Maharishi that “For three days I have been living the simple state of Unity Consciousness,” how the leonine yogi known for his laughter had matter-of-factly stated, “Vedi good, dees ees de goal ov de course;” and how Justin had asked the founder of the TM movement, “Where am I?” To which the Indian sage, sitting on a deerskin on a white couch covered in silk had replied, “Somewhere in de layers ov wholeness.”

I did not mention how Justin had become the object of heated discussions. I had heard Maharishi confirm Justin’s enlightenment, but the pink-cheeked course leader at our hotel had told me how someone claiming to be enlightened at another Arosa hotel had been sent home a month ago, and did I know that Snow had been in a mental hospital? I hadn’t replied. Justin had told me that years before he had spent a night on Piers Island where his father had a small cabin and, to prove to a group of invited friends how cavalier they were about life, he had thrust a knife into his right thigh, illustrating just how serious and sincere a real seeker had to be. But he had left the part out about the psych ward. And, when the innocent-looking course leader told me that I would be wise not to associate with him—“He’s *very* unstable”—I took it as simple jealousy, realizing that Justin did not fit the image of enlightenment that Maharishi had been projecting for nearly 20 years.

And I didn’t tell them how, after our historic walk on the mountain, Justin no longer sought my company, but chose to be with a short, bright, dark-haired Italian with glasses, named Roger Barranni, who had some knowledge of the scriptures of India and pointed out to Justin how his growing experiences were classic replications of those of the ancient sages and seers.

Now, before dinner, Roland was showing me “An Open Letter to the World,” which announced Justin Montclair Snow as the World Teacher. I had read enough to see that Justin wanted to make all of his friends World Teachers, when Roland put into my hand another letter typeset on gold paper: “Dear Maharishi,” it began, and went on to say:

What I now enjoy fulfills everything that any other character who has ever lived on this earth has striven for. Nothing is denied me when it comes to knowing every impulse of beauty, nobility, passion and holiness that could fill the consciousness of man.... What you have said about Enlightenment is but a mild description of a state of being that for me knows no absolute limits of creativity or intelligence.... I have yet to encounter one human being who is storing more exploding joy, tenderness and beauty than I do within my heart. All this I owe to thee. Know that I can listen to Handel’s *Messiah*...see a painting by Picasso, watch a production of *Henry IV*, write a commentary on the Gospel of St. John, enter the world of a child, feel the purest enactment of all history (experience the impulses of an event or personage hundreds of years ago)...touch the soul of another human being...and know the heart of God as vividly...as any human being on earth.

These words astounded me. I was awed, and yet thought, “What presumption!” Yet I knew that Christ had not been exactly modest either. Besides, I had by now read most of

Justin's books, their intricate brilliance undeniable. Tobin Rivers had told me the day before that Justin's enlightenment was unique: "The moment you saw him go down on his knees and rise up enlightened, he perceived in each face he saw thereafter that person's divinity, as well as the forces of negativity which were preventing that divinity from being conscious."

Roland had come up the stairs to invite me to shoot some hoops with him and added, "We all have a demon. Except for Justin."

I couldn't tell them how much hope and disbelief were colliding inside, along with great fear and doubt, and great faith and certainty. Having grown up in a good home with good, generous Depression parents who never talked about emotions, I didn't know what I was feeling, just like that afternoon with Justin on the mountain. Terrified of confrontation, I nevertheless recalled how Jesus had confronted demons, had made a scourge and driven the moneylenders out of the temple. And I knew that all I had known of Justin was now expressing itself as the first enlightened person who maintained his full human personality—not to mention the first in the world to have taken on the task of confronting evil.

That was the challenge—to know and love Justin as a person. He claimed not to be guru or sage, mystic or Master, but a special friend, as well as the World Teacher, the culmination of the human personality.

And then there were stories of the awesome early days. They passed through me as I walked up the winding staircase to the upstairs dining room—how Roland, as we shot baskets on a rain-puddled court, had said, "Justin pulled demons out of our feet;" how Roland had once actually seen Tobin's demon: "Unspeakably horrific," and a tale I could not afford not to believe. One night a knock had come on Justin's Sunnyside

door. He opened the door to find a woman standing there, saying she was a Jehovah's witness, and as she spoke she took Justin's left hand and he had watched his arm slowly turn into pure bliss to the elbow, then suddenly turn transparent, as if made of eternity. He asked the woman to join him at Sunnyside, to live with him and his friends. She had returned the next night, again holding Justin's hand, until his arm filled with infinite strength. Sensing it supremely odd, given the lack of subtlety in her voice and bodily grace, Justin suddenly realized that her abilities came from 'negative intelligence.' Finger in her face, he confronted her, uttering the epithet, 'devil,' he had suddenly said, "I'm gonna take away your power!" And, as if grabbing it from her gut, he did. Her power vanished! The woman turned and ambled into the night. Hearing that one, I had been incredulous to think the devil operated in the flesh and would visit Justin Snow. Was he alone Evil's true match in courage and discrimination?

As Jason Rivers beckoned me to sit, I wondered if this meal would be like any of the legendary dinners when Sunnyside's three small bedrooms had in the early days held thirteen people who ate together nightly. Those meals often began close to midnight and lasted until the linen curtains grew faint with dawn. Listening to James Taylor or Keith Jarrett, the group's main purpose was not eating, but getting close to the Personal God—and that meant finding out where the resistance to God's intelligence lay. And that meant the core of The Context: confrontation. Often it began over a small matter, such as how someone passed the salt, or it could be a major ordeal, with elaborate meals left cold on the table. Justin might grow silent and stare, or flip a spoonful of mashed potatoes into someone's face—anything to prevent 'deadness', anything to get a friend to 'break through'.

I mentioned to Nadine, the stern, tall brunette on a special diet, if tonight might be like one of those mad dinners at Sunnyside where the couple who had never before met Justin had come with their child and brought potato salad, without any knowledge that they were dining with an enlightened man or that they might be confronted, which they had been for three hours before they walked out.

“I knew them,” Nadine said, deciding to sit next to me, “and neither of them were ready to commit to their integrity.”

After a delicious fare, that had begun with my again relating the story of being on the mountain with Justin, the World Teacher himself marched in for dessert. He sat at the kitchen end of the long table.

I felt suddenly cold. Justin’s presence had instantly shifted the energy in the room, all conversation stopping. I sat in fear, my body clenched, as confrontation began. Justin was agile. I felt in any given moment he could scream and point a fiery finger, or turn a salad bowl on his head, or mine.

During one silent moment, Justin, his face bordered by two tall ivory candles in silver sticks, looked at me in the flickering light: “Bill, your task in this life is to walk into nothingness and not panic.”

I was awestruck. This man had looked inside me and mapped my inner terrain, hidden even from myself. His exhortation was a sword thrust so sharply through me that it left no hole. This flash of insight, this one true connection with him overshadowed all of the trauma that had led up to that peak moment. Having felt like a butterfly pinned in an insect collection, I suddenly felt myself in fluid wonderment. Justin turned to Nadine long enough so that my mind drifted, eased and disengaged.

In that instant, Justin pointed his right hand between my eyes, saying with authority, “Bill, this is the beginning of your



enlightenment.” Rising quickly, he left. Everyone else followed. No one had smiled. I sat bewildered, knowing only that a sharpshooter had hit the infinitesimal bull’s-eye of my being. I had no idea how enlightenment could be based on a moment of blankness, or how such an instant could have revealed itself to him.

Later that night I answered the second-floor phone when no one else was around. A man asked about purchasing some books. I got the impression of him being far away in a phone booth on a littered beach. Not knowing how to reply, I said, “Just a minute, sir; I’ll try to find someone who can help you,” and I called downstairs. “Hello, sir? Yes, well, no one is here and I’m sorry but I don’t have the information you require.” The rusty voice quickly told me, “No matter, forget it.” Imagining an unshaven guy drinking a beer, I felt strange when he hung up.

The next day, the short and bouncy Holly, who spoke in quick, clear bursts, said that she was “the only one who’s not been fooled. You were hoodwinked. But be glad. The attention of an enlightened man is always a blessing. Just that he took the time to play with you!”

The next night I was again invited for dinner. I made sure Justin was nowhere in sight as I entered the second-floor suite centered by the mahogany table with its dozen empty chairs. I disliked that bare table. I had heard that Justin often came to Annapurna, sometimes rapping on windows in the middle of the night, but I figured that last night’s appearance meant this evening was safe.

Holly and Lydia were laughing as they prepared an aromatic dinner and, sitting casually at the end of the table, I was moved to share a grace in Sanskrit that I had learned from Maharishi. Then I translated it: “Let us go together, live

together, eat together....” The prayer ended with “Let us not entertain any negativity.”

As if on cue, someone in slacks and sweater entered the white room, asking, “Then why are you so negative, Bill?”

The room descended in silence, Justin’s words like a knife thrown into the center of the still barren table. Justin sat in his customary seat at the far end, with me opposite him, having no idea what negativity I could have exhibited in quoting Maharishi’s grace. Yet so little did I trust myself, compared to the enormous talents that my cosmic friend wielded, that I said nothing.

Justin bent forward, his unwavering eyes fixed on me. Everyone else stood like sentries to his right and left, waiting for me to do something. Justin’s voice, like a lord’s in a mead hall, skidded into me over the gloss of the table. Armored silence weighted my shoulders. The mystery of whatever was being asked pinned me, a sword point to my throat.

Holly spoke: “Bill, there’s never been more love coming toward you.”

But love was far from my experience. Yet I felt it should be as she had said. In a stuckness masking panic, I looked up. The onlookers in a rigid semi-circle were faceless. I couldn’t focus.

Justin rent the air with a command: “Okay, let’s leave. I won’t stay here a moment longer.”

“No!” I shouted, wanting to do something, whatever it could be, pleading meekly, “Please don’t leave.” Finally, in an attempt at intensity, I gripped the edge of the huge table, lifted it perhaps an inch and let it slam down on the hardwood floor in frustration. My hands were tight, my face red with effort. At least I felt better having tried to express the strength of my desire.

But they all followed Justin out, their silent departure a powerful shock. Pausing at the door, their leader said, "I've never witnessed such a performance!" Justin didn't look at me, but left, the confrontation over on the outside, but still rushing inside my sweaty shirt.

Something crumpled, as if I were no sturdier than a first grader's ruled paper tossed into a trash basket. Roland told me I could go upstairs and watch another video. Then the room was empty. I was unable to move, furious that they had all walked out when I had tried to do whatever it was that they were asking.

I had tried and failed. I feared that I had disappointed Justin. The status of my spiritual well-being was on the line. I felt demolished. I watched another video up on the third floor, both wanting and not-wanting to talk to someone, anyone, about my experience.

The next day found me again at Annapurna. There were more videos to watch in the front room. Jason handed me Justin's latest letters, one to William F. Buckley, Jr., the conservative TV host of *Firing Line*, and the other to President Jimmy Carter. Tobin had told me that ten letters a day was not unusual. At this rate, I figured, in a few short years, Justin would outdo Victor Hugo, who had written ten thousand letters.

Lydia was there, handing me the phone. It was Justin: "Thought you might want to play some ball, *if* you think you can behave better than during last night's fiasco."

"Yes!" I agreed, eager to prove myself, glad to be forgiven.

I went to the court, remembering Justin as I had known him in Switzerland and impressed by how all his friends understood Maharishi more deeply than any TM people I had met. To the Annapurnans, Justin was Maharishi's secretly favorite disciple. And not only that, but to them Maharishi was

‘locked into his role as founder of the TM Movement,’ as Tobin had put it, whereas, to quote Justin in his announcement of being World Teacher, “I am free from tradition, the person who embodies all possibilities of consciousness.” As I put on my sweats on this cool day at the finale of May, I had to admit that in just one week Justin had proved in seemingly countless ways that he did, indeed, embody ‘all possibilities’. No wonder, though, that the TM Movement had ousted him.

In a white T-shirt and shorts, Justin jogged up to the abbreviated court just around the block from Sunnyside. After practice shots, he threw me the ball: “To 50 baskets.”

Hoping not to make winning my prime motive, I had no idea what it would be to play ball with an enlightened man. Except for Justin’s remonstrations to himself when he missed and his ‘Nice shot’ when I made a tough one, the game was largely silent. Which was fine with me, since I was questioning every word that wanted to form on my lips—if this or that was appropriate to say or not. Surprised that he would get mad at himself for blowing a shot, I came to see that he, as a complete child of nature, was probably exhibiting anger for *my* benefit. Though I beat him without much trouble, with Eva and then Adam Hauger, Justin’s red-haired sometimes pilot, as audience, I was aware that the game of life was the real game being played. After taking down the net, the neighborhood being a bit rough, I joined Justin and the poker-faced pilot in the shade of the single tree in the small park.

“If you were to have only two minutes to live, what would you do, Bill?”

I was thinking, “Meditate”, when Justin said, “Meditate?” in such a way as to immediately nix that response. And so I just sat there, sure that later a dozen great answers would announce themselves, yet fearing the edges of last night’s

paralysis reasserting their peripheral hold. Justin suggested that he and Adam and I walk to Sunnyside to continue.

In the hallway, Justin asked if I could feel the great battles that had taken place in these rooms. The next three hours were a blur. There was little verbal pressure, at first; Justin's voice was merely matter-of-fact. But questions like, "Why are you so afraid?" horrified me. I should know the answer to such a question. But I didn't. Justin was trying to get me to take an honest look at myself and respond as someone who was truly afraid. I wanted to be authentic, but it was as if I was held.

"You're in your self-definition, Bill. Not how God is defining you. Not how I am defining you. But how you, in your ignorance and fear, are defining yourself. It's horrible!"

But his piercing eyes and pointed questions couldn't dent me. Pleading arms and pun-filled asides to Adam couldn't arouse me, serving only to indict me as someone unfeeling, driving me to standstill shock. Wanting to make a move, do anything to move, after my two major failures, I felt less plastic than a glacier. When Justin begged, then demanded that I give him the chisel that would crack me open, I could not produce that precious tool.

"If I were to cut off one of my arms, you wouldn't feel a thing!" My silence, compared to his passion, forced me to agree. "My God!" was his only reply, "are you like this in normal life?"

I thought myself a fine administrator, a budding poet, an effective teacher of literature, but my denial was empty, for content here mattered not at all—not *what* I was speaking but *how* I was speaking, from *where* I was speaking.

Suddenly he asked what I thought of a picture of him behind me on a wicker table. It was a photo of him at age five. He was looking up with bright hope, as if to the stars. I lifted it,

dropped it, my right hand swooping instinctively to catch the silver frame.

“There, Adam, did you see that!” Justin shouted, as Adam confirmed that it had been my first natural act in two hours.

But could I continue to be natural? Wondering about this, I lost all momentum, and, as always around Justin, lost success only deepened defeat.

“Your demon’s covering all of Victoria!” Justin shouted.

I felt trapped, but never dreamed it could be so serious. Suddenly I became ghastly afraid that I might be cooperating with a wrong power. The sun was bright outside and birds chirped in the mowed grass. After what felt like countless defeats, I couldn’t imagine one more.

Trying to give me yet another chance, Justin screamed, “Do something, Bill,” but, remembering that he had said that a whole element in me was missing, I returned only silence, which brought Justin’s only option, “Get out! And don’t come to the lecture tonight: I’d just have to compensate for you.”

Outside, I sat in Adam’s car. Eva came to the car window. “Justin suggested I talk to you, that maybe I could be of some help.” Beautiful though she was, her ever-so-slightly husky voice recognizably rich, still she felt a world away to me as she said, “Bill, you have to want out of your isolation. Want out!” she pleaded softly.

The next day I ran three miles from Annapurna, just to feel my body, to shoot baskets with Roland at Beacon Hill Park. Playing better now at 35 than I had in high-school or college, I found myself showing this un-athletic man how to dribble and make a lay-up. But Roland, who had quit his MA in psychology “to be at the heart of Psychology,” was here to play life, not basketball, and his questions pushed me again into

panic, especially when he shouted, “You’re fucking up your soul!”

That night I took a cold shower. After six failed confrontations, my body held no resistance. Shivering came quickly. I turned the dial to hot, wondering, “What if I am consciously demonic? What if I am willfully going against God? The questions beat down far heavier than the water vanishing into the swirl at my wrinkled feet, my life going down the drain into numerous lightless sewers.

“No!” I cried out, my stomach hollow, the sky ashen.

I barely slept. Only Justin could release me.

The next afternoon, I went to Annapurna to help clean. Justin’s mother Vera was soon to arrive from Toronto. After scrubbing the newly installed second-floor kitchen, where dinner had gone to waste two nights before in my fourth failed confrontation, I walked out onto the bright balcony. I could see all the way to Mt. Baker in Washington, snow crowned in the first week of June. Reclined below in a lawn chair, Justin was reading.

Gearing up my nerve, I called, “Hello, down there.”

“Sounds a bit brighter up there,” came the reply with no visible turn of his head.

To me, these words were sunlight. I went back to scrubbing and, when Justin finally entered the kitchen with “Feels happy in here,” I felt that I could still produce something positive, despite the hugeness of my demon.

Everyone was bustling. Holly, Adam, Klaus, Celeste and Brandon were wearing “Divine Billionaire” badges. These five were the financial committee, who had met with Justin the night before and would meet with everyone tonight. Holly had said that their meetings were so powerful that once, when the five of them were ‘breaking free of the money demon,’ Eva and Roland had entered the room and, as close as they were to

Justin, physically had to leave. ‘They couldn’t stand the money power.’”

Though many of the Annapurnans had been up all night reading galleys, meeting about finances and making arrangements for Vera’s visit, their energy felt strikingly alive. I was glad to be playing my small part in cleaning the upstairs kitchen.

Vera was a formidable woman. This I had gathered from Justin having said, “My mother has no self-definition.” Yet she knew nothing of her son’s enlightenment.

Soon the brilliant university professor of psychology was upstairs talking to Roland about their shared interests in that subject, while the rest of us looked on, Justin, standing next to me, making an occasional wry remark to his mother. At one point he rested a hand on my shoulder. I was struck that he would touch such a demonic person.

“He rarely touches people at all,’ Holly had said. I liked her irresistible energy, quite striking in someone barely five feet tall. “The stress he takes on from just touching someone in ignorance! Or just being around us. It brings me to tears.” She rolled her round eyes under her sandy pageboy hair, adding, “His hair’s grayed—far more since starting seminars. He needs to take more silences on Piers.” I remembered the almost mythic island where a decade ago Justin had plunged a knife into his left leg to prove a spiritual point. “But he doesn’t. He just gives all the time, 24 hours a day.”

After Vera, whose vitality impressed me, had left up-island for a visit with Dierdra, Justin’s only child by his second marriage, the financial meeting began in the front room. Roland said I could sit in. The veterans around me were talking vigorously, until Justin stood in the doorway. I sat on the floor in a sweat I thought audible, as he entered, with Eva and Roland



following. He sat on his couch. He looked around at every person.

Then he told everyone that I was “in a difficult place,” but that he thought I was innocent. “So, give us the situation, Klaus.”

The tall Dutch electronics expert with an aristocratic face summarized in charming accents the debt due on the purchase of Annapurna, a deal closed during the last peak in the real estate market. The short-term debt of \$200,000 was due by September, with \$85,000 due in three weeks. Another facet of the drama around Justin Snow, I reasoned, feeling my parachute had just opened 300 feet above ground. I had no idea how far I’d fallen, just that Justin had said I was innocent!

Celeste Bingham, the stately seamstress and dancer I could never imagine stepping to anything faster than Schubert, had sold her house to help purchase this \$525,000 mansion. A couple I hadn’t met, living on the mainland for the summer, had given \$80,000. Klaus de Kooneck and Mary, his talented massage-therapist wife, had put in \$20,000. Roland and Eva—who had been convinced their married relationship had been demonic, as had Tobin and Lydia with their own past marital history—had given Sunnyside to Justin. The extent of the giving of these people made me feel I had earned no right to be a part of this group.

After significant pause, Justin expanded the situation: “Seven times we’ve killed the money demon, yet now we must slay it again.” He then told a story I had heard from Maharishi: “A man in the dim light of his hut mistakes a rope for a snake. He screams. Neighbors come running, and the police. The result is heart attacks. In the frenzy someone kicks over a lantern. The man’s house burns down. All for a misperception.”

After chastising Klaus on the way he delivered his report, Justin asked, “Who feels this situation is a rope...and who thinks it’s a snake?” After confronting Klaus, who felt snake but said ‘rope’, Justin took us all to another level. “Now we must see this not just as a rope, but as a golden rope—to heaven.” The quiet thickened.

“I tell you, on my enlightenment, if you stood where I am and saw this gift which you call a problem in its keen and true purpose, you’d all be on your knees, begging God not to change it one whit!”

I would not forget these words, or this situation emblematic of what living in The Context was about. Justin had changed seeming devastation into “God’s ennobling will,” a clue to who the World Teacher really was. His first book had been dedicated: “To all who sing in their pain.” I felt now that I knew something of what those words meant.

After Brandon Bench, the debonair businessman of the group, though not an Annapurnan, said he could sell his publishing company, The Bench Press, and Lydia said the next Fairfield seminar could bring \$50,000, Justin asked me to leave the room for a few minutes.

When I returned, Justin invited someone to give his or her experience “of the difference between Bill being in the room versus being outside.

“It was as if when he left the room the whole group fell fourteen floors deeper,” Adam said.

“For me, it was like being in a forest,” Holly offered. “All the animals were making noise. In Bill’s absence, the forest became suddenly silent.”

Justin nodded, sitting cross-legged on his blue couch. “No one,” he added, raising his voice and his arms dramatically, “no one, I don’t care *who* they are, no matter *how* many years they’ve been meditating, no one who does not know what this

is, who has not been confronted, whose demon has not been hit, *no one* can enter this room and not disturb the acoustics.” And he drove his eyes into each of us.

Diving back to my lodgings, feeling almost reborn to have been declared innocent, I didn't care if I had, in effect, been called a spiritual imbecile. The people in that room had been around Justin for seven years. Seven years! I could only wonder what the group shared when they were alone with him. Before my head hit the pillow, I had decided that I would extend my stay and attend the weekend Vancouver seminar, the third World Teacher Seminar. It was open to anyone.

This was to be the third seminar, preceded by the one the previous week in Annapurna, the first being the inaugural WTS in Fairfield, Iowa, where Maharishi's movement had years before bought a college, a party school that had failed and was for sale. At Maharishi International University, everyone meditated. It was hailed as “an ideal society,” with crime was reported to be zero. A dropped \$10 bill pinned to the dining-hall bulletin board would stay until claimed by its owner. But some TM'ers there had read one or more of Justin's books and had invited the man they thought was merging Maharishi's impersonal knowledge of the East with the Western path of personal heroic drama. Remaining unimpressed until an M.I.U. official had phoned Justin to say that he should not come, the World Teacher needed only this challenge to have Adam make flight arrangements. That April weekend, some 300 had attended Justin's first seminar. I had seen the tapes: Justin, the dazzling performer, had not disappointed. To queries about his opposing the TM Movement, the World Teacher merely revealed the questioner's lack of openness with counter-questions like, “Are you prepared to drop your point of view and let life speak its verdict in acoustics where egos are absent?” Or, “If something in the TM Movement was way out

of line, would you not oppose it merely because you think Maharishi is enlightened and must know, or because you lack the self-knowledge to see that you need to change as well?" Besides generating \$10,000, there had been a number of rapid breakthroughs at the microphone.

Friday brought a group exodus to Vancouver, the Annapurnans abuzz throughout the large house. All had jobs, all were broke, yet all were going despite the \$150 cost. Justin let his close friends owe what they couldn't pay, Roland keeping track of the debts.

On the ferry to Vancouver, I stood in the air of passing pine islands, delightfully cool even in the bright sunlight. As the ship passed Piers Island, I hoped for the promise the seminar held, yet feared that power. I was innocent, Justin had said. My enlightenment had begun, Justin had said. And I had more light than anyone else he'd ever worked with. Yet, despite my intellectual grasp of what Justin was all about, some basic dough holding my manhood together had been kneaded and punched down, kneaded and punched down, until it wasn't much more substantial than the bits of bread some passenger was setting on the lower deck railing for gulls.

### **CHAPTER 3: IN TOUCH WITH THE DOWN UNDER**

My first seminar began with the piercing cry of a child. Janine, whom I had known during my graduate-school days at the University of Arkansas, had just entered the hall. She had driven 2500 miles and couldn't find anyone to stay with her 4-year old daughter, whom she had to bring along. Celia was now wailing outside the doors of the large rented room of St. Michael's Seminary. Beneath two gothic lamps hanging by chains on either side of the stage, Justin took his first cue, saying that we could each tell from the nature of a cry whether it was authentic or manipulative. True to the moment, he always made the best of whatever was happening.

He moved about the stage, totally comfortable in his body. He wasn't reading from notes, but letting the wisdom of the Personal pour out of him: "The Intelligence that authors life is, by definition, everywhere: a deft beneficence that is in every fiber of our lives, permeating even the smallest space and frame of time. There is no such thing as an insignificant moment. Every moment is perfectly scripted to bring each of us the maximum degree of evolution. The trick is to listen. To listen means being without negativity." The former English teacher and actor, not famous but evidently locally acclaimed, looked around the room, as if spending a significant moment with each of us, pushing meaning from his eyes into our eyes so that we might catch the music of every moment being scripted by life.

He sat in a chair covered in white silk to give us an example--when, as a major character in one of Shakespeare's history plays, he had tripped up the stage stairs: "In that moment of wondering why God would have done this to me, I rose to give a smashing line, totally in character, a line that used the very faux pas I had committed to forward both the action and my character—as if it had been planned. Life is the great script, a cosmic drama of magnificent proportions. And you are each the principle player." Justin Montclair Snow, it was not hard to believe, was the consummate actor who could perform himself perfectly in any situation.

"If I had secretly made a movie of your life so far today, would you like it? Would you find it enthralling? You think you're writing the script, making it up as you go. But there's a script, perfect in each moment, being written for each of you—if you can yield up your needy self-definitions in favor of the character God has created. The baby cried, and I saw there my next line. If you just trust whatever God-given situation you're in, you'll always be evolving at the fastest pace. But ya gotta trust that even the worst event is totally a divine gift."

Yet the 75 people here hadn't come to be talked at. Justin was holding back. I guessed it was for Brandon's parents, wealthy and unfamiliar with the World Teacher. Or maybe to allow the atmosphere of the group to congeal. As he went on with his introductory lecture of how we were mistakenly separate from the infinitely intelligent flow of our lives, I wondered when he would break loose.

It was between the first and second sessions that I came to believe concretely in the demonic. I had read the Gospel accounts of Christ casting out devils. But, outside the seminar hall, Celia clamored for her mother. Celia also wanted candy. So she pleaded in her white pinafore, demanding to no avail, before sitting on the floor and whining. Janine did not know

what to do, even after Roland and Nadine explained to her what was actually going on. Nadine held Celia until the four-year old quieted. But when Celia realized that her silence was not going to result in candy, she howled. Nadine was not about to reinforce such demonic behavior, and escorted the mother outside, with Celia left behind.

Roland held the door closed, while Celia screamed wildly, pounding the glass as hard as she could. He told those of us looking on, "It may seem cruel to separate a child from her mother, but do any of you believe the real issue here is candy?" The youngster screamed all the more. Finally Roland let her out, perhaps afraid she would smash the glass. Celia instantly in tears ran toward her mother, who finally was seeing the falseness of her little girl's pain. Roland and Nadine intercepted Celia. Roland held her and explained the matter. Soon the child was a banshee. Holding her arms to the ground, Roland asked if she was going to be quiet. Met with cries decibels beyond previous wails, he taunted her, then, pointing to his cheek, asked her to give him 'a little kiss'. This effort was answered with more screams. Until gradually Celia realized that Roland was not going to let her up. Quickly the hysteria ceased. But the ante had been raised, as Roland reminded her, "A little kiss." Then came the wailing tactic and again the taunting...until she realized that she would, indeed, have to kiss him. Her crying again stopped. She gave him a perfunctory little peck, to which Roland responded, "Now the other cheek." I could see her deciding, but she did it. "Now a kiss on either cheek, but a sweet kiss, like you mean it," Roland requested sincerely, revealing love to be the true objective. This was too much. Shouts and unabated screams raged throughout the campus. But Celia's oppressor wasn't budging. And, once the blond-haired child saw this, her tears fell quickly away. She

gave her confronter a snippy kiss. And then, to my surprise, the real thing. Roland immediately let her up.

Someone had taken Janine down the walk and out of sight, so Celia went hand in hand with Nadine to lunch. There I met a sweeter, more outgoing, more genuine Celia than I had seen in the three years I had known her in Arkansas. She flitted from table to table, talking with people, especially with Roland and Nadine. Only half way through lunch did she find her mother, whom she seemed not to have missed.

While I had been intellectually prepared, confronted by both Justin and Roland, I had not taken the demonic 100% seriously. But here was a girl released. To think that some force, some habit of behavior, some structure of ignorance was that strong in a child of four! Yet here was a model of the effects of whatever dark power was keeping me, its host, uncentered, off guard, misguided and feeling ugly, dishonest and devoid of integrity. It was not the daemon or guardian spirit of which Socrates had spoken, nor a situation of being possessed, but the force that structures everyone's ignorance and separation from God. These were Justin's words. Now I believed them.

In the afternoon, Justin spoke about the demonic, without using that term, still computing what this new audience could comprehend. He spoke about "the structure of life for those in ignorance," and how "our incarnational problem is mathematically calculated to perfectly oppose our gifts." Then he added something I had not before heard: "It exactly corresponds to that aspect in us that is most beautiful, the precise other side of our coin." For me, that meant, fearful as I was, that I potentially was not just courageous, but fearless.

Not until evening did the seminar begin to deliver the experience that Justin wanted, that made him say, "This is the



longest I've gone before a group of people have entered The Context.”

It happened after Roland had come in late and taken his front-row seat next to Lydia that a Germanic man with keen insight said something about Justin being authentic, but those around him being clones: “I zee Roland much defferent around you dan ven he ees mit zee common volk.”

Justin was not given to protecting anyone, even his best friend. Roland came quietly to the mike and began to speak casually. But the German didn't let him off the hook and soon Justin was asking that knifing question: “How are you, Roland?” Those were the words that always meant confrontation had begun. Now the confrontee knew he was facing something formidable and, after that, said almost nothing, likely knowing that whatever words he might have wanted to speak would not have come out authentically. He retracted each word that formed on his lips, a testament to how well Justin had taught his associate to reject the first impulse of speech. I had already learned that one did not just have a conversation with Justin Snow. Around him, one had to convey experience, to come from the gut. Roland was fighting all his temptations to speak mere content, to fake sincerity and pure feeling. In that battle, he was encountering his demon head on.

After an hour the Annapurnans were shouting, “Come on, Roland, come on!” while others said prayers or held up their hands in distant support, gathering like figures a Renaissance master might have painted around the Crucifixion. All of us serious about the seminar knew it wasn't just Roland at the mike—it was ourselves.

Justin evidently pushed his close friends harder. He upped the ante, saying that if Roland didn't come through, World Teacher Seminars would cease. “What a burden!” I

thought, at the same time impressed that Justin would give up even his seminars if he was unable to infuse life into his friends.

Finally, Roland broke into quiet tears, then into soft laughter which, for him, meant freedom. Not that he was enlightened, for the demon, like the thousand-headed hydra of mythology, would now go to a subtler level—until its final head was decapitated at the most fundamental field of personality. So Justin had said in his several books. Yet the room had changed from suffocating fog to the uplifted dazzle of day. Everything looked clearer, cleaner, brighter—not just to Roland, but to all of us who witnessed his breakthrough, as Justin pointed to each of us basking in the glow, “Finally, you are in the deft beneficence of a World Teacher Seminar. This is it. This is it!”

The intensity I felt from him drove itself into me. Empowered, I stood in the freshness of experience that The Context meant being in the thick of heroic struggle.

Then, out of the blue, during the next day’s morning session, I suddenly felt totally spontaneous, as if playing basketball and knowing I could not miss. Suddenly I knew I belonged in my body, at this seminar, on this planet. The poetry Justin read on stage was just for me; the energy of his humor, his sternness, his unpredictable dancing—all spoke to me, as if I had graduated to some fresh feeling of the musicality of life itself, whatever its rhythm, whatever its key.

Then came what would be known from then on as ‘the Down-Under confrontation. Justin’s friends saw only an ‘aspect’ of him at any given time, and the Annapurnans must have seen innumerable aspects in their seven years, aspects I might never witness. Roland had told me all this before. I was starting to comprehend the just-off-the-press seminar booklet he had handed me the morning we had all left Victoria. During a

break, before Kerry Axelrod strode to the mike, I had opened to random pages.

The World Teacher Seminar Program represents...the last frontier of absolute knowledge still hidden from man.

The seminars are the direct and most efficient means to awaken people to the sacred currents of Creative Intelligent always lively within the field of Natural Law.

Justin Montclair Snow is a personality unmatched in the world today; his enlightenment has brought him the highest gifts of individual freedom and creativity.... He is able—when there is any sort of openness—to produce the experience of wholeness in those listening to him, at the same time producing the experience of the Personal God.

The World Teacher Seminar is that unique event in the world today which is the method that the universe—finally—is using to reveal its reason for having created human beings.

When the young Aussie, in his late twenties, came to the mike, within a few minutes I felt him to be honest and real, more so than I. He put to Justin a question I had dared not ask.

“You say you’re enlightened, mate, but from all I’ve read, those who’re really enlightened never say they are. “Those who know the way say nothin’. ‘cordin’ to the Buddha.”

“You’re from Australia?”

“Right. Visitin’ friends ‘ere. Might stay,” said the freckled Aussie, dusty hair in untamed curls.

“How’d you find out about the seminar?”

“Saw your poster, mate.”

I could feel the front row of Annapurnans frown that someone would be so familiar with their divine friend. The World Teacher leaned forward in his director’s chair.

“So what d’ya think of the seminar, mate?” Justin quipped, grinning.

“S’alright. Mate. Interestin’, y’know. I seen a few holy men in m’day...” I watched him, lanky but strongly hewn, take in a deep breath as he utter the forbidden words: “an’ you ain’ one of ‘em.”

“I’m whole, I’m wholly whole, holy whole,” Justin played, raising his fists like a pouting six-year old, saying in a base voice, “Ya wanna fight?”

Kerry, arms folded across a plain gray sweatshirt said, “Your ego’s too big.”

“Nope, my ego’s infinite.” This had been a serious response, and, after the laughter faded, Justin explained that killing the ego was not what the Creator had intended, but that the ego needs to grow to “cosmic ego,” must expand to include the whole universe. “Ego is divine when freed from negativity. Enlightenment shouldn’t mean silence or a mysterious withdrawal, because life itself is mysterious, even when we reveal it. Do you want to reveal life, Kerry?”

Justin, I was seeing, purposely led people to think that he was the greatest of egotists—to get them to react, which, of course, they did. He used that reaction to get them to take a look at themselves. He dared anyone to engage him and find where he ended.

Suddenly the World Teacher rose and, center stage, spoke, “I’m just the place in the universe where life is happening purely.” Pointing to his forehead, he added, “There’s

nothing here. Justin is dead. We all have to die to our own self-definitions.”

Kerry, in red sneakers, was shuffling his feet when Justin asked, “On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate yourself in the following qualities? Courage.”

“An eight, mate.”

“Sensitivity.”

“Gimme a seven.”

“Aesthetic appreciation.”

“Wha’s that?”

“Well,” Justin smiled, “how about humility?”

“A seven. No, make it a six, six an’ a ‘alf.”

Justin rubbed his hand on his chin a number of times.

“How about aliveness?”

“At least a six, maybe a seven,” Kerry said after a pause.

Walking to the opposite side of the stage and off, Justin hid in the backdrop of royal blue curtains. When he emerged, he looked as if he were carved out of rock. He walked, gaze fixed, each step taking several seconds, toward the tall Aussie. He stared into the young man’s eyes, a foot from his face—just looked, the way a hawk must eye a meadow mouse.

Amazed that Kerry just stared back, I watched Justin draw his right arm back, slash the air and stop less than half an inch from the bridge of Kerry’s straight nose, yelling like a samurai, “Ayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!”

Justin turned and sat down.

Kerry hadn’t flinched. He asked, deadpan, “Why’d ya do that?”

“Because I knew you wouldn’t flinch and wanted to give you an experience of how right you are and how I will do anything to change that rightness.” Then Justin’s whole demeanor softened as he grinned, “I mean, you seemed to lack

confidence, mate.” But the irony was lost. “So tell me, Kerry, what does your father do?”

“Sheep rancher.”

“Sleep rancher?”

“No, sheep. Sheep.”

“Oh, I thought you said ‘sleep.’ Which made perfect sense since you are *so* unawake. Would you like to get awake, like to send some light into the deadness which has nearly eaten you up like mutton?”

Kerry stood rigid, said nothing.

Justin turned to Roland. “You know, Roland, if someone told me I was dead, I think I’d get angry, refute the accusation with my life, or question its veracity. I think our mate from Down Under is really down under.”

I rather liked Kerry, but Justin was right—the kid was about as sensitive as a winter twig. Justin had said that only the microphone experience could pull the forces of divine and demonic apart—often by stimulating someone’s demonic until its ugliness became obvious and the person could exercise choice. It always came down to choice.

Justin turned to Kerry: “If you want to know God, want to contact the source of life, you’d better get off your spiritually platitudinal ass and start putting some desire into this exchange, because, mate, you’re dry as the bush country.” And he approached Kerry, shouting in his face, “Move it!” But the Aussie stood, arms folded.

“Some of you don’t believe that in each person there exists a force opposing God,” Justin said sarcastically. “I bet he won’t even change expression. Watch this: What do you want for Christmas five years ago?”

No change.

“And where were you the day after tomorrow?”

No change.

“Jesus, man, why’re you laughing—it’s Sunday and the bars are closed?”

For some reason, Kerry smiled at that one.

“Hey, everybody! Did you see the difference it makes in Kerry’s whole energy, his entire being, to see some bloody sunshine come from down under into his face?”

Even Kerry nodded, admitting, “Yeah, quite a difference, eh?”

“I’m not such a bad guy, am I?” Justin asked rhetorically.

Kerry slightly shook his head, a faint smile warming his lips.

“But I’m not enlightened!” the World Teacher adamantly kidded, dancing back to his chair, where he stood, crowing, “But I’m not enlightened!” several times like a cock, before he took a piece of tissue and said, “Watch, everyone. I’ll tear this tissue and defy every one of your expectations.”

This was evidently one of his favorite tricks, one I had seen on video and not thought much of. But watching him do it, slowly, slowly, keeping my eyes close on his hands the way one watches a magician in order to see how a trick is done, I was sure he would not find a gap. But then he broke the last fiber of tissue, the two halves falling as if it had happened somehow between two thoughts.

“Well, shamatzahai, William Howell!” he shouted my way without looking at me.

“And what do you do, Kerry? How do you carry on? Yes, Kerry, carry on.”

While Kerry said, “Cabinetry,” I couldn’t even begin to imagine how Justin had known my mind so minutely, once again at a distance, so that I almost missed the coming exchange.

“You’re working at being a cabinet?”

“No, mate. I make ‘em. Outta wood”

“Wood you say you are as open as your cabinets, if you wood hazard a guess?”

When Kerry didn’t respond, Justin tried again: “Well, let me put the question to you in entirely the same way, ‘Are you as open as your cabinets when they’re closed?’”

“My cabinets have doors.” Another dead-pan reply.

“And you, Kerry, do you have doors?”

“Me, no.”

The Annapurnans were laughing. Me, too, despite feeling sorry for the lad.

“Then how can you ever get open? Do you want to be opened?”

Kerry said softly, ‘Yeah.’”

“Why are you here at the microphone?”

“Just to say you’re not enlightened, I guess.”

“Oh, but I am. He said so.” Justin pointed to a picture of Maharishi kept on the chair-side table with a blue vase full of carnations and the poetry books that were part of every seminar. “And God says so, every moment.” Now Justin was miming a silent discourse, back and forth, which ended with, “Yes. He was wondering about me with you at the mike, but He still says I’m his ace in the hole. Tell me, Kerry, are you whole, an ace with a hole, an asshole, or just a hole?”

Kerry’s expression remained unaltered.

“Really, Kerry, I didn’t mean it,” Justin laughed in faked apology. “Something just comes over me and I don’t know what I’m saying. So, asshole... Oh, there I did it *again!* You’ve just gotta be forgiving; you know, turn the other cheek,” as he turned and shifted his hips. “Yeah, just open those creaking doors. Let’s hear ‘em open, eh? Kinda rusty?”

Still nothing from Kerry, though I was a bit shocked to hear such language from an enlightened man. But then, he by



no means existed to fulfill my ideas of enlightenment. In fact, he may be tearing them down—just for me!

“Seriously, Kerry, may I ask you a straight though slightly grainy question?”

“Sure.” Kerry’s arms were folded now.

“Why are you so dead? Wooden, I would say.”

The room groaned, and I felt sorry, not just for Kerry, who still had no idea what confrontation was all about, but also because I could not help but wonder what I would do in his place.

“I’m not dead,” Kerry said bluntly.

“How convincing,” Justin taunted, countering with, “No, mate, you’re so dead that the way you answered my question exhibited your total lack of care about your dignity, your manhood, your....”

“I am a man,” the Aussie said straight up.

“A man isn’t a fact, Kerry. A man is God’s way of understanding Himself. A man has 14 trillion times 14 trillion interactions going on in his brain, more events than there are atoms in the universe. A man, mate, is a river unafraid to die into the ocean.”

Kerry wasn’t listening. If I could see that, I assumed everyone else could, as well.

“How are you, Kerry?” By now that question, the one that turned any conversation with Justin or his friends into the seriousness terrain of confrontation, made my chest tighten.

“Oh, fine.”

“Oh, fine,” the World Teacher mimicked. “Do you always cut off your father’s head when you speak to him?”

No answer. But I could see Kerry’s eyes fall.

“So you think I’m a spiritual fuddy duddy?”

“Of sorts, mate.”

“And are you enlightened?”

“Nope.”

“Are you a seeker, someone who wants to be enlightened?”

“Right-o.”

“But are you striving for enlightenment as you speak?”

This was the first thing that Justin had said that seemed to get Kerry’s attention.

“Until you want God as fervently as you’d want air if I held your head in a sewer, you’ll never have it. When you answer, make sure your words don’t deny what your life is about. So, Kerry, how are you?”

“Feeling good, thanks.”

“No, Kerry. How are you?”

“Fine.”

“How are you, Kerry?” Justin asked, his voice bearing down.

The Aussie started to speak and then did not.

“That’s the first right move you’ve made,” observed Justin. “So, mate, how are you?”

Still no answer, as Kerry’s lips tried to form a reply, their sounds being held back, as if the words were distasteful.

“Good, good. Nature’s finally trapped you. The hinges on your doors, rusted over all your life, are getting their first drop of oil. So, Kerry, how old’s your father?”

“He’s, he’s, uh, fifty-seven.”

“The last syllable of the ‘seven’ was good. But be careful now. Tell me, have you ever been in love before?”

As if this were a yes-or-no question and he knew the answer, Kerry said brightly, “Oh, yeah.”

“No!” Justin shouted. “Don’t do that! You threw everything away. Now, when I ask you if you were in love, give me the pain or glory or emptiness of that experience, but don’t throw away your lines, man. Never throw away your

lines!” Justin suddenly grew softer and rolled his eyes up, as if asking the question for the first time: “Kerry, I was wondering...have you, uh, have you ever been in love, really in love?”

“Yeah. I guess so. Yeah. I have.”

The sincerity brought one soft clap from Justin. “What was it like, being in love? What was her name?”

“Her name was, her name was...Beverly,” Kerry replied, like a low stream over smooth stones.

“And what was being with her like?”

“She, uh, was, she...wore cotton dresses...from me’ mother’s shop in Perth,” Kerry intoned seriously, sweetly, his voice complex and inherently interesting.

“And did you ever take her for a drive, watch her hair blow in the wind?”

“Yeah, we, uh, drove, we drove...up...to the hill...above the bay...and she...she...held me....” Suddenly there came tears.

Justin motioned to Lydia to bring tissues, then, having walked to Kerry’s right side, standing there until the man’s weeping subsided, the World Teacher inquired ever so softly, “How does it feel to feel the pain of loneliness?”

Kerry could not answer, his face seething with memory.

“Who are you, Kerry? How are you? Why?” Justin asked, preventing Kerry from grabbing onto whatever he thought himself to be.

“Why, Kerry? How! Why! Yes!” Justin cooed, raising his voice, after a long pause, to us all: “This is the battleground of the soul, the heroic field where one finds out if he is a man, if one can face one’s pain and live the beauty of all that the pain covers. How are you, Kerry? Still merely curious? Still think that you can get enlightened and not seek it with every word and breath? How are you, Kerry?”

Though Justin had nearly shouted the last question, Kerry still did not answer, his fists clenched, as if he were staring down the vast corridor of his unembraced past.

“Good, Kerry. Keep up that intensity and you’ll achieve something very beautiful in this life. Now, look at me.” Then, as Kerry tried to shift his gaze, Justin motioned with his arm toward the audience and, softly smiling, invited, “Tell us how you are.” It was a sweet order, generous. “Look at me. Look.”

Kerry looked at Justin, who invited, “Now, talk to us.”

“This never hap...happen’d before....”

“Why, Kerry? How? Don’t try to be the way you were. Let the painful beauty of the experience shape you.” Justin waited another minute before saying, “Good. Now, tell us how it feels to touch the heart of what is truly Down Under about you. Do you have a door in you, Kerry”>

“Yeah. Yeah, I have,” said the man, his voice the proof of his openness.

“And what does it feel like to enter that door?”

“It...feels...real, mate.”

Justin turned away from Kerry with a huge smile, his arms open as he approached the audience with, “Excellent. Even the ‘mate’ didn’t sink the delicate boat he’s building. Well done, Kerry, well done.”

Justin walked over to his chair to pull a red carnation from the blue vase. He returned to Kerry, handing him the flower.

“So, Kerry, are you a cabinet?”

“Yeah, yeah, guess I am.”

“Beautiful!” said Justin; ‘you’re sending me love. This is what it’s like when the doors are open. It brings what’s down under to the surface. And what’s under what’s down under is the one ocean of being that unites us all. Sit down, now, Kerry.”

Kerry took a front-row seat that Holly had vacated for him, and when he sat down and Mary de Kooneck put her hand on his shoulder, the young Aussie instantly cried, hiding his face with his red carnation.

“What’s it feel like in here, Eva?” Justin asked boisterously, clapping his hands, “when someone touches the true stuff of life that makes them beautiful?”

She took a hand mike, and, as if she’d thought about the words for a very long time, spontaneously offered, “It feels like this place has been cleaned, larger, open to the sky, as if this room has been washed in the joy of martyrs.”

Justin looked at her, silent in her red and black dress, as if he were a martyr. In the gorgeous intensity between them, after a very loud minute of looking into her eyes, the World Teacher simply said in a voice full of beauty, death and resurrection, “We’ll all meet at seven.”

Then came the Beatles’ “Yellow Submarine,” with Justin shouting over the happiness of the music, “This is how lively you have to be every moment!” as he opened his arms wide and shouted even louder, “Look at Kerry, everyone! Did you ever think you’d see such depth in a doorless, barren cupboard?” Then he winked, turned, and walked out into the late summer sun.

With Kerry looking like he had just witnessed the battle of Troy, I could only remain seated, feeling deep, even somewhat heroic, realizing this wasn’t like being on drugs, that I felt nothing of escape but rather of entrance—into a realm of strength within myself. I felt deeply, enthralled in a bodily energy of heightened integrity.

Each day of my Victoria stay I had been terrified of not feeling, of letting my demon suffocate me into passivity and even coma. During my childhood, my parents had never spoken about feelings, had never asked me how I felt about anything.

Feelings were like spices in bottles on a shelf, and I had not known their names. Now all my sadness, all my joy at being alive had become a sense of adventure about entering a fresh realm of myself—it lived in my belly, in my bones. I was rich—and solid.

There had been no hope for Kerry, I had thought. And then the doors had opened. In the long look Justin had given Eva, I saw that his purpose was to make heroes out of this group, that each of us was playing the game of life, perhaps as no others in history.

In the dinner line, I talked with Kerry, finding him to be surprisingly supple.

“It was like he was cuttin’ off the avenues for me to make mistakes,” Kerry said, “as if he could see me thoughts anglin’ off. It was ‘eavy duty, mate, to face that empty tunnel inside me.”

“Think he’s enlightened?” I asked.

“Don’ know, I guess, and right now it don’ matter.”

Wishing I could have said that, I watched him walk over to where Justin was sitting and tap his shoulder with the red carnation. I heard the young Aussie say he had to leave tomorrow for Dawson Creek, but that he wanted to stay close, become a regular.

“Someday I’m gonna give you the money so’s you can buy Piers Island outright, mate,” I heard Kerry tell the World Teacher, who did not grin but held Kerry’s hand as if pushing more intensity up that freckled arm, before returning to a specially prepared salad.

I ate with Mary and Janine. I really liked Mary, whose simple beauty radiated a rare and wholesome health, though I had not yet felt close to her. Half way through my meal, I decided to tell her that. But before I could begin the right words, she looked at me with earthy brown eyes and took my

hand in a way that conveyed such delicacy—as if I were experiencing her heart through my hand—that the layers of distance suddenly fell away. How, I wondered, had these people around Justin learned to feel this deeply?

The evening session started with humor, which rarely fell flat, but if it did, even that was a delight, for Justin was conscious of the fact and it made him seem even more human. Tonight he did ‘manifestations,’ another of the World Teacher’s unique talents: Someone would suggest a person or place, object or event and Justin would close his eyes and become the feeling of what had been requested. We got to see Joan of Arc, Zeus, Maharishi, Winston Churchill and Archangel Gabriel.

“The universe holds the memory of every character or event throughout the ages,” said Justin, “and I simply let that intelligence move through me.”

“Will you manifest Creation?” Nadine asked.

Without thinking if he could or not, Justin’s face, after moments of silence, began to take on a sudden burst of energy, as much power as a human face could endure, before letting his puffed cheeks, redder than any face I had ever seen, go into sputterings. He gasped, “Wow, what an experience! I thought I was going to explode and all the galaxies were going to burst from my forehead!” That was followed by Abe Lincoln, the World Teacher taking on the character of the Great Emancipator—his sadness, humanity, humor and charming wisdom—and those sensitive enough felt the integrity and flowing courage available in Justin’s presence as Lincoln.

When he manifested ‘a baby giraffe in a jolly jumper,’ the Annapurnans were rolling with laughter. I wanted to tell him why my favorite was ‘a cup of coffee,’ but it was Holly who took the hand mike and excitedly said, “Justin, when you manifested the coffee, I could taste it!”

“Decaf, right?” Justin winked.

“Too sweet,” Holly laughed back.

“But I did it tout suite, and I know you’ve taken your lumps, baby. What you need is an Irish Coffee.” Justin’s exaggerated face ensured that only jocund energy was transmitted to the effervescent Holly, now bubbling over with love.

Then the World Teacher began crooning “Sweet nothings” before he ran around the stage like one of the Three Stooges and, in half a dozen accents from Cockney to East Indian, cawed, “Sweet nothing, sweet nothing,” as he point to his head—“No ego, only God’s sweet intelligence.”

The room was fertilized with applause. Before it ebbed, a new person came to the mike, and it seemed to me quite suddenly that the seminar turned—as if comedy needed to be balanced by tragedy. The man waited, for Justin had begun reading from T.S. Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”:

To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
To say, ‘I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all.’

“Spencer, good to see you. Wanta play a riff with me or will you bail out again?”

The man in a tweed sport coat and pastel yellow vest, blue button-down collar and red tie had been with Justin for a year and a half, before leaving to pursue a music and sound-engineering career in Edmonton. Everyone in The Context knew that Spencer had run from the pressure, and was returning after a long absence.

Not knowing the specifics but able to ask the right questions, Justin talked music with the good-looking man of



forty-plus, before focusing the conversation: “Are you ready to make music in yourself?”

It was clear to me that the balding Spencer had a sound grasp of Justin’s ideas, but as yet little more. Face weatherworn, beard clipped in Amish fashion, eyes clear but tired, the one-time Sunnysider carried the chiseled look of someone not intending to surrender that strength.

“Somebody come to the other microphone and talk to Spence. Somebody who’s been around. Roland? See if you can help Spence take his first step.”

Justin, looking up to see three of his friends leaving, called, “Holly, Mary, Nadine—where are you going? Just wait five minutes. I need your help on this one, and we want to focus all our attention on Spence so that our energy will create the arena for something beautiful to happen. Spencer’s a good person, someone I feel great responsibility for, if we can just stir him.”

Roland, speaking gently, carefully, got nowhere. So Justin interjected, “With Spence, it’s a particular kind of deadness that has to be overcome, that has to be killed.”

“Is that something that has meaning for you?” Roland asked, “and what are you doing right now to change?”

Though I looked closely—trying to monitor his energy, the confidence and givingness in his voice, the spark in his eyes—studying Roland yielded no signs of noticeable difference as a result of yesterday’s confrontation. “Must be inward changes,” I noted to myself.

Justin, looking out toward the cameras manned by Klaus and Adam, asked, “You have to absolutely *see* the problem. How many can see it?” Half of the sixty-some people raised their hands. I didn’t, but wanted to. But I didn’t know Spencer.

When asked how he would express Spence’s problem, Roland said, “It’s like when you stood with me at the end of my

confrontation, Justin, and I felt your presence: my own heart started to expand and pettiness totally dropped away. I want to give something to Spence, some sense of that experience, beyond his rationality.”

After Spencer engineered a reply in analogies and logical comparisons, Justin’s arm extended like a scepter, knifelike, as he issued the challenge: “You see, Spence, there’s a physical definition in you which keeps life from being warm and moist and virginal and just spring. There’s actually a hollowness within you, a void, and you speak within an empty chamber where the actual blood and flesh and movement of the music of your soul is muted. And there’s a form of emptiness in you now, due to my presence, which is drawing out almost a grotesqueness, which is the frustration your soul is feeling. Your way of talking—gestures, analogies—it’s so stylized that it doesn’t vitalize the parts of you that want to sing—it’s a profound dislocation from the natural sensuousness that I can actually see is there within you. The juice of life jus’ ain’t flowin’. There’s something robot-like—more extreme today because Nature wants something to happen for you. You see a lot of what I’m doing, but not absolutely, so that there’s a very negative force holding your body, your mind, your heart and keeping you from the anguish that could make you cry out and become a child again—a boy and a young man again, and be able to have your words sound not abstract to your wife but so that they run like juice from your mouth...”

I could see Spencer’s situation so clearly—his tightness and broken-record responses dancing around the central issue. I saw it all once Justin announced it.

“You gotta face the music, Spence,” said Roland.

Spencer’s wife Rhonda—a chiseled loveliness with wide eyes and a wide, expressive mouth—was in the audience. It hurt me to watch her tight, yearning face—too much make-up

for my taste—while Spencer hung his head. She had also left Sunnyside, being one of the original group. I couldn't imagine anyone close to Justin leaving him, especially Rhonda, whom Justin had been extremely fond of. I had read *Letters of the Personal*, and he had written her many, hers perhaps the most amazing.

Justin studied the dazed face. “One thing, Spencer, is that I've seen you at your best when your problem is not so acute. But the time has come for your deliverance.”

Rhonda held folded hands to her lap, while her husband moaned, shaking his bald head, as Justin said, “I suffer from the desire...I writhe in agony when I see the negative structure of life eating away the soul. It would be cruel of me not to make available to Spencer, even though he ran from my power four years ago, that diagnosis which contains not only a prescription but starts to move him into the inner reckoning.” Justin halted his analysis. “Some profound sorrow and self-abnegation caused him to cut himself off”—the World Teacher slashed the air with his right arm—“cut himself off...and then he erected a mode of response that denies the fact that there is going to be spring coming out of the cold earth again.”

Then, rather abruptly, Justin was telling us, “One of the signs of your evolution is the ability to actually feel whatever is happening with the seasons of the year, that some inner natural rhythms related to the turning of the Earth round the Sun—that you are part of that, that it's moving within you. It's a wonderful experience.”

The World Teacher continued, “Spencer's on his way to dying—physically and in every other way—unless he decides to live at every level of himself. If not, there will just be hollowness and the nobility of a beautiful soul, but not an alive person, not a human being. And I would never say these things unless something can change.”

“I see it in everyone’s face, too,” uttered Spencer listlessly.

“See, Spence, you don’t speak from where life can conceive of birth. You know, life is to give life to life. That’s one of my greatest thrills—to make life *life*. I ask you all to give all you can to Spencer, to offer something to this man who is so wretched that he doesn’t yet know he is wretched. So give! Each of you.”

Rhonda was in tears, praying for her husband.

“Spencer!” Nadine, a stern warrior, picked up the hand mike and in her erect way spoke: “I think if you start to relate to what each person is saying without trying to figure something out, but let the rhythms of their words seep into you...”

“The music angle won’t work, Nadine.”

“Okay, but, Spence, you’ve got to realize that the existential intention needed is something you’re going to have to stumble upon, not something you’re going to mechanically engineer.”

“Spencer,” Justin asked, “have you actually given up somewhere?”

“No, I don’t think I have,” came Spencer’s reply in his unexcited voice. “Listening to Nadine, I was trying to get a gut feeling as to...to...to what I was supposed to grab. Uh, the outward dialogue is the only thing I have right now and I’m trying to reach inside...”

“It’s all this vocabulary,” Justin interrupted, throwing up his hands. “Spencer, this sort of executive psychology has nothing at all to do with the lyricism of the human hand or rains falling, and it’s all dead abstraction so that you’re not letting life come in, even for a second.”

“How the hell... I’m trying to communicate.” Spencer was raising his voice: “How do I do it?” He unbuttoned his pale yellow vest.

Justin looked pained and Roland, still at the other mike, asked, “Spencer, do you experience a yearning?”

“An extreme yearning,” Spencer said as if noting the sun was out this morning.

“The way you said that tells me that’s merely an intellectual idea. I don’t feel you *are* yearning for anything.”

“Everybody should be helping,” Justin softly reminded us.

“Sure, it’s an intellectual idea,” Spencer retorted. “It’s something inside me trying to come out and you’re trying to help me get it out, but the mechanisms I’ve got—maybe they’re superficial—but they’re all I’ve got right now. Now you’re saying...”

“I, I guess I’m convinced,” Roland conceded.

“Good move,” said Justin to his friend.

“You give up, too?” Spencer asked Justin with a chuckle, as if in relief.

Justin winced. “Spencer! Your wife, lovely creature, wants to feel you breathing and giving the fertility of your manhood and the sense that the soil is rich in you so roses and orchids can grow. It’s so important that you realize that somewhere you are being tricked. The whole Spencer Cox lexicon of psychology that’s yours—all those words—they’re deadly, deadly words. There must be some extraordinary combination of sorrow and fear inside you that makes you say to yourself, “I have cut myself off; I cannot experience aliveness; I can talk about it, but I cannot manifest it.”

The World Teacher turned to us in sorrow. “Every human being is the universe. At this microphone where all the forces of a person’s beauty and ugliness converge, the whole

world is here, all of creation, and our job is to keep the pressure up until the person at the mike splits and can see what has been gripping him and *makes a choice*. Mark my words, whatever other powers come to me, however my talents get expressed, this situation—the microphone experience—will always be ultimate, for it is here that someone can totally change, can go through eons of evolution in a minute.”

Then he returned to Spencer. “What would happen to every human being in this room if you came through? I’m not asking you to; I’m not counting on it. I’m just saying that this is where you can stop executing yourself before life has a chance to refute the thesis which is unconsciously there: ‘I am not alive.’”

Spencer had been listening, but I could see the fear in his eyes, drooping in circles and haunting his whole face as he spoke, “When you’re talking, Justin, I still experience some kind of emotional...reality of just wanting to touch the...fabric or just sense what it is that you are asking. I look at the faces here and I see feelings coming out, even though I can’t delineate what they are, but there’s sorrow, there’s hurt.... How do I read the messages?”

“How do you read the messages?” It’s right there...!”

“How?” asked Spencer helplessly.

“That word,” Justin replied, “is the first I’ve ever heard you speak since I’ve known you. You said, ‘How?’ and life caught you. Life is so big, so complex. Doesn’t anybody have any idea what is going on here? A human being is being fooled, absolutely taken by the negative intelligence.”

“Spencer.” It was Janine. I was amazed that this shy woman who couldn’t organize her house and fretted about whether to dress Celia in pink or white was now saying, “I don’t know you, but it seems you always have a choice whether or not

to analyze. Couldn't you just drop that? Doesn't life ever just flow, knock you over? Quit holding the reins."

"That won't help you, Spencer," Roland announced.  
"You must..."

Justin cut Roland off. "There's a profound ambivalence in Spence about whether he really wants to go for this. I don't know how conscious it is, but he's very much not wanting to go on with this, even if it denies his real intension. He's freaked out about this whole thing, actually." Justin had moved to the back of the hall, where he was leaning against the wooden doors. "You know, everybody, it still comes down to this microphone experience. This is the way that somebody breaks. We may stop these World Teacher Seminars, but it still will be a group of people and God and this microphone and we'll never be able to get around it. How else is Spencer going to come through? With gentleness and sweetness?"

"Spencer." It was the German, trilling his 'r's. "You haf zeen utther confrontations, rrright?"

"That's the question, right there!" announced Justin.

Nadine, as tough as anyone at times, took the mike: "You can't put this situation in a box and say you'll take a look at it later. You've got to deal with it now. You've got to feel your pain. I see it in you. Is there a pain? Is....?"

"Hold it, stop," commanded the World Teacher. "Ask that question again."

"Is there a pain?"

"There's a sorrow," Spencer said as if he were age nine.

I saw Justin mouth the words, "There's nothing."

"Spence, Spence!" It was Rhonda, his wife, now asking, "What do you want here? I think you've got to want it more. I want to feel you wanting something. You know you could give birth to yourself, and giving birth isn't easy. Why don't you push? Jesus, why don't you do something?" She was frantic.

“But what do I push on? I mean, you tell me you want to hear things and I want to, I want...”

“Justin said that somewhere you’ve just given up—I’ve had a sense of that most of our married life, that I didn’t really know what my place was with you...”

“Spence, how will you ever again take your wife in your arms?” Justin asked mournfully. “If I were a woman and feeling that void in you, it would prevent me from experiencing that you could give to me what I was entitled to as the woman you loved.”

Spencer just gazed out, but it wasn’t at Rhonda.

Justin shouted, “If there’s one person in this room who’s lazy, who’s not giving, I just know that God won’t allow anything to happen!”

I thought, Thank God that Brandon’s parents had left after the Friday night introduction. Others had gone, a dozen or so. Maybe that’s why Justin could be so much more direct now. Roland had said how Justin had to compute the presence of everyone in whatever room he walked into—that such computations determined the range of his behavior.

With Spencer’s hands in his back pockets, his tweed sport coat flared out like a tail, Justin asked, “Do you really want to stay up there? What if somebody said, ‘I think it’s a lot better now, Spence.’ What if somebody said that you’d broken through? I mean, do you have any inner locus, any way of telling if you actually feel better? I don’t feel you have anything hanging on the outcome here.” And as Spence nodded and took off his jacket, letting it slump to the stage, Justin added, “Your suppressed agony is like ice made of dust.”

Then came what I sensed was the lowering of the boom: “Somewhere I feel, Spence, that you are surviving and that there is consolation. Somewhere you’re actually aware that the extent you’re enthusiastic about Justin Snow and his ideas is the extent



to which you've absolutely given up. And you're aware of that! It's like a meal—you sit down and refuse to put anything on your plate. You're just miming at the feast of life, taking nothing into your mouth at all. And you know it!

“And yet, I know nothing like this ever gets arranged just because somebody's got a problem. It gets arranged because life can no longer tolerate this. Creation wants a change, *we* want a change, Rhonda *desperately* wants a change. Your soul, paralyzed in the agony of your capitulation, to this murmurs, ‘Can I? I want this.’ But you're an empty crabfish at this moment, Spence.”

Janine spoke up beside me, “Spencer, I just want you to close your eyes now, turn off your brain and give me three sentences that begin with, ‘I feel’ and tell us what you're feeling right now.”

Justin wryly smiled as Janine softly said, “Close your eyes.”

Spencer, eyes closed, began, “I feel...empty.”

“Good,” offered Janine. “Close your eyes again and...”

Justin interrupted, “We have to be very careful that we resist the temptation to put life into any technique. I sense, Janine, that Spence is getting ready to go down your road. You have to discover everything in the moment—or it's no good. The demonic's not afraid of methodology, only of the unknown. That's where God's intelligence can surprise us, and Spence.

“I feel a pain,” Spence said, searchingly but without depth.

“God, how can a human being stand this?” Justin asked, shaking his head.

“Spence, what are you living your life for?”

It was Nadine and Justin clapped his hands. She went on: “Where will you be in a year or five or ten? What will your marriage to Rhonda be like?”

“I don’t know,” the man at the mike said crisply.

“Let it go in,” Justin coached. “One truism is that you’ve got to let what is coming to you go in.” Then he told us, “This poor creature’s not even thinking he can do anything about it or that anything can happen. We have to take out our knives and cut. And we have to give. How will you feel as a group if we let him walk out of here like this? This is an extremely successful human being professionally. Very competent. He’s gained the admiration and respect of all his colleagues, a man of utter....”

“So what good is it?” Spence blurted out.

Justin was stunned. It was one of those moments I had come to know well, when he stops and lowers his eyes in silence, a silence worse than scraping fingernails on a blackboard. “You know, you implied that you agree with what I was saying. Yet your clichéd agreement totally robbed me of what I was trying to give you.” Turning to us, “Do you all see how intelligent the demonic is, how it uses even what is noble to pervert? Or,” turning back to the man he now called ‘an un-poetic King Lear,’ “was it your conscious intention to stop me, to deplete my power, Spence?”

“I actually feel that we’ve said everything we can say, that there’s nothing more we can offer you. It’s up to you, Spence.”

“Thank you, Nadine.” Justin said.

The silence lasted a full minute before Rhonda called out, “Spencer, what’s happening is that your death wish is coming true!”

“What’s that again, Rhonda?” Justin asked.

“That Spence’s had a fatalistic death wish almost the whole time I’ve known him.” Her voice was shaking.

“I tell you, that’s the most unbelievable statement of the day,” Justin moaned.

“All our married life, Justin, Spencer’s anticipated something horrible happening to our marriage,” she cried. “All he’s done, whatever support he gives me, is all because he feels he has no more life to live. ‘I’ve lived my life,’ he said when we married. I told him what that meant to me was that I had no real place, except to be taken care of. It’s not what I wanted, Spence! I wanted to share my life with you. Think about the letters your daughter’s written you recently, begging to share your soul. Everybody just wants you to express who *you* are, not live your life for *other* people. You’re not even feeling responsible to what everyone here is pouring out to you.”

“That’s for sure. Everyone here is 20,000 times more invested in this process....” But Justin was cut off.

“I just don’t know what to do, Ronnie,” her husband said, like a child pulling out his pockets to show he has no money.

“Then, you might as well just go out and stand in front of a car!” she lamented. While she was crying, her husband paced the stage again, grumbling, “There are no options.”

Brandon said something, and even the taciturn Adam made a bid at clarity, but Justin cut them off: “You guys are getting trapped! There’s an intelligence here in this room and in Spence’s soul that is gripping us in suffocation. Why do you guys put up with it?”

Brandon went a bit white, as Roland said, “It’s defiance. And this is the proof of it. You know it, Spence—so seemingly helpless—that it’s just violence.”

Justin whistled. “Were hitting his demon. Finally.”

“There’s no pain,” called Brandon, trying again, not bothering with a mike.

“There’s a lot of pain!” whined the confrontee angrily.

“Well, I’m so sorry for trying to help,” mocked the dark-haired young businessman.

“Shit, everything I say comes out wrong!” Spencer snapped.

“So, we’re to feel sorry for you?” It was Adam. “Stop feeling so damned sorry for yourself.”

Justin was waving his arms wildly. “There’s a brilliant intelligence are work that’s keeping life from happening...and your lives are being wiped out as well. You’ve got to go under his responses.”

I wondered if Justin were letting this thing go on mainly to educate us by giving us a direct experience of the demonic.

“You’re wounding us, Spence. And wounding the heart of the Personal God.” It was Lydia’s soft voice rising. She spoke like a still lake. “If you wanted to feel, you would. It’s not an intellectual endeavor.”

“It’s a classic situation. Everyone here is trying to help free the soul of someone who has not only given up but is also thwarting every one of our attempts. You’re getting caught up in the idea that this person’s doing his best, that he’s just crippled...but in actual fact he’s working against us in a brilliant way—one step beyond whatever’s being aimed at him. I could do this whole thing, but I’m trying to teach you to develop the insight and moves that outwit the demon, because in one sense the demonic is stupid. It commits itself. If Spencer would see that and make one move away from that pattern, the whole universe would change. But he won’t and we’ve got to go in with heavy artillery. And we will give everything to Spence—unless he is being conscious in his refusal.”

“I feel that this is the funeral of Spencer Cox and the nails are going into his coffin lid and we’re saying, ‘You’re dead’ and he’s saying, ‘They’re right.’”

Justin corrected Roland, “No, he’s saying, ‘Could be. I’m doing my best here.’”

Roland laughed, adding. “But where’s the scream? I mean, you’re being *buried!*”

“You don’t believe that, do you, Spencer?” Lydia quipped softly. “Justin and Roland are just making up these scenarios that could never really happen.”

“Now, you see,” said the World Teacher, “when Lydia just spoke, a creative vibration was initiated that the demonic intelligence can’t appropriate. There’s so much more creativity in the air, because the demon feels this unknown intelligence and can’t figure out what to do with it.”

“Am I figuring it out?” Spencer asked.

Justin stopped. I could feel the ante going up. He rubbed his chin. “You know, Spencer, I’m beginning to question your innocence in all this. Each time the demon is pinned, it crawls out and goes to a subtler, quicker, vaster, more insidious layer of intelligence. Be careful. Be very careful, Spence.” The last sentence, thrown like a spear, was said as if Justin knew that the demon knew that Justin would die before he would let his thrusts be finally parried. It was the first time that I sensed the full display of Justin’s power.

Spencer’s pacing stopped. But his hands fiddled in his trouser pockets.

“The whole world is caught. This is the true battlefield.” Justin moved toward the man at the mike. “Why do you make those completely arbitrary body movements? It’s the demon having a field day in your body. You were once in your mother’s womb, a child who came out of her womb, naked, a child who played and loved and fought and...were hurt. And, Spence, you’ve become a demon.”

Spencer’s face seemed not to change at this stunning accusation.

Justin added, “I don’t mean that you are a demon, but you’ve allowed.... But you’re computing all this, aren’t you,

Spence? You know what it always comes down to? This is life”—Justin blew his cheeks out—“and a great struggle. Somewhere, this soul has to say”—and Justin became like a child—“Maybe I could; is there really a chance? Could I?” And in his regular voice he asked, “What time is it, Eva? Nine thirty? We have to be out by ten.”

I felt sure this was a ploy to get Spencer to make a move. I couldn't imagine Justin leaving this man in such a state.

The World Teacher took a step toward Spencer with each phrase: “Spence. Come on, now. Please.” His arms were outstretched, and inside I was outstretched, begging Spencer to do something, begging God for this man's freedom.

“So, Spence, what is your decision? What is your decision, Spencer Cox?” the Justin asked, looking out at us, as if transfixed, the formality terrifying me.

The man at the mike, in the beginnings of tears, said, “I don't know.”

Justin tried to fan these embers: “Hiie, dabbadaie? Yieehabajacka haiiiiie!”

Spencer dropped, pounding his fists on the floor.

“Nope, melodrama,” came the official adjudication. “You've got to let it go in stages, Spence. You've got to just find it. You can't suddenly have it all, but you can say 'no' to the absoluteness with which it's governing you.”

Loosening his time, Spence just sat on the stage, where Justin whispered soothingly, “I stand in a kind of absolute, too, Spence.”

Spencer got up quickly, brushed his slacks and stood in as much strength as he could muster. With Rhonda's eyes closed in prayer, Justin said, “Spencer, obey me. Jump up and down twice. Come on! Fast! Jump now!”

I couldn't believe it, but Spencer didn't. Justin said soberly, "Spencer, your demon's trying with every breath to keep you from obeying, to keep you as you've always known yourself. If you jump, you'll feel 10,000 times better."

Yet again, Spencer did not obey, and as Justin said, "Do you see, everyone, this man won't jump or roll over or suck his thumb or say 'yippee!'—not if his life depended on it, which it does," the old-timer of The Context straightened his tie.

Justin suddenly stopped, staring at the person before him. "Have you been stringing us along, Spencie, m'boy?" The World Teacher was crouching, asking without looking at the man at the mike, "You look strong all of a sudden, Spence. Was that strength behind your production up here all the time? Are you trying to pull down what I'm working to create? Eh, Spence? Eh, Spencie baibie!" Justin shouted, then softly said, "Can't fool me, ya know; sooner or later you'll be found out."

With Spencer looking down again, Justin asked, "Eva, what's your experience?"

I watched the dark-haired Eva softly take the mike Lydia handed her. Having said nothing the whole time, she now spoke clearly in that unmistakable voice that felt to me like the most luxuriant moss, fields on fields of moss: "What is your intention in this moment, Spencer?"

"To be myself," he said with strength in his voice.

"Maybe you could tell us where this confidence in your voice is coming from. Are you ready to face your hollowness?" Eva asked, her sexy yet chaste voice melodically suggesting compassion, even in these most difficult circumstances.

"I, um, I don't feel hollow."

"But what changed that for you?"

"I decided not to..." Spencer was looking away from Eva, who interrupted him before he could botch his response anymore.

“Justin, the feeling in this room has been suffocating. I can’t find my power or feel that anything authentic has happened to Spencer. I think he is no longer ambivalent, that he’s made a decision.” Her voice was still without anger, only sorrow over the tragedy.

Justin smiled at this woman, looked at her openly with love. Folding his arms, he turned to the man standing on the stage: “Is that right?”

Arms folded, the man said, “I do feel stronger now....”

“Shut up!” Justin shouted. “You’ve decided to stab each one of us in the heart because you’ve realized you don’t have one. You’ve bought the biggest lie in the universe and now that lie has descended on us all!”

“Justin.” It was Adam. “I agree that this man, whom I considered my friend, has sold his soul and is taking absolutely no responsibility. In the military, these sorts are called traitors. And they’re shot.”

“Instead, we’re the ones getting shot. Well, you can’t *make* a person be good,” Justin noted, looking at Spencer, strength gone, his unshaven face in his collar. “If any of you think his strength is waning in this posture of helplessness, let me tell you that it’s only increasing. So, you folks can take this, but this man has sold out.”

And with that, Justin walked off the stage. He removed his lapel mike and spoke into it by the rear exit, nearly all of us out of our seats to watch the World Teacher as he said, “You know, the battlefield creates the closest friends.” He looked long and hard at each of us, sharing his strength, before concluding, “Tragedy is more ennobling than victory.”

I felt enormously solid and energized as Justin lay the mike on a back-row seat and walked out. Eva, Lydia and Roland followed.



Spencer was left of the stage. Rhonda, still in her seat, looked at him in hopeless disbelief. As I walked out the large oak doors, I looked back to see her approach her still-standing husband, look at him on the stage for an excruciating minute. Then she turned and walked out. She passed stone-faced by me. Spencer had not looked at her, but now put on his overcoat, his face expressionless, leaving the corpse of his tweed sport coat under the great chandeliers.

The night air was cool. Stars fluttered in the campus trees. It was good to be outdoors, which had been far more glorious after Kerry's confrontation. Now there was only cold beauty. I said a silent prayer that Spencer, whatever he would do after losing his dignity and his wife, would not try suicide.

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The next morning, the last session, found Justin in a wonderful mood, kidding with Eva, Roland and Adam. He manifested Aphrodite for Nadine, whose thin and sober countenance brightened and grew more supple. He manifested Hercules for Jason, who already looked the part, Plato for Tobin, and Alexander the Great for the handsome Brandon, whose parents had not returned. I assume he was thankful for that. His wife Anna, one of British Columbia's finest physiotherapists, requested Hippocrates.

The seminar ended, after poetry and stunning humor, with an emblematic gem, that later, when someone would ask me about the World Teacher Seminar, I would often share. A blond young man, a former M.I.U. student named Ian, came to the mike. He was enthusiastic, interested in karate, bright, energetic, but stiff and simply not catching on. But the way he was not catching on had us all in stitches. In clumsy naïvete, he was throwing Justin line after line. No straightman could have done better.

When Justin asked, “How many understand what’s going on here?” we all raised our hands, all of us save Ian, whose frustration was mounting. Lydia worked with him; even Eva got into the game. Justin liked Ian. We all did. While he would go on to be a regular, at this point he could not grasp the knack of spontaneity no matter how Justin tried to foil his Saskatchewan linearity. Ian, while as sincere as they come, couldn’t even get confused properly. Finally, the World Teacher suggested something to bring this confrontation to finality: a shootout.

“Stand back to back with me. We’ll walk ten paces, turn and fire.”

So they did, Justin counting the steps: “One, two, three...” as they stepped further from each other...and at “Ten!” Ian turned, drew his right hand to shoot, while Justin simultaneously turned, kneeled, and extended both hands, forming not a gun but the gesture of prayer. The room fell into hush. Ian’s right hand, still in the shape of a gun, shook and fell limp, his face confounded by Justin’s unexpected gesture of total compassion.

The blond man could say nothing. Justin simply ended it, telling us all that the seminar was over. Ian just stood there on stage. Then he very slowly, as if in a daze, walked back toward his seat. Eva intercepted him, softly telling Ian not to analyze his experience. I went over to him and somehow ended up holding him while he cried, big long sobs that washed both of us. We sat silently for fifteen minutes.

When I moved toward the oak doors, I met Duffy, a Victoria theatre student. Justin had changed his name, as he had others’, to enhance personal growth. Duffy, very friendly, the slight deformation at one corner of his mouth making for a seeming smirk and adding to his jocularly, said hello. We spoke about theatre and T.S. Eliot’s poetry. Perceiving some

timidity or fear in my eyes, suddenly, at the exact moment when my voice faltered ever so slightly, this new affable friend gave me a mock punch to my solar plexus. Amazingly, glowing warmth spread noticeably through my belly and up into my chest. Duffy just smiled knowingly.

I walked out into the bright day, wondering yet again where these people learned such tricks. Duffy wasn't even in the inner circle.

I couldn't think any more, wanting to merely stand in the sunshine. Soon I would be leaving Victoria. My trip had been like writing a huge term paper, one I would never have begun had I known all that would be involved. But here I was. The long ordeal seemingly over, I was beginning to feel expansive.

Justin slowly wheeled by the Seminary in his gold Renault coupe. Lydia drove, Eva in the front seat. The World Teacher waved from the backseat to most of his friends. I wanted him to wave to me, maybe say something as he did to several others. He never looked my way.

But I was far enough along to realize that Justin would never give in to petty, self-centered neediness. More than this, I was coming to understand the depth of tragedy. An optimist all my adult life, during this weekend I had been shielded or had shielded myself from the rawness of the human condition.

Outside in the summer heat, part of me drifted back again to the slant light beneath the great gothic lamps hanging on their chains where Spencer, tie askew and sweaty blue shirt unbuttoned, stood at the microphone on that wooden stage, his coat about his ankles, alone, staring out into an empty hall.

## CHAPTER 4: HOW CLOSE TO THE FLAME?

I could almost see the azaleas growing, their hot pink and white clusters in various stages of explosion outside Annapurna, so that one snip of the scissors meant a lavish centerpiece. I was soon about to return to an ordinary life, but wanted to return enough that I had made some calls to find out how it would be possible to live in Canada.

The regulars were all on Piers Island, where Justin was purifying and fasting in silence the day after the seminar. I had heard Eva speak of the black bile that he often expectorated during his silences, testifying to the deep negativity he would take on.

“It was agony,” she had told me..

With everyone up-island, it was my chance to look into the many bedrooms, to sniff out the ambience of the Personal in each of the Annapurnan’s personal space. I found each décor to be a statement of uncluttered tastefulness, as if the residents had studied interior design. Even the beds of plywood on cinderblocks, covered with an unwrinkled blanket and smoothed pillow, confirmed a well-schooled aesthetic, minimal with an understatedly taut energy. Not one room failed to prominently display at least one picture of Maharishi and another of Justin.

Frankly, I was glad to have the others away. I walked through Annapurna, imagining what it was like a month ago on the day when the World Teacher had met in the front room with the parents of his Victoria friends. They had gathered to hear Justin’s explanations of his self-proclaimed stature. Legs crossed and uncrossed and crossed again on the oriental blue rug in the packed room, as Eva had entered to say that Justin, an hour late, would be in soon. A tape was to be made—as was the case whenever Justin spoke—and someone was always with

him in that capacity—for Justin was significantly lacking in mechanical skills, his one seeming area of deficiency—and also to give support, usually silently, then afterwards to share the experience with those not attending. Sharing experiences was what the fortunate people who lived here did much of the time.

When Justin finally presented himself, he sidestepped nothing but entered right into the heart of the matter. He graciously welcomed ‘this fortunate assembly,’ hinting at how lucky they were to have such sons and daughters, then caught his guests off-guard by saying he was amazed that they would come ‘to listen to such a crackpot.’

Masterfully deflating the tension in the room, Justin acknowledged their concerns, built up over the past seven years, then walked with deft charm precisely around all their hostilities. He strolled so close to the boundaries he perceived in each person as to seem to collide, but never touched anything that would be threatening. He seemed the paragon of poise, yet managed to keep the parents’ attention lively while he explained that ‘World Teacher’ merely meant the ability to determine the positive and negative tendencies in any experience, person or world event.

“This is something,” said the World Teacher, “that I’ve been gifted with as a result of a revelatory period while climbing in the Swiss Alps. What I want is to share myself so that your offspring will also become world teachers—able to assist their fellow men by unraveling the confusion of modern society in political squabbles or conflicts of any kind, from international to interpersonal. These are the finest friends that anyone has ever had.”

Having spoken for forty minutes, he then asked for questions, thanked them all and left, while Eva and Lydia served tea and scones, followed by small cakes with dainty blue and green icings. Everyone had seemed satisfied, even Mr.

Rivers, Jason and Tobin's father, who once allegedly had threatened to come after Justin with a gun.

Eva's version was that Justin had held them in the palm of his hand, caressed their secret wounds and lifted them into the clear air where they could breathe easily. After comparing Justin to St. Thomas More, she called him 'a man for all seasons' who could have convinced Henry VIII and all England that their lusty king should stay Catholic. Eva had indicated to her friends that their parents could now begin to grow wings, even fly.

My solitude was interrupted by Klaus phoning to say that the camping trip had been rained out and Justin was returning to work on his latest book, a philosophical work about the universe's justification for God's resistance to Himself.

The next day Roland picked me up and we arrived at Sunnyside to do some gardening. Furious typing—the fastest I had ever heard—poured like a silver mist through Justin's second-floor window. He was said to have written his entire 'children's book for adults' in 45 minutes—typed with no mistakes. This is the book he had sent to me, an act that had resulted in my current visit to Victoria.

I had written Justin challenging letters that he had answered voluminously. His responses had fascinated me with the intensity of his heart, especially when he had included his letters to various Annapurnans and to Maharishi. Justin had spoken of a love grand enough to be called mythic. I had no idea then that people looked, at times for hours, into each other's eyes, on one occasion falling over backwards because the bliss was too strong.

Of course, I still felt somewhat uncomfortable with the Annapurnans whose talents, strong yet defying categorization, continue to mystify me. I could hardly believe that seven years from now I could be working at such a level. Some of what

they told me I still found hard to believe. According to Tobin, Justin's chief editor, a comma could be all-important in a Snow letter. With even punctuation was lifted to almost cosmic import, no wonder that editing Justin's most recent book had been intellectually exciting enough that rarified philosophical energies Justin and Tobin had generated left a glow visible in Sunnyside's kitchen where they had been working, a comment, because it came from the sultry Eva, that amazed me all the more, since it stood for an intimacy that even she did not share with the World Teacher.

With Justin home and writing, Annapurna was suddenly buzzing with proofreading, cleaning, phone calls. I heard one complain, but witnessed Mary and Holly dropping other projects to send Justin's articles, open letters and manuscripts to a mailing list of thousands, at significant expense. The names of heads of state, scholars, publishers, entertainers and friends had been carefully researched and constantly updated over the past four years. During that time period, Justin had written over 2,000 letters. The products of each day were displayed in a three-ring notebook on an ornate table in the foyer. I watched small lines form when a new addition was rushed in by Roland or Lydia.

It was in the library suite that the call came from Dawson Creek. To earn money for university, Kerry had joined Dolores, a long-time friend of Justin's, to fight fires in the northern forests of British Columbia. Kerry had gone directly there after the seminar. I was totally stunned to hear from Roland that both had died this morning, caught in a ring of fire. The helicopters could not reach them in time. The way that Nadine made her report exhibited the depth of The Context, and it was a task to adequately take in her account as it rippled through her face and flashed in her eyes.

When Justin heard, he immediately phoned Klaus to bring a video camera to Sunnyside. There the World Teacher pronounced for Dolores, his friend of several years, and Kerry, his newest mate, a eulogy deep enough and so powerfully raw that I was at first not allowed to see it. "You cannot imagine Justin's abyss of sorrow, how unabashedly naked he showed himself to be, Bill," Roland had communicated an hour after I learned of Kerry's sudden passing. "I think that is a Justin you are not yet ready to meet."

But late that night, with a nod from Roland, I was permitted to sit down to witness Justin, poetically charged with the moment of death, frightening in the turgid and darkly passionate aspects of himself that he revealed. His face was shadowy and unhandsome as he read the poem he had just written for his friends no longer in the beauty of their bodies, an oration of martyrdom. Without an iota of sentimentality in the harsh glare of spotlights, his eyes often close to the camera, he pulled back the veils of their deaths, how they had sacrificed themselves so that the whole community of those seeking the Highest would be purified.

From the moment that Nadine had brought me news of the deaths, her words cracking through thin lips, her sad almond eyes tearfully red, the day was tensely silent. After I had seen the videotape, Roland said how fortunate I was to have witnessed Justin's passion. I wasn't sure that I was pure or human enough to assimilate what had been let loose in the privacy of Justin's living room, with only Klaus as actual witness.

Was all the world's suffering to be felt appropriately like this? I was fearing it too much to feel, when Tobin handed me Justin's newest pamphlet on the World Teacher Seminar. Of the dozens and dozens of aphorisms, these three stuck with me:



*The World Teacher Seminar is that which takes up everything once one finds out what is keeping one from knowing what it is.*

*The World Teacher Seminar is the pure opposite from what everyone unconsciously assumes is reality.*

*The World Teacher Seminar is the experience of being forced to realize that it extinguishes all previous notions of reality, that everything must be given up in order to enjoy its eternally replenishing creativity and aesthetic joy.*

I thought, if I could find out who Justin was, that I might better understand who I was—and why I'd been with him on the mountain. Likely, no one else in history had been the sole observer of the actual event of enlightenment. I had to know.

The next day on the blue oriental rug of the front room, I finally asked Mary, "Who is Justin?"

The large-boned woman pushed strands of long blond hair behind one ear to look at me through her bluish eyes as though it was absurd to expect an answer, before her sweet, "You're so innocent, Bill."

I asked Duffy, who visited Annapurna almost daily, because I felt more comfortable with him. He wasn't in the inner circle, and I hoped for a simpler, meatier response. We strolled around the irregular block and, on a corner by the local flower shop, he said that none of them knew, that they saw only aspects, that the whole was unknown. He reminded me of a poem by Wallace Stevens, not knowing it was one of my favorites, called "The Snow Man." "Justin is the Snow Man?" I asked, receiving only raised eyebrows from the affable theatre student. Suddenly it hit me that Justin's press, which self-published all his books, was called Snow Man Press—that he was, indeed, the Snow Man,

...the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Back in the foyer of Annapurna, I suddenly remembered him running around the stage in Vancouver, pointing to his head and, like one of Shakespeare's fools, singing, "Sweet nothing, sweet nothing...."

Such reverie was interrupted by Lydia, saying I should get up to the second-floor meeting room, that Justin would see me after he met with Holly. This was evidently the last time for a few weeks that he would have time to see friends individually. Since I was leaving the next day, for me it would be my only opportunity, one both dreaded and longed for. To be in his energy was...well, the closer one came to Justin, the more rapid would be one's spiritual development. That's what I had heard. And, despite my doubts, I had to admit that it had been my experience, as well.

While waiting, my sweaty armpits in bodily anticipation of this approaching *tete-a-tete* testified to the many confrontations I had experienced in my short stay in the Garden City. Yet every hour had seemed like a day, every day like a week, and two weeks had augured a hole in any concept of time that I'd held. Yet, what poured through me were Justin saying in the financial meeting that I was innocent; Duffy, like a court jester, poking my stomach into light; the 'gunfight' between Ian and Justin; and my talk in porch light with Eva the night of my arrival. We had barely spoken since, and the angelic Lydia had been more like a mentor, as had Roland. It was they whom I most admired, and yet they were in their own ways aloof. But the days had been hectic, and now it was 9 PM. I had stayed on an extra two days in hopes of seeing Justin privately. But he had been working furiously on his book; then dealing the

Dawson Creek tragedy, and the preparing for the arrival of his daughter.

I had first met Dierdra via photograph. There seemed to be an almost a mythic quality in which the Annapurnans held her. Justin's daughter! Even at thirteen, the photo of her hanging gaily out an Annapurna window revealed an almost nameless freedom. There were no photos of her and Justin together. She was his only offspring of a second marriage that had ended in divorce. Holly had mentioned that Justin considered his former wife to be crazy. Everyone near him understood the marriage had happened to produce Dierdra and that the divorce had freed Justin to do his lifework, which transcended all cultural notions of marriage. Besides, he had been in ignorance then. Yet, it was a pity that he had been denied custody because of that Piers Island knife incident. He had, in fact, not been allowed to see Dierdra until a month ago, when the photo I saw had been taken. This was their second meeting, and word went around that Dierdra might move to Sunnyside—or at least to Annapurna. “Even Dierdra has a demon,” Holly had told me, meaning that Justin's daughter, amazing as she might be, was not pure enough to live at Sunnyside with the World Teacher.

I had briefly met Justin's daughter the day before, surprised to find a young woman full of radiance and poise, uniquely polite. She lived far beyond her years, as I imagined a Juliet or Ophelia. Her slightly punkish haircut disturbed a classic sweetness. I did not resist the startling reservoir of her eyes. We became instant friends. I saw her only once more, walking with Angelica, daughter of Eva and Roland, who, though lacking the dramatic beauty of her dark-eyed mother, was charming and mature for a girl of ten. Watching the two walk off arm in arm in the shade of Annapurna pines, I was pleasantly startled to see these two, three years apart, enjoy such

closeness. Yet they had only each other, I realized. Who outside Justin's friends would understand confrontation, pure feeling, acoustics, the Personal? What must it have been like to grow up in their tender years in The Context? I could not imagine what the future would hold for these two lovely pioneers.

I waited till even I, knowing the price it often costs to be around an enlightened man, got antsy. I was dozing when, just after 1 AM, Lydia, fresh as ever, ushered me in. The room was small, with part of the ceiling slanted where an outdoor stairway led to the peak of the roof. I hadn't even known this room existed. Lydia crouched in a far corner and meditated while I sat on the floor in front of the day bed where Justin sat cross-legged, wearing a sweater of pale gray cashmere. Under that I glimpsed perhaps the edge of a silk undershirt. I had heard that silk protected against stress. Justin looked tired, and it pained me to be in any way contributing to his fatigue. Eva had wanted him to take a long silence.

I had heard from Nadine earlier that day that Eva had told her, "You can't believe the difference between the way his face, so pure and charged with the serenity of Piers Island, changes the minute I enter his cabin to bring him home. Right away my demon forces him to be engaged on some level I'm not aware of."

Of course, I wondered what my demon must be doing to him as he asked me questions. I had nearly finished his latest book on his final visit to Iran, which he had strongly suggested I read. I told the only western journalist to have met Ayotollah Khomeini, "The book is brilliant and clear, takes all the complexities of the Iranian revolution and does justice to the duty of living one's religion to the letter of its pure intent."

"Well said, William Howell, well said," came his first open compliment to me. He, in the same breath, mused that his

mother, who knew nothing of his enlightenment, thought this to be his most accessible and objective book. “Meeting Ayotollah, though we said nothing, was like being in the presence of an Old Testament prophet come to life. Despite the seeming horror permitted by the ruling regime, the Revolution is an event of mythical purity that the world must heed.”

We talked about the seminar, which of his friends I had come close to, and which manifestations had meant the most to me. While I didn’t ask him the many queries I had locked up inside, not knowing how to even formulate a question about the black square I had seen deep inside when Roland had confronted me on the blue couch, or my concern for Spencer, or what had happened when Duffy’s pseudo punch had enlivened my gut, or how he could have known what I was thinking that first day at the Seminar. But I did tell him that I wanted to come back and live here, which brought a faint but distinct smile. By the time we finished it was well past two in the morning. Such a grueling schedule, though Holly had told me, “We all fight fatigue and kill it every day. Yet when we’re tired, we’re more vulnerable.”

I had wanted, finally, to just talk to him as one friend to another. Of course, it never quite happened. Likely the Annapurnans, even after seven years, were not always comfortable talking to him. That was, in a strange way, his job—to keep everyone guessing and on-guard.

“Okay, Bill, watch the smutzies and grow strong in your beauty,” was his parting comment. I got up to leave by the narrow door. Yet, though I knew I was taking a chance, I had to say something more. In the doorway I looked back to see him sitting in lamplight on the low bed, his head slightly bowed, his face shadowed on the side toward me. The farewell I longed to offer came out in a half-whispered, “I love you, Justin.”

Stepping slowly away, I thought I heard, “Good, Bill,” but I saw or sensed that the figure outlined in light hadn’t turned, could even have fallen asleep.

In the driveway mid-morning after little sleep, I said my goodbyes. Up came Roland in uncharacteristic T-shirt and cutoffs to help Jason weed the rose bushes. I told him I was leaving.

“No one knows how to say goodbye properly,’ Justin says. Think we can get it right, Bill?” Roland asked gaily, playfully, his face full of this day’s brightness as he looked into my eyes. “Shamatazahai! Well, you have become beautiful. Bill. I can see none of your problem. Then, inspecting my eyes a second time, he added, “Or very little.” He wished me a good trip and, as he turned, I mentioned to him my desire to live in Victorias. Even perhaps in Annapurna, though this last phrase remained an addendum only in my mind.

Roland considered this, his eyes flashing in a way I was coming to understand. “It depends on how close to the flame you want to be. There are Victorians who have chosen not to live in Annapurna. They must prefer to be in the outer circles. Even some Annapurnans are closer than others.”

Then I was starting the car, moving as slowly as the bus that almost a decade before had left the Swiss hotel and taken Justin out of my life. Pine shade dappled my windshield. It was paradise here—the azaleas big as basketballs, the trees tossing cool images on the perfectly trimmed lawn, the sky made clearer by clusters of puffed-up clouds, the air fragrancd with the sea. Not wanting to leave, I managed to wave to Jason as the car edged through the narrow stone gate in the eight-foot brick wall and into a larger summertime. I felt large, strong. I thought again of Kerry, and of Spencer.

I was leaving with double vision. I knew I possessed the insight that revealed the hidden story of the cosmic drama going

on beneath the surface of even the most mundane human actions. Such insight was painful. But to be conscious of what virtually no one else knew was worth the long hard look into reality that I could not have avoided.

I had decided that being on the mountain with Justin meant something special, still nameless, but a path that, no matter how difficult, I would walk to the end.

Not understanding why anyone who really knew Justin would decide not to be as close to him as possible, I drove off new into the deep shade and brilliant sunlight of a new world.

**PART TWO:**

**INTO**

**THE UNKNOWN**

*...Once it struck me, what quality  
went to form a Man of Achievement....  
I mean Negative Capability...when  
a man is capable of being in uncertainties,  
mysteries, doubts, without any irritable  
reaching after fact and reason.*

—John Keats—



## CHAPTER 5: TAKING THE HEAT

I picked up the white receiver, excited to hear Sondra's voice, for she had decided to attend at the first week-long World Teacher Seminar and was calling from Fairfield.

"Sondra, how're the cornfields. And how's the course going?"

"Bill, it's incredible. There was a woman who was confronted all day yesterday and today and was found to be evil. But that's not why I'm calling. Justin knows that I was living in Vegas, too, so he asked me, 'Where's Bill?' I told him you were back in Las Vegas, didn't have the money to be here, and were showing my sister around town. All he said to me was, 'Just get him here. I can't give this course without him.'"

Life without Justin had not been boring back in the Nevada heat. It was not life without Justin—he was very much present. For I had entered The Context, that mysterious attitude shift that was now aware of Good and Evil in every event. Sondra and I, plus several others, had been getting together weekly to watch Justin Snow tapes, read from one or more of his books and see what wanted to happen. That generally meant confrontation. Sondra and I had caught onto tracking and, well, the results were often amazing. While my life away from Victoria was not satisfying, it was thrilling.

Now I was reeling with a jolt of glory and confusion. "Can't give the course without me?" I thought, instantly wondering how I could scrape up at least gas money. As I packed a knapsack and put some food together, a subtle fear shot through me to hear that such a cosmic possibility as evil had announced itself. Who was this woman? I shut it all off with practical concerns, for I had just been told to explain to Sondra's sister that I had been called away. "Great," I thought;

“she just arrived this morning and, well, sorry, Beth, but life is calling. Enjoy your stay in Vegas. Your sister sends her love.”

Sondra and I both knew where our priorities lay. So I borrowed \$20 from a friend, made apologies to a perplexed Beth, and sped off in my white VW bug, feeling strong and adventurous. Just over the border into Utah, I picked up a hitchhiker going to Des Moines. He couldn't drive, but said he had a sixth sense about cop cars. We barreled, except up hills, at twenty miles over the speed limit.

Eighteen hours later and five weeks since my first seminar, having driven straight through to this town of 10,000 with its tree-lined streets, I stood before the white doors of 'Ag. Hall' in the Fairfield fairgrounds, a place usually used for square dancing and county-fair exhibits to pick blue ribbon winners. Now the drama of humanity would be dancing on the stage and what would be exhibited I had no idea. I mean, that a woman had been found to be evil! Anything could happen here where the only prize was being authentic. I could only wonder what Justin's presence in Fairfield, home of Maharishi International University would do to the TM Movement. It was likely to be life's version of a plain's twister.

The glaring summer day with its passing cars and elm shade vanished into spotlights illuminating the blue backdrop behind a stage with its standard equipment: director's chair, table with flowers and poetry books and a picture of Maharishi, not to mention the two microphones. As I walked in, Justin was reading out of his booklet, "What is the World Teacher Seminar?"

*It is finding one's place within the Script.*

*It is touching the places where gods are conceived.*

*It is discovering the aesthetic of evil.*

*It is coming to know the profound mystery and vastness  
in the face of another human being.*

*It is feeling the power that built the cathedral  
at Chartres*

*It is....*

He closed the booklet with “Heyyyyyy! Janine. Hey, Janine! Janine, Janine, Janine. What’s ya gonna do, baby?” He sang and held each word, his voice filling the hall. He hadn’t chosen to welcome me, as I had hoped, but I supposed he hadn’t seen me through the stage lights.

At the microphone, Janine started to smile, trying to play off of the World Teacher’s exuberance, her eyes widening with a laugh under mousy brown hair that she had put up with attempted sophistication, not her long suit. “Well, I wanted to say....”

“Say, hey, Janine. Janine, Genie, come on out of that magical lamp. I’ve rubbed it and it’s time for you to show yourself. Come on, Genie.” Justin’s song lilted in the intense watery lights.

The Annapurnans were all there. They held the front row. I remembered Roland saying back in Victoria how their vibrations formed a barrier of comparative purity and protection for Justin.

“I wanted to say....”

“Hey, Janine, babeeee! You won’t get out of that lamp unless you shift into drive. Whatdya say, Jeeeeeeeeeeannie?”

Unnoticed, I sat in the back row. Maybe a hundred people populated the audience. Confrontation was under way, and I was concerned for Janine, who was a simple, good and lovely soul but who definitely needed to come out of her sentimental covering that doused her fire and kept her in the shallows. But there were no instructions, no textbook on how to do it—just the unknown, the gusto to be honest and the willingness to dive into mystery.

Janine tightened up in the waist, breathed in and shifted her feet closer together.

“I, I...”

“Yeah, Janine! Your tires are starting to hit gravel. Whatdya say, Little Miss Tuffet?”

“I, I...”

“Yeah, we got a big one on the line. It doesn’t like to be found out. And life a vast tuffet that won’t let you go back into that phony sugar stuff. No more of that assumed positivity that is positively unearned. Wanta taste saccharine all your life, Janine, my sweet?”

“No.” Then she stamped her foot: No!”

“Not so heavy on the second ‘No. You can’t get out of the slime by a fist fight. Kitchikitchi, Janine, my genie; kitchikitchikoo.”

“No,” she said resolutely. I could see the angry, hurt child in my friend.

“So, whatdygonna do? Come on, we haven’t got all morning. You’re just a piece of candy, aren’t you? Go get some candy out of your purse.”

Obediently, as flies buzzed in and out of the stage lights, she turned for the stage steps and her purse on a third-row seat, till Justin said, “Jesus!” and picked up a book of poetry, waiting for Janine to catch on.

She turned back to intone, “I wa...want...I want...” her mouth close to the mike like a singer’s in a rock concert.

“More Janis Joplin, less Julie Andrews,” kidded the World Teacher with a seriously gibe. “Here’s a good poem,” he announced, as if he had been reading all morning. I knew it to be “Easter, 1916” by Yeats, his eulogy for the heroes of the failed 1916 Irish revolution, ending with:

And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died?

I write it out in a verse—  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

Janine, of Irish decent, was in the ascent of weeping.  
“Whatdya want, Janine-poo. What’ll it be: Sugar and  
spice n’ everything nice?” Then he boomed a cannonball laugh.

“I, I..want...to be myself and....”

“Heyyyyyyyyyyaaa. Heyyyyyyyyyyaaa, heyyaaaaaaaaaaaa-  
ayayayaaa-ya.” These were grizzled and gritty chants turning  
high and shrill, each somehow pushing Janine down, down, till  
she knelt and bawled.

“Hey, Janine-o, come on, Janeeeeeen!” Justin shouted,  
thumbing through the book of poems, not looking at her, but  
keeping her tension level strong with “Hey, yeah!”

Janine had slowly risen. Then Justin got up, his white  
coat without collar flaring behind him as he approached her. He  
held out his hand, fingers flared, to her face, yelling, “Now rip  
off the mask. Rip it off!”—their eyes locking—“rip it off!”

She raised her hands to her forehead and pulled down, as  
if her skin were hardened makeup. Though she wore none, she  
was pulling off everything artificial inside, struggling to peel  
back the falseness, as his command continued, “Tear it off,  
Janine, till your eyes are real and your mouth is real and the  
eyes of your eyes can see and the face of your face is free, clear  
as sky in the summer of your tears.” Then he turned back to his  
director’s chair, tossing out, “Now sit down.”

He shouted at her again to take her seat and, as she  
slowly walked down the two stairs and sat on the end chair of

the third row, Justin told her that now her genie could be released and perform the service of her divine purpose.

The session was over. Justin looked at a note card, motioning to Klaus, who put on #21: *You were only waitin' for this moment to arrive. Blackbird fly, into the night...*”

With the Beatles flooding the space of Ag hall, I wanted to get caught up, the course being well into its third day. I went to ask Roland, who was wearing his tan suit and busy talking to Lydia. Wondering if I were in the right place inside myself to speak to him, I decided to look elsewhere.

“Evil!” I said as I looked into Sondra’s face. She was telling me about the woman from M.I.U. whom Justin had called ‘evil’. “She even admitted it earlier this morning,” my Vegas comrade added, mentioning Justin’s manifestations of Krishna and Socrates and Marie Antoinette, as well as how demonic he’d said the TM Movement was. But Sondra looked good, really good, like this seminar was giving her something.

For me to enter the seminar meant dealing with a lot of fear. Mainly about confrontation. What particularly unnerved me was the fact that the blows Justin delivered were always unexpected. Even those that I thought were obviously deserved were often not given. The next day, one woman—I wondered how she was surviving this seminar, so obvious was the sorrow she carried in her face—had not overcome her leaden way of talking after two hours at the mike, when finally Justin had her speak to us as if she were telling M.I.U. officials why a World Teacher Seminar was nothing other than Maharishi’s meditation in action. To me it seemed that she did little better, yet Justin had given her his blue sport coat, followed by audible ‘oooo’s’ from the Annapurnans, who had been with Justin thirty times longer than this poor woman now wearing the most valuable relic he had as yet passed on.

When a Julliard student arrived on the third-to-last day, I thought the young musician would soon be invited to the microphone. Anyone new entering an audience that Justin had been grooming for five days would definitely threaten the acoustics he had worked hard to create. But the sensitive Philippino told the World Teacher how he had heard about the seminar and of his decision not to attend—until he had read the section about devotion in Justin's book, *Enlightenment Is*. He drove all the way from New York City to be here.

Instead of confronting the young composer, Justin had him read that part of the book to us all. The student, in his early twenties, in his first time at the microphone, read with such heart and depth of feeling that he had to stop every few sentences, his voice choking in vulnerability.

That's when I broke. The young man's words echoing over the speaker system, his cracking voice stirring the funneling silence, his love in crescendo all thrust me inward into some void where I knew I was loveless. Suddenly, Handel's *Messiah* full blast throughout the hall choreographed the student's shaking body. His arms outstretched, Christ-like, the composer fell to his knees in the spotlight, bowed forward and then bent back, lost in devotion. Justin rose, looked at this young man exhausted in radiance and chose that dramatic moment to walk out the side entrance. In the hemorrhage of tears, I did not see the young devotee run out to follow the enlightened man. I wept for half an hour in the back row in gorgeous release.

I recalled when Roger Barranni, whom Justin had also known in Switzerland, had come to Las Vegas with new Justin Snow tapes some months ago. I knew that Roger, who lived in Seattle, had been to Victoria more than once. After watching the tapes, I had spoken to him about a persistent level of loneliness in myself. Our eyes had somehow connected in a

flash of recognition and the luminous comradeship of pain, resulting in tears I hadn't wept in years. It was that inexplicable power which, more than exchanging letters with Justin, that had sparked my Canadian sojourn.

Now I rose, my life slowed to where every movement and perception felt real. No longer was I looking for who I was. Wiped clean of guilt and uncertainty, I walked in the meaningful ease of every step. I could feel my shirt against my shoulders and back, my breath moving in and out. A car door closed and I felt it was just for me. Sun and August breezes on my skin had never felt like this. This first breakthrough was all the proof I needed about The Context—and that I could belong here. For years I had felt my heart was either pea-sized and pure or large and lethargic. Such restrictions of heart had, I knew, provided the caves where my demon lurked.

Over a cheese and avocado sandwich with friends half an hour later, I noted that my quiet ecstasy had nearly worn off. I didn't know what I could have done. I had tasted the freedom Justin had spoken of in so many ways, and I wanted more of that joyful yet empty sense of sweet solidity. It was as if I had become untied, the insecurity that had been with me throughout my life unknotted by the world expert of knots. There were doubtlessly more tangles, but I trusted Justin to undo each one.

That afternoon, the brother of the woman who had been called 'evil' came in with a reporter. Adam, who served as Justin's bodyguard, prevented their entrance. But the World Teacher, as if looking forward to this encounter, offered the two invaders a front-row seat. I was getting an eyeful of Justin's fearlessness, as the rest of us flocked around the edges of light, not unlike the atmosphere of a prize fight about to begin.

The brother seemed enormously articulate. I marveled how he held his ground, though he managed to answer none of Justin's probing questions. He kept on a lawyer-like track,



figuring maybe this tactic would make the most news. The reporter didn't speak, though Justin moved some charm his way now and then, along with directions to not print certain of the brother's inaccuracies.

Justin had others give their experience. Adam and Klaus testified that the woman had realized what Justin tried to do for her, consented to the process and even thanked him after the first session by giving him a flower.

"She said you hit her," the brother countered, pulling on his left ear, unbuttoning the stiff collar of his shiny silver shirt.

Justin explained that he hadn't, but that one of his friends had pushed her slightly before he could prevent it.

"But you're in charge here," the brother retorted, leering a smile, stroking his goatee, the dialogue playing out for an hour before the man's glib, "Thank you. My sister is going to sue."

"It's all on the videotape," Justin replied calmly, his eyes dancing as he winked at the reporter, the brother gritting his teeth. Once they had stepped out into sunlight, Justin talked about the brother's slimy polyester demon, and we all commented on the World Teacher's ability to handle danger as if it were his friend.

The next day the article was front page bottom in the Fairfield paper: "Injured Woman to Sue Seminar Leader." A 'spy' at M.I.U. came to the seminar to tell us that the woman had made a deal—that, because she had not been allowed to take an advanced meditation course due to her mental instability, M.I.U. was now going to permit her to take this course—if she pressed charges against Justin. The battle that would last years was on and none of us in Ag. Hall, including Justin, could predict where it would go.

Not until the final session of a week that had shown us heaven and hell (once again—yet in totally fresh revelations) did I finally sit in the front row. There, closer to Justin and his

energy and his scrutiny, I realized how much more intense the seminar was from this vantage point. None of the Annapurnans had ventured to the microphone, perhaps feeling the course to be for the Americans, but it seemed to me that everyone on the front row was participating in the ‘microphone energy.’

Now, with some former M.I.U. student from Chicago on stage in the hot spot, Justin suddenly veered from the light confrontational flow to talk about “World Teacher Seminar, Incorporated” and the scope he knew WTS had to achieve.

Though impressed, for me something far more important was happening. Without looking my way, Justin announced, “If anyone here wants to work for World Teacher Seminar, then see Roland sometime after this session.” I sat transfixed. I knew he was talking to me! I was on fire with this inner message, as Justin returned to the event at the mike, left the stage and crossed in front of the blue risers, heading my way.

My feet, I realized, were stretching well into the space between my front-row seat and the stage. Deciding not to move, seeing what would happen, I watched Justin walk toward my seat until he was half a pace distant. Turning toward the crowd, he inadvertently touched my right toe with his own. I felt his gesture, too delicate for anyone else to have noticed, had been intentional, intimate, precise, just outside any expectation I might have harbored. Here was confirmation!

Though Justin moved toward the other side of the hall, far distant in my metal fold-up chair I felt that he and I were brothers, fox-hole buddies. I spoke to Roland afterwards. He looked at me, nodded, and said he would speak to Justin.

That night, late, the course finished and I spoke with Justin. Sitting in his Victoria director’s chair, he said, “I think you should go back to Nevada. Just wait and see.”

Shocked, feeling still put off from the party, I had inside myself answered the call to adventure and yet was starting my

VW Bug and returning to the desert where temperatures hovered at 115. A seminar could get a lot hotter than that. Oh well, I thought, disappointed but still believing in the destiny that had begun on the mountain.

So I spent six months in which the only fascination was weekly get-togethers at the house of a couple who were also interested in Justin's work, evenings always ending in confrontation. Justin's knowledge had given me a faith in the process of tracking and a strength to not hold back when the negative intelligence started to dig in—to the point of once sitting on Sondra, who was blaming her family for her problems, which had me pounding on her back. Justin had said that such tactics never hurt a person when they were demonic. Though such approaches at times could seem cruel, we were all amazed at the breakthroughs that were achieved, at the searing and nourishing power that moved through one or more of us to help one another.

Finally, my self-employed business lost all fascination and I picked up the phone, called wintry Iowa and could feel my life shift with each ring.

Lydia answered. "Come to Fairfield? Certainly, Bill. We are waiting." Her voice was pristine snowfall as she spoke of the "Evenings with Justin" being held several nights a week in the living room of his modest house, as well as the weekend seminars twice a month. The university situation was explosive.

"Oh, Bill, you'll simply not believe the drama about to unfold here..." Her felicitous voice shared a simple invitation: "Just let me know when you'll be arriving." I felt like an unknown actor being offered a role on the big screen.

"Justin asked about you. Everything's draped with snow, and the drifts are deep."

## CHAPTER 6: HERITAGE

I had arrived. Working for World Teacher Seminar meant I was on the cutting edge of human development. On a saga of undetermined proportions, I felt like a pioneer. And yet I was nowhere. There was no solid ground around Justin Snow.

He was here because the M.I.U. situation held a seriousness and profundity he could not resist. The university, having checked license plates of vehicles outside the first World Teacher Seminar held here, had kicked the student owners of those vehicles out of school for associating with Justin Snow. He had written many letters to the *Fairfield Ledger* and to M.I.U. officials. Seeing that the stakes were high, Justin had simply moved, part time, to Fairfield, invited those close to him to come along, and bought a house on Sixth Street. Clearly, M.I.U. was afraid of the World Teacher.

The ‘Evenings with Justin’ were phenomenal. After a two-week grace period, it was during a such an event at Justin’s house that I finally sat in the front row, on Lydia’s suggestion that if I was going to work for World Teacher Seminar, I had better get used to being close to Justin. Roland was running an errand, so for the first time Justin called on me to say the invocation for the manifestations: “Justin, by the grace of God, will you manifest the essence of the performance and effect of...Beethoven as he was composing his Ninth Symphony.” Then everyone in the room watch intently, trying to take in as deeply as possible the truth and feeling of what he was manifesting.

Most of Justin’s methods for transformation did not reach me—for example, his chanting in such a way as to directly confront each person’s demon. Others reported feeling that their heads were coming off, while I sat in my chair and

wished that something would happen. I enjoyed the less threatening, less grandiose events, such as Justin's story of visiting Bellacoola, his grandfather's birthplace in British Columbia, and the village's eldest Indian, whom Justin imitated for us, throwing his hat to the ground and dancing around it in honor of his grandfather. I was weeping with laughter after that one, as well as appreciating Justin's colorful heritage, which in my own family was a blank spot. My dad had fought in no wars, and I had dimly recalled having met one of his two brothers. I took to Justin's manifestation of Popeye, the way his face became instantly distorted--uproarious. During his manifestation of a waterfall, I could actually see the power of its tumult rushing in Justin's face.

"Can anyone else in the world do this?" Justin asked after a particularly powerful manifestation. The question was rhetorical, the answer, we all knew, was all too obvious.

I still lived with terror around being confronted. I hadn't been at the microphone...yet. But toward the end of that weekend seminar, Justin asked me to comment on a confrontation that was underway at the mike, which I did. His rebuff—"Bill, you're not in the authenticity of experience—get real"—sent shockwaves of heat through my chest. After everyone else had left, Justin interrupted my folding the chairs with, "Bill, why don't you join Eva, Lydia, Roland and myself in the kitchen." I felt like having been summoned before the High Tribunal. There, in a circle of chairs, Justin asked how I enjoyed working for World Teacher Seminar. Though enthusiastic, my inner ambivalence about myself exuded a powerlessness that brought the silence that I knew meant confrontation.

It started with Eva's invitation: "We hoped you would spiritually complete our circle, Bill. You're being brought into a great heritage—of Maharishi and, before him, all the Masters

of the Holy Tradition down through the ages, uniting now with the individuating journey of the Personal. You must sense what beauty and what history surrounds you. Let this nobility sink down into you and make you one of us.”

It would not do to say that I simply felt outclassed. The confrontation was mild. But Justin had told me that I was not real, words conveying a deep condemnation, given my hope to be exactly that. The result stimulated a hopeless inadequacy. When finally, at 2 AM, Roland walked me back to the Broadway house ten blocks away, he told me that I was ‘the most terrified person’ he’d ever met and that he was amazed that Justin hadn’t confronted me before. The fact that it had been said in a kind, almost fatherly voice, made little difference, and I lay awake that night, thinking that Justin would send me away. Not vital to the functioning of WTS, I did whatever needed doing. I lived in a fear that went easily underground but could surface instantly, for example, when a few days later Justin asked me when I would face the horror of my life.

With no idea what I would do if I left Fairfield, I knew that I would definitely feel like a spiritual failure. I had had enough strikingly beautiful experiences that I could not entertain leaving this flat Iowa farm town. But that fact fed my self-remonstration—that, despite so many profound experiences and insights, I was still terrified.

The next day, I was asked to sit in on a session with Sondra, who had come from Las Vegas to Fairfield to be with Justin. But after two confrontations, and despite two nights where she had prayed from midnight until dawn, my attractive friend was not emerging out of her fashion-designer persona that rested on inner instability. This confrontation was going no better, except that Justin was not heavy with her, evidently knowing she was not going to stay.

‘What do you want to do, Sondra, really want to do?’

The naturally effervescent woman, in a light gray suit with fuchsia scarf, spoke of returning to Boston, of being with her parents and doing her fashion consulting there.

He half-turned to me, asking the same question, and I said, “Wanna be a truck driver, drive one of those big 18-wheelers.” Though my quip brought no response, yet I felt good about my first attempt at humor around the World Teacher. Now that it was clearly Sondra’s life on the line and not my own, I felt freer and rooted her on silently, having tried to help her over the past few days, but concluding that clearly she was not meant to be close to Justin.

Eva and Lydia completed the semi-circle in Justin’s living room that day. He frequently turned his attention from Sondra to joke with the two women and thereby keep the energy moving. I sat there amazed at the rapidity of their remarks, like a professional ping pong match in which the eye can barely keep up with the ball. As their cobra-mongoose quickness danced in pure wit, my brain literally swirled. I wondered if Eva and Lydia—it was almost as if they were speaking another language—were sorceresses. I stared at them, astounded by their alacrity.

In this magic, as I kept staring, I saw a sweet blue cloud just above and between the heads of the two lead Annapurnans. I couldn’t imagine what it was, except it somehow being a product of this subtle connection between them and Justin. I even rubbed my eyes, never having had anything that resembled a vision, but in this cloud I ‘saw’ lots of people, in black garb and tall pointed hats, sitting in a cave in a semi-circle around an elevated leader in similar dress. I was outside the gathering, looking in through metal bars, desperately wanting to be in that coterie, in that cave. Then this dream-like perception vanished.

I looked to Justin, to get some bearing, to see if he would indicate that he knew what my experience was, but he

had merely begun to again question Sondra. Yet, even without his confirmation, and as ethereal as that experience had been, I suddenly knew I was no longer outside. For the first time in my life, I felt like I belonged.

I was reminded of having picked up Lydia the week before at the Cedar Rapids airport, a 90-minute drive, shuttling being one of my functions. I saw her waiting for her bags and decided to silently approach and stand quietly next to her, unnoticed. Soon, I felt that I was standing in a sanctified space. After a minute's duration, she turned, saying with a heavenly smile, "Oh, there's an angel in my midst." Driving back to Fairfield we were in enchanted conversation, the content mainly about Sondra's problem. Lydia felt that I possessed great insight, enough so that she mentioned it to Justin later that day. Justin had, as I was cleaning his house, then said how delightful Lydia's connection had been with me. I had little knowledge of the facts of her life, only that my spiritual closeness to her outweighed whatever details I might learn. Justin's acknowledgement of that connection confirmed its purity. Was I glimpsing what it was like to be in the inner circle, something of the heritage that Eva wanted for me?

The intense feeling of belonging resulting seeing into the blue cloud lasted two days. I felt I was moving through a life that was being created for me just as I wanted it. My eyes were open. I wore the sunny Indian summer weather like a favorite shirt.

The day after that magic wore off, I drove Sondra to the airport. As she had left his living room on Sixth Street, Justin had told her, "Enlightenment means dropping everything, being so empty that you can hold a dozen paradoxes in your head at once, and then take even one more if God offers it to you." As we watched her get into my car, he told me, perceiving some connection between her and me, "Stay away from her, Bill." I



didn't question those intimate words, closeness to him being the important thing.

Justin frequently traveled between Fairfield and the rest of his jealous brood in Victoria. The next day I woke Eva and Lydia up at 5 AM, and they awakened Justin, for their flight just two hours later, which, by the time everyone was ready and packed, meant having to make the trip in an hour, which translated into averaging 90 mph, even on the back roads. Having two previous speeding tickets—precisely for getting people who waited until the last minute to their planes on time—I did not want to lose my license by getting a third. Yet I did what I was told. But at one point, my two hours of sleep pushed on my eyelids until I was veering into the lane of an oncoming 18-wheeler. At that moment, Eva, dreaming in the front seat, lifted her head to say, as if a pot on the stove were ready to bubble over, “Bill, watch out,” then went calmly back to sleep once I had made the correction. In the back seat, Justin never lifted his scrunched face from the pillow of his right palm. When he woke, we were on the divided highway that led to the airport, but it was already 6:40 and we had thirty miles left to catch their 7 AM flight. “Are you committed, Bill?” asked Justin, to which I hesitatingly said, “That means driving over a hundred.” When Justin didn't respond, I knew there was only one choice and I committed my foot to the floor. “Now we're getting somewhere!” the World Teacher happily announced, as we sped and passed one, then two police cars going the other way. But they took no notice and Justin caught his plane, saying, “Nice driving,” his hand on my shoulder. Yet I had almost gotten the World Teacher and all of us killed by one of those Mack trucks I had sarcastically said I wanted to drive.

Sensing myself dear to Justin made up for my general lack of ability to relate fully to his latest techniques of chanting and the ever-more inventive manifestations that he or the

Annapurnans would dream up. But, with him gone, the pressure was off, allowing me a more confident and even space. One of my duties was making a daily trip to the post office, which meant seeing a professor I knew or some student I once had taught three years before. I had enjoyed being on the faculty of ‘Guru U,’ and had made many connections during those two years after graduate school. But now I saw how restricted the atmosphere had been. It was not easy to tell those I would encounter about Justin, it being both an effort and a thrill to stand before such past friends, care for them and try to drive through their hatred of the infamous World Teacher—especially knowing they thought I was a lost soul. A lot of M.I.U. people said it was a shame about Bill Howell.

The president of M.I.U. had even contacted the TM headquarters in Switzerland to get Maharishi to make a definitive clarification. The gray-haired sage had replied, “A disciple always does the will of his Master.” M.I.U. officials took this as clear-cut denunciation. However, those of us in The Context understood that Maharishi had offered a cryptic reply to indicate that Justin, a true disciple, *was* doing his Master’s will.

Recently another ‘clarification’ had reportedly come from the sage’s lips:

“No one should follow him. He is a madman and a disgrace to Canada.” But again, this proved the model of ambiguity for those of us around Justin. We knew that Maharishi had once referred to himself as a madman, that Justin wanted no one to follow him but walk by his side, and that Canada needed its manmade edifice to be disgraced in order to find its authentic grace as a nation under God. We all laughed at how the M.I.U. community, people who were supposed to best understand Maharishi, completely misinterpreted the inner message of their beloved Guru. It came as no surprise when the Movement banned Justin Snow from the campus, further declaring that any

students wanting to attend M.I.U. must not engage in Snow's techniques or they would risk injuring their allegiance to Maharishi and his knowledge, which was the focus of the university's curriculum. Despite such threats, a number of students and other Fairfielders attended the intimate 'Evenings' at \$5 a person. The most recent M.I.U. valedictorian and his two best friends—the 'gang of three', as Justin called them—had become regulars. Justin told them they were to play an important part in the 'cosmic drama.'

Before I had been in Fairfield a month, Justin decided to escalate the drama with M.I.U. He hired an attorney, a keen, powerful man named Vance Price, whose logical highways, it was clear to me, would have to be re-routed to unpaved roads full of potholes and vistas. The Victorians were already reacting to the power and insensitivity of this one-time semi-pro basketball player who at St. John's College had organized a three-day protest takeover of the president's office. But Justin, taking daily walks with him, had him legally set up WTS, Inc. and engineer the lawsuit against M.I.U. Everyone in The Context knew 'Guru U' had acted fascistically in preventing students from exercising their curiosity, and therefore was no 'university' at all, especially since it violated the Constitution, thought itself immune from the law of the land, and prevented Justin's truly universal perspective from 'infecting the purity of the teaching,' meaning Maharishi's knowledge. "Horse manure," said Justin Snow, who was writing yet another open letters—this on a sarcastic, witty, challenging, scathing full-pager—to the *Fairfiled Ledger*. The whole community was buzzing, especially when it found out that Justin Snow was suing M.I.U. and Maharishi himself for \$43,000,000.

"Not for the money," Justin would say, "but to monetarily represent the scope of this drama between Good and Evil, and to involve Maharishi, who alone can bring resolution."

Between the lines was Justin's hope that his Master would be forced to publicly acknowledge the fact that he, the World Teacher, was indeed enlightened and doing his Master's will.

Tensions with M.I.U. made for exciting times. When Justin was gone, it was the only excitement in town. Then, the next day, Roland almost died.

His auto accident proved in yet another way the kind of power that the people close to Justin were imbibing. Justin's closest friend was taken to an Ottumwa hospital, right leg broken in three places. I went to see him with Roger Barranni, the one who had spent a great deal of time with Justin after his enlightenment. Roger had already been with Justin a full year and was now office manager here in Fairfield. He was always doing his meditation program, it seemed, even when there was a lot to get done—which meant I, his assistant, did the work, from transcribing audiotapes of meetings with Justin, to paying bills and setting up courses at Ag Hall or St. Mary's, not to mention collating the newsletters, sending them out, and making airport runs.

We entered Roland's room. Speaking through obvious pain, he first told us about confronting the admission's nurse, whose focus on questions seemed oblivious to his agony. Barely able to speak, given the bolts of discomfort grimacing his face and his refusal to ingest anything artificial, which meant no pain pills, he managed, "One must not only accept one's fate, one must love it," as if he were a hero out of *The Aeneid*. The story of his rainy night crash only reinforced such a notion: the car slipping on a curve, Roland thrown out, the car turning over and over, crushing his leg and ready to take one more roll that would smash his chest and every bone as it tilted toward his body. At that moment he had held out his hand and said, "No!" the car stopping, rocking back and forth on its side several times, but going no further. Still his leg was wedged under the

balanced hulk for two hours before someone came and called an ambulance.

It became my job to visit Roland and rub his feet and back. Despite the pain, he managed to confront me during every visit, once very heavily. No matter how unfair I felt it was, I kept visiting, to do what Justin had asked, to care for Roland. No one in The Context merely did a job. I knew that. The job was actually to live life without negativity, which meant confronting one's demon over and over again, day after day. Besides, I was learning a lot from Justin's closest friend. Once, high-voltage pain still shooting through his body every minute or so, he held a picture of Maharishi in his lap and asked, "Can you feel what this picture contains?" I couldn't. He covered it with a hospital towel, then uncovered it. "Did you feel the change in the room just then? That's what Justin is teaching us. Can you imagine where we'll be in five years?"

Part of the largesse of meaning was that Roland would miss the first New York seminar. Though still afraid of him, and still awed, we had grown closer and I didn't want him to be left behind.

But soon Justin was phoning to ask me to go to New York City, which was going to be his new headquarters—close to the United Nations and the financial center of the world. "It's the city of cities whose life energy is unmatched," Justin rhapsodized on the phone, "the most happening city on earth. It is here that who I am will reach the world."

It was here that Eva made the most heroic breakthrough I was to behold.

I saw very little of her, so devoted she was to Justin, and she carried such silence that when I did happen to be in her presence we said little. I felt I knew Lydia better. Lydia was beautiful. Yet Eva was of a deeper order of beauty. This dark-haired woman of thirty-eight, before meeting Roland at a

Vancouver coffee house, had been a model. Their marriage had lasted but two years, yet had been a destiny, as Eva saw it, that allowed her to ultimately meet Justin. She cooked with ghee, saffron, freshly ground nutmeg, spending hours over his every meal. She bought his clothes, always of the finest quality, as were her own. She kept his schedule, mothered Angelica, did the laundry, paid the mounting bills, and got confronted daily or even many times a day by the man she adored, to whom she gave everything. Though there had been stories from the early days of Justin sneaking away to meet her at some motel, I couldn't imagine anything illicit. After that unbelievable race to the airport, at the gate Justin had pointed to her and asked me, "Do you think, my dear friend, that God could have sent any better woman to take care of me?"

So, in a rented classroom at Columbia University, which was attended by only one or two new people, the first session began with Justin calling Eva to the mike: "Tell them what it's like to be around the World Teacher for seven years."

I was giving her my full attention, definitely interested in her response to this potentially revealing question. What she said was clear enough and energetically sophisticated, but lacked all detail. Whether Justin agreed with my assessment or not, he began to push her to give more, to speak more in her power. In a couple of minutes he was saying, "I just called you up to tell these people about life in The Context. I had no intention of confrontation. But this is New York and here we are in a situation that needs addressing. So, what'll it be, Eva?"

For three hours she went nowhere, despite her graciously deep and wise responses and the bouquet of her voice that revealed—to me, at least—no gaps in her flowing energies. I sat wondering if Justin were doing this simply to show us how confrontation should be gone through, for if anyone could ever be expert in being confronted, it would be Eva. Her charm was

such that I wasn't understanding why she was being confronted at all. Lydia, her dear ally, tried valiantly to help her. By then it was clear even to me that she was skimming along on the surface of some inner boundary, for Eva was in her own way caught, even sounding stupid at times, though I admired her for keeping herself lively and never losing hope. At some point, she realized that she could not speak authentically. And that was when she bit down on her words, forging each one as if out of molten steel, crushing with the intensity rising from her gut the demonic impulses that sapped her speech. Deeply, vivaciously, she fought silently in shivers.

Finally, she cried, as if holding her arm over a constant flame, "I...have...a right...to be. To be! I...am...a person...a human being...with a...right...to be! We don't...realize how we're...being tricked! It's a...huge...trick!" She was biting down even harder, shuddering in tears she would not let get the better of her, as she wrestled with the tendency to be run by anything known. Her raw visceral grit pumped every cell in her body, a monstrous force as she spoke. I was watching a divine athlete.

At this point, Justin was not looking at her, but glaring into the distance towards Grant's Tomb across the street. I wondered why he wasn't helping her or excited about her bravery. Then I sensed that he and Eva were so linked that he didn't need to look at her, that the love they shared—so large and so real—connected them through this shared warrior-like feeling of inner greatness. Eva's epic struggle at the microphone ended simply in Justin saying, "Well done, Eva. Given what you've shown us, I'm going to expect a lot more of you now."

Yet such courage—my greatest deficit, my greatest desire—had shamed me, forcing me down into some pit of my own where I, too, began grinding my innards in revulsion,

cleansing the dark grunge of timidity in a bliss beyond the pain that, up to this moment, I could have only imagined.

And then came my initiation into the irrational. While I was still seething in an inner fire, Justin began drawing continuous curved lines on the wall-to-wall blackboard, scribbling in Jackson Pollack randomness, saying without lifting the chalk, “I never thought you guys could take it, never believed you could hang in.” Yet something in me was following every line, as if this increasingly complex going-nowhere road map was just for me and making *complete* sense. It was leading me inside myself, as if I were tracking a secret language that neither I nor anyone else could speak, the trick being to let it speak me. I felt tied to Justin more closely than two brothers or a son to his father. I couldn’t believe the intimacy that was connecting us or imagine the circuitry that was making this resonance possible.

Afterwards, Justin said nothing to me, until outside, after I had packaged up all his unsold books, as he was getting into his car, he asked, pointing the silver tip of his umbrella at my chest, “What do you want out of life, Bill?”

“To be a normal human being,” I said.

“Am I a normal human being?”

“Yes. But you’re the only one,” I answered. He seemed satisfied, got into a black limo and was driven by Adam Hauger to his hotel.

The day after the course, a number of us met with Justin in his hotel room. I was glad to be included, especially when he said that all of us here—if we kept making progress on addressing our incarnational problem—would be in the inner circle.

“And can I tell you something, can I say it straight out?” he asked, sitting cross-legged on a sofa. “Do you want the truth? Can I reveal the secret?” He was looking to me as if he



were 6'7" and 280 pounds on his couch, his face austere. "*This* is the place to be! This is *it*, the only pure place in the universe that life is happening purely. It's the only game in town!"

While driving back to Fairfield with Jonathan Boyce, a carpenter who got to go to seminars in trade for remodeling Justin's Sixth Street garage into bedrooms for Eva and Lydia, I felt, even in the back of an old service van once used to deliver Wonder Bread, that I was heading into the mythic heart of history. Then, somewhere in Ohio, while I was driving, the van started smoking. Instead of pulling immediately off the interstate, I tried to get us to the next exit and a garage. It cost a day and a new radiator. The van also leaked oil and twice more had to be repaired, not to mention twice getting stuck in the snow, once having to spend the night with no heat. Jonathan's wife Lilly and four-year old daughter traveling with us were none too happy.

That effort to push the van's limits felt like a statement of my own engine smoking and not doing anything about it, such that, back in the Broadway House, I dreamed about a large seed that looked like a bright circle with many layers, too many to count, and that a gash went from the surface of the husk all the way to the very center. Bolting up in bed, I knew I had seen a replica of my soul, that my 'problem' went to the core of my being. Having neglected the smoking radiator meant I was neglecting something about to break down in my own life—that I was hoping the problem wasn't too bad and that it would somehow take care of itself. Well, it *was* that bad. The dream had said so. Sure that Justin would know my plight, I saw I had to get to the microphone.

At the next weekend seminar, there were many on that first day who came to the mike. At the end of that day's second session, Justin asked who still wanted 'the microphone experience' and, along with six or seven others, I raised my

hand. I sweat through the next day when, finally, Justin said that both Roger and I would get to the mike, which Justin said, “Shouldn’t take too long.”

But a sweet balding guy from Minneapolis, a high-school music director and as timid a man as I had ever met, was taking a long time, with Justin telling him to sing a song. The man picked an old Beatles’ tune, but sang with no feeling or rhythm. While I was wondering how he could teach music, Justin asked, “Have you ever been in love?” The man’s simple ‘No’ nearly broke my heart, his head hung in submission. Justin asked him to speak to Eva as if he were in love with her, and, after hesitating, the music director spoke: “Gee, you sure have a great body, Eva.” A moment of disbelief was the segue into universal laughter, except for Eva, who was blushing, and the music director at the mike.

Roger and I were forgotten.

After the session, the balding Romeo did not leave, sitting in tears, not because he had confessed his lack of love or felt humiliated in speaking to Eva, but because he was transfixed, saying he had seen Justin’s face turn into golden light.

## CHAPTER 7: THE MICROPHONE

I was in New York again, where driving was a contact sport and the feeling of merging with the city's tribal energies held me in sunlit intoxication. I was alive as I rode the unpredictable flux of humanity in its infinite confluences and percolations. The Christmas Course, Justin's first two-week seminar, was under almost way. This was the city from which Justin said he would launch World Teacher Seminar, Inc. across the nation and abroad. From the cosmic match-up with Maharishi in Iowa's corn country to the Big Apple, it was a move from small-town dullness to Broadway's incandescence.

I had arrived early, on Justin's direct order, to locate accommodations for the Victoria group and, bustling among the lights and energies of masses of people, I at times acted as if I owned this crisp city. Hustling to hotel managers to get the best deal, I imagined myself a hot young exec who had won his first big contract. Then Roger, acting as Justin's small but surprisingly skillful business attache, arrived two days later to negotiate the World Teacher's uptown apartment and find something for Eva and Lydia that would be midway between Justin's place on West 82<sup>nd</sup> and the Central Park Eden, where the seminar would be held. I had no idea where the thousands in rents and tens of thousands in deposits and finders' fees were coming from, but Roger seemed savvy and I was definitely feeling this dazzling city to be Justin's proper platform. The World Teacher, who arrived a day and a half late, nevertheless said that the course would be worth the \$1000 every attendee had paid. He had been held up at the border by US Immigration officials who questioned his claim of 'distinguished-alien status.'

“The TM Movement demon was subtly involved in this incident,” Justin revealed on arrival; “I felt the same vibration coming from the border officials who hassled me as I did when touring the M.I.U. campus.” Vibration told the story for Justin, who had once said to me, “All the demons in the world are connected. And they all know me.” Before he was driven off to his new apartment, he added, because he felt Maharishi and TM to hold the brightest promise for the world, that the TM demon was the largest on the planet.

It was Christmas, the day after I had been invited to Justin’s impeccable apartment to then be applauded by the Annapurnans as ‘the man to thank for the extraordinary accommodations,’ words followed by steely silence as everyone looked at Justin. It was my first experience, momentary as it was, of the One Mind, my own term for the incredible stillness that pervaded the room, as if we all were only one person with one motionless awareness. Whether it inherently scared me or that I had no idea how I could learn to be in such an unmoved state, I knew only that I didn’t mind that I had other tasks to attend to.

It was the fifth day of the course, Christmas morning, right after Roger had been asked to give some of his amazing experiences of the meditation techniques Justin was now offering: three sets of increasingly complicated sutras, costing \$1000 each. Justin said, “They came from Maharishi, who told me to give them to you.”

It might have begun the instant that Justin called out, “Bill, what would Maharishi think about the feeling in this room?” I came to the microphone to say that the Master would love it. Or maybe it began moments later, once I decided to enlarge on the question and explain Maharishi’s first words six years ago to the newly-liberated man, which I quoted, “Vedy goot, dees ees de goal uf de course.”

If it had not happened before, it surely happened when Justin, his blue eyes squinted to slits, emphatically retorted, “That’s not what he said at all! He told me, ‘You are the first Pillar of the Age of Enlightenment.’ That’s what he said!”

Suddenly I had no space. I had not heard those words from the Master’s lips, having cherished each moment of Justin’s enlightenment. I remembered so clearly our walk on the mountain, and then three days later when Justin stood up and told Maharishi his experience—every detail.

But no one told Justin he was wrong, especially about something so vital as his Master’s first words to his profound experience of being in Unity Consciousness. So it was that I was instantly flattened by Justin’s rebuttal, the way an insect is kept in a book, then stuck to its paper mount. The World Teacher’s eyes now pinned me. Somewhere inside I knew there would be no discussion of what had actually happened. I saw only a yellow fog wrapping my awareness as I stood before the 150 sophisticates of The Context. Suddenly far from everything, thinking, ‘Justin’s enlightened; his memory must be correct,’ I looked out in the daze of someone who felt he had unknowingly gotten life wrong, perhaps made a cosmic mistake.

Justin, arms folded, pleased, asked, “How was that, Lydia? Ever see confrontation start in such record time?”

All I could think of was that confrontation had begun and that I had to mentally prepare myself, trying to recall how Eva had been on that heroic day. Half my time since the last Fairfield seminar when I had wanted to get to the mike had been spent in gales of scenarios: “Justin will say this, and I’ll say that; then if he says this, I’ll reply quickly with...” It went on and on. And on. Now it was here for real—my first time at the microphone. It would not be anything like watching a confrontation from the audience.

Justin began by asking me to recount the events on the mountain. I knew them well, my memory clear, had spoken the sacred event a number of times and had treated the sequencing like Jesus' stations of the Cross. Yet I could not speak. I wanted to but could not find how to begin. My mind was both a fiery storm and a wasteland as barren as the mahogany table where I invalidated a meal at Annapurna. The story I had felt to be mine alone, linking my fate with Justin's, was now....

"Somewhere, Bill, you hate me. Something in Eva hates me too."

I knew he was asking me to touch the place in myself where I hated him, to feel that ugliness and pain. But I didn't hate him!

Basically, I said nothing. For four hours. Every word I started to say I could feel was missing the mark. I continually tried to begin, to rise to the occasion, but never got far, never got off my knees. My soaring life was crash landing in a clear sky, no instrument failures, no one understanding why.

Justin had Sondra, whom he had finally allowed to attend the course, come up to help me. She did not help. Very soon we both were wrecks on the stage.

"What are you hiding," Justin's lawyer, Vance Price, now virtually as prominent as Roland, whose leg was said to be healing slowly, put forth. "What am I hiding?" I wondered. I began speaking about the pressure in my head, my sense of needing to be more grounded, but Justin simply dismissed my issues as 'red herrings.'

When the World Teacher asked, "Have you ever had one real experience?" Amazingly, I could not reach concretely back even to the first New York seminar with all the terribly meaningful squiggles on the blackboard just weeks ago, or my inner imitation of Eva's battle at the mike, or even to the Fairfield seminar when.... Suddenly, unable to find anything

to deny the point of his question, I found myself wondering why he had asked it in such a harsh way if it weren't true.

Sondra and I remained on the desolate stage until 9 PM, with Justin saying, "I'm simply trying to get these people to move a millionth of an inch. But for now, it's enough."

But feeling devastated, knowing it could not possibly suffice, I cried out, "But it's not enough!"

Justin turned to me in utter disbelief. "Shut up! You idiot. You idiot! Do you realize what you've done? Now we have to start all over again!" he boomed, turning to the cameras with a crisp, "We'll break till 11 and go till 3 AM. New York never sleeps."

It felt like I was in a coma till we reconvened. The brimming void of fear carried on, as Justin manifested New York as held in God's imagination, Harlem, the Wise Men, Mary holding the Christ child. It carried on as an M.I.U. newcomer offered his rendition of *The Grinch Who Who Stole Christmas*, during which Justin roared with laughter. It carried on as Justin called me 'a eunuch'. To rebut I would have needed to stand on a solid place inside myself. I had none.

There were a couple of moments when I felt human: when the World Teacher had me pulling tissues from a box that he held, my hand trembling—Justin rated me a 9 out of 10—to place one on Sondra's head. But my 9 became an instant zero when the trembling went no further. Each time I touched freedom, I watched it a moment later revert to failure. I went through two boxes of tissues, until Justin's voice rose higher than the crystal chandeliers, higher than the hotel, higher than the Chrysler Building: "Your demon is covering all of New York!" And hours later, after I had taken a seat on the far right of the ballroom, he asked, "Going to give Christmas back to us, Mr. Grinch?" Slump-shouldered, looking out of abandoned eyes, I found the glaring lights too bright.

It was 5 AM. The seminar would not meet until the next afternoon. I tagged along with the group to the Waldorf Astoria, where New York's 'money power' had etched itself into every surface. In the darkened ballroom of one of the globe's grandest hotels, someone half-whispered to me, "You look like death."

I felt like one of the bumper cars I used to ride at Glen Echo Amusement Park with the electric charge sparking wildly above me, yet not reaching my body. In the following days, seeing Justin before the seminar sessions, his coldness rammed me. When Adam, who had never liked me, called me 'consciously demonic,' a wire snapped. Without spark, I was no longer even connected to the ceiling.

When we all went to see *Amadeus* on Broadway, by the time Justin was standing at the finale in singular ovation and calling for Mozart to take another bow, I had realized the worst: I was Justin's Salieri. Like Salieri, I was not only doomed to mediocrity, I was also, against my will, trying to kill my friend whose genius could make all of life musical. This must be the hatred Justin was talking about. As I rode the subway back to my lodgings with Roger in New Jersey, it didn't matter that I was the only white person on the train, that I might get robbed. I had nothing that anyone wanted.

Touring the Metropolitan Museum of Art the next day found me half enjoying the reproduction of the living room from one of the Chicago houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, my late father's favorite architect. But I hid behind one of the chairs when Justin and others came through.

When the seminar again began, Justin looked my way: "Now there's a man in hell. Ever seen someone so entrenched? Wouldn't you do anything to get out of that?" And before that day's evening session, when I chanced to meet Justin coming out of the elevator, he hid his face, shouting: "Don't bombard



me with your negativity. I've been shooting you with bullets of love.”

A sleepless night had me rising in hot terror. Morning barely shone on the floor, yet something black and empty was near.

As I ate cereal on the living room sofa, a small devil's face appeared, made of polished gold and glaring at me, then ducking behind the couch. When Roger came in, seeing me immobilized, my bowl dropped and milky cornflakes on the carpet, he was angry, tried to talk sense into me, yet told me not to look his way because of the pollution of my gaze. He got me dressed, pushed me into his Saab and, when I refused to leave the car, pleaded and then half dragged me out. I hit myself in the face, trying to feel anything. Roger made me stop, but I would not enter the seminar ballroom. In the bathroom, a friend saw me and soon had me running in Central Park to get into my body. Sweaty, blood in my face, I felt more real, enough to return to the seminar.

That afternoon, my friend got to the microphone, with Justin manifesting 'the most beautiful woman in the world.' My friend was to court her. He phoned; she hung up. He gave her flowers; she took a sniff and handed them back. Trying another avenue, Justin asked about his day, and my friend related our run in Central Park. "Let's get Bill up here," said Justin, who soon was commanding us to confront him, as he boomed another jack-hammer laugh. No one had ever confronted Justin—and we both knew that no one could. But we tried, less than half-heartedly, until Justin commanded us both to be beautiful women. With my friend totally unconvincing, I—whether unable to stand my own timidity and silence any longer, or whether suddenly inspired—ran to the drapes, covered myself demurely (I had seen Justin hide behind stage curtains more than once) and, sultry and coy, tempting and

alluring, I played a woman strolling, her hips in provocative cadence, about to stand before her enlightened suitor. I sensed the crowd with me, no doubt surprised to see....

“You asshole!” Justin screamed. “What would you have done next? Don’t you see how stupid that was, that you could never have pulled this off? This is no game! This is *serious!*” It takes an enlightened person to manifest. Do you see how ridiculous....” I cowered again, a bumper car in the boardwalk arcade of my childhood, out of gas, sparking, shorted out up top, being rammed head on and from every side..

Several people were kind, took me to dinner, gave me affirmations: ‘I am protected by the goodness of the universe and nothing can harm me,’ and the like. But such well-meaning stuff from Context novices gained little buy-in from me, their words ridiculous and dishonest.

It was the next day that I came to a realization: I’m not cut out for life in the fast lane, can’t keep up with this caliber of people; I need more life experience. I decided to leave, take up sky diving, karate, something I could learn and do to overcome my fear. When, at lunch, I told Roger of my plans, he said, “Well, you certainly seem stronger and more alive. Sounds right, Bill.”

Five minutes into the seminar, Justin confronted me again. It didn’t last long—didn’t have to. When in the seat in front of mine a Vancouver physics instructor started rubbing his shoulders as if to brush something off, I put one and one together and knew he was trying to protect himself from attack. I could not bear the thought of hurting him, or any of the others. Wrong whichever way I went, I could stand no more mistakes.

That night ‘the Celestials’ spoke publicly for the first time. The Chicago duo—a pudgy, mentally agile redhead named Rudi and Marvin, a soft spoken businessman, both exhibited their ability to ‘tune into the celestial vibrations and

speaking with archangels.' Justin, excited by the possibilities, had Adam bring up two chairs and place them either side of his director's chair. The Celestials had been advising him about the M.I.U. lawsuit over the past six weeks and had given dozens of 'readings' about how it was Justin's duty to confront the demonic on the earthly plane, that he had been the prophet Mohammed in a past life, that indeed he was Maharishi's secret ally who would carry on the Holy Tradition. Now they sat, eyes closed, hands in their laps, and after a long silence in soft voices spoke, first one and then the other. The voices were their own, but the 'channeled' angelic intelligences held forth about Justin's role, of the great light visible to all in Heaven....

It was their last remark, "And everyone here should beware never to give their minds over to evil," that got me, the only one seated in the back row, wondering, 'How could one give one's mind over to....?' And then, in my disconnected state, 'Have I given my mind over to...?' There was nothing, given my life during the past five days, to prevent this next door of devastation from opening.

That was when I knew I had to run.

But the night was not over. Justin was now manifesting the quality in an individual that would get that person to enlightenment, and then the quality that was most needed for this person to take the next step in his spiritual growth. This being the last event of the night, only two were selected by the group: Bette Sulrich, who had been taking care of the children the entire course, and Bill Howell, who had not broken through.

I was called up first, terrified, of course, that Justin would know I had given my mind.... He manifested the quality I needed: "Reality, solidness, straightforwardness," and then the one that would get me to enlightenment: "His dynamic enthusiasm. He will move fast once he learns to trust." That was it. I had made it through.

Then, as I walked back to my seat, relieved, suddenly the implication suggested by the Celestials reasserted its hold and I saw instantly that Justin's manifestations merely mocked me. I sat down, stronger now in my decision to leave. My head seemed suddenly clear. Mary, once the session was over, even told me, "You look a lot sturdier, Bill." Happier for a moment, I wondered if evil were the source of this perceived strength.

I drove off, struck with the fact that I would never again see Mary, Eva, Lydia, Roland, Duffy.... It was unbelievable, my fate to be linked with Judas Iscariot and all betrayers. In the poetic saga unveiling its vastness, all this was compounded because I knew Justin Snow. At least I would fail to bring down the World Teacher, even as Judas and Salieri had failed. Driving into New Jersey, I was assailed by even darker thoughts: Hell. Forever. Forced to do worse, ever-worse betrayals till I lived on the edge of the Devil's pitchfork. How could I stand the tortures in store for me? My existence had become epic. Everything was clear: living 35 boring, gutless years; being on the mountain with Justin, not as his friend but as his unwitting foil; constructing a life of ideals that kept me from any real experience; Justin having seen so much light in me because I was akin to Lucifer.

I knew only that I could not go back, for Justin would not end the course until the Bill Howell matter was cleared up. That meant having to face everyone again and say, "I'm not sincere, can't change, can't, can't, can't...." Justin would have everyone line up and yell an inch from my face, spit on me, throw me out on the sidewalk. I could not endure. Any tiny step on my part would last but a moment. I could not go back.

There was one more day of seminar left; the day after New Year's. The New Year for me would be a dark eternity, if I lived through it. Early the next morning, alarm under my pillow, I packed silently, left some kind of note as to the whys

of my departure, tiptoed past a sleeping Roger, and drove into the city, the note telling Roger where the car would be parked. I took care of the final arrangements of the Victorians' accommodations, making sure that no one was over-charged, and walked with my heavy bag five blocks to the closest bus stop, afraid someone would see me. Yet, strangely excited about my new life, I took a bus marked 'Port Authority', phoning collect to St. Louis once I arrived at the cavernous terminal. I told my mother how I couldn't make this team, that I was coming to stay with her. Her voice was concerned but full of understanding. Learning I had only \$50, she told me to take the bus to Columbus, where my aunt Mary would give me money for the rest of the fare. I thanked her, said goodbye and that I would see her soon. Having never heard my mother so on-the-spot inventive, I thought that maybe this new beginning was off to a good start.

There, it was done. The bus would arrive in two hours. The terminal thronged with people and for the first hour I sat on my Samsonite suitcase, one end strapped closed with duct tape. Next to me sat a man with big gnarly hands. Next to him another man was drawing his portrait in charcoal. Soon he finished and left. "That's quite a likeness," I offered, and the man with scarred hands began talking about Greece, how his son used to draw the boats draped with nets, how he used to take his boat out and bring it back loaded—till his son died at sea. The man had come to America to work on a tug. No more did he own his boat or fish the sea or repair his nets. He just stared at his hands.

"This is my world now," I thought, rather excited that right away I had met a real character, someone who had worked hard, loved and suffered. But within minutes the man's bus to Buffalo was announced, his seat taken by a woman bent on her crossword. I glanced over her furred left shoulder, wanting to

tell her that the answer to #1-down was 'mistake.' Failing at sleep, I was soon pondering the seminar--seeing Justin ordering Adam to come find me. Suddenly I wanted nothing more than bus doors shutting behind me. Finally, that wish being granted, I boarded only to be glued to the window of seat 7-A to see if Adam would be running up, leaping aboard to drag me back for confrontation. But soon marquee shooting with lights and names of strippers in red letters were vanishing with the hundreds of unlit shops, until everything trailed into the highway of sleep.

When I woke, I started a conversation with a girl headed back to college at Antioch. She was blond, a bit vivacious with a wide mouth, and I had a feeling from her almond eyes that she could have Chinese ancestors. I had always wanted to go to China, especially to see the terraced rice fields shimmering green with the flooding of young shoots below jagged mountains. We spoke of interesting things, interesting for a bus ride. At the first stop we shared doughnuts. I had to watch my funds, \$2.29 having to last me until the morning. By dark we were in Pittsburgh and, stretching my legs in the cold air among buildings with turn-of-the-century tobacco ads painted on old brick, I wondered what this city was all about and who were the men who smelted its steel? The vague excitement of new places wore off the instant the friendly blonde took her nice smile down the narrow aisle of heads cocked in sleep. Yellow Springs sounded like an interesting town. And then I slept until we pulled into Columbus at 6:33 AM, the sun up and only a short wait for the limo to my aunt's part of town.

Soon my mother's younger and only living sister had picked me up in her aged Cadillac, and I remembered my last visit to her house when I was seven, being dubbed the 'bacon king' after making 21 strips disappear in a single breakfast, breaking a pane in her garage window in a game of 'fast pitch',

touring the roundhouse where my now late Uncle Don worked and driving an old-time steam engine twenty feet, finding enough coins in the crevices of her couch to buy a hunting knife, and at the airport sticking my tongue out at my mom, who pulled it, my scream making it only one of two times she ever apologized to me. Aunt Mary lived in an apartment filled with Hummel figurines, other knickknacks and quite a tea-cup collection. Over tea and scones I tried to ask meaningful questions: “What was she like, my mother? What was your most memorable experience together?” But, when every answer started with “I don’t remember, really,” and phrases like ‘nothing much’, I wondered what their lives had been like, since to similar inquiries my mother had been equally vague. The cat’s eyes and rope swings, first bras and lipsticks had vanished into the power of the “speak-not-till-you’re-spoken-to era. The books neatly in rows, the painted cups and saucers, the sealed windows letting in little light constituted a room and a life going nowhere, and going nowhere translated as hell. “I have measured out my life in coffee spoons,” I recalled T.S. Eliot saying in “Ash Wednesday.” Yes, I was living a life of ashes. In this small, meaningless realm, I followed suit, asked nothing further and went to bed early.

When I woke, I had no idea what time it was, but sat up, as usual, to meditate. I closed my eyes and instantly went rigid: the room had filled with a dark closeness, as if the distance between me and meaningless was at wall’s length, then at my throat—a vast suffocation I had no name for. Far beyond horror or paranoia, my eyes couldn’t bulge out of it nor could breath escape. The black square Roland had seen in me on the blue couch in Annapurna was now swirling and everywhere threatening.

I tried to keep together. For God’s sake, I was in my aunt’s house! I tore off the covers, could barely see my face in

the mirror and was utterly unable to plug in my razor. I had to get outside! Then Mary's voice came through the door, "Are you up, Bill? I have tea and toast ready." I stood terrified she would see my peril, yet had to be with someone. In the living room, the darkness was not so thick. I kept my face slightly turned, and when she asked, "Sleep okay, Bill?" I answered, "Good tea."

Then we were downstairs and outside and arriving at the terminal, where I tried to thank her without sounding overly strange. In the lobby, I managed to figure out that the bus for St. Louis would leave in twenty minutes. But I could not inflict my condition on my mother, could not risk bringing whatever was so deeply looming wherever I went on the woman who had given me birth. I had to keep moving to stay alive, and in my pacing I realized I would have to go back. No one could understand me outside of The Context! I checked on busses for New York. One left in fifteen minutes. I walked back and forth in a dilemma of frantic steps turning at one impossibility one to be faced with another impossibility. Walking, turning, walking, turning, back and forth--until finally I stopped, my mind careening from pole to pole, faster and faster. On a knife edge, I picked up a black payphone, dialed a number, and asked that the call be collect.

"Eva. Hi. Well, I'm, uh, o...kay, I guess. Look, thank God you're there. I, uh, took a bus and am in Ohio and I, I, I don't know what is...I just have to keep talking, and breathing, yes, and I don't know what to...I'm so afraid that I.. I'm a...a demon!"

After being told over and over that it was not true, I managed to say that the bus arrived in twelve hours, an express, and yes, could I call again at the first stop?" I had not wanted to hang up, had not wanted to ever hang up, leaving the phone dangling in circles as I ran to get a refund for St. Louis and buy



a ticket to New York, which with my two dollars I could just afford. A dozen times I paced, wondering how I could go, before the bus came and...I got on. I tried praying, was totally terrified of sleep, meditation being infinitely out of the question: I would not close my eyes. By the first stop I was gasping for air and phoning for another pep talk, learning that Roger would meet my bus. How another ten hours passed without sleep or sanity, I had no idea. I called again at each of the five stops.

They had come, Roger, who even asked to carry my suitcase, and Sondra. Seeing them felt, by comparison, like pure happiness. They suggested I go to Justin's. I didn't know about that but had no alternative to offer. In half an hour I was breathing hard in front of Justin's glossy black metal door. Lydia let us in, not looking at me, motioning us to the floor in front of the peach sofa with palm fronds stilled over a sea of silver, saying in a middle-or-the-road voice, "Justin asks that you meditate."

I closed my eyes, a victory in itself, wondering how much I must be polluting the living room and kitchen. Soon Justin came in. He asked why I left. But it was so big, the answer, which faded into fog when my lips started to form a first word about the assailing darkness. Finally I only shook my head. Asked how I felt now, I said, "Safe." I knew the only one who could save me was the person saying that the note I had left was a suicide note.

Shaking his head, he told me to go back to Fairfield, that Roger would accompany me, that he had an important newsletter to get out, that it was paramount, and that the focus would give me something. Then he even asked me to help him write the newsletter. To be useful was a distinct form of salvation. But when not even a first sentence would emerge, Justin suggested I go to Connecticut, to his lawyer's house, knowing I loved to play basketball, a good therapy. "You still

like to run down the court for a lay-up?" But, rethinking things, he re-suggested Fairfield.

That was it. I hadn't died and Justin had treated me...well, not like a demon. It was 4 AM, and the two of us left immediately for Iowa. We stopped in eastern Ohio so I could call my mother and tell her that I had decided to give the World Teacher Seminar another try. She knew my friends were here, how much I loved Justin, and sounded happy. I could only wonder what was going through her mind.

I focused, got the newsletter out in two days. Glad to be back, trusting that Justin understood my condition, though I could not speak it out, I could not trust sleep the first or the second or the third night. For days, I woke Roger every time my head jerked up out of oblivion or I started to fall and gasped at the abyss. When Roger went to Washington, D.C. for the next seminar, I gasped alone.

## CHAPTER 8: THE FABRIC OF BEING

In two months, the universe had shifted again. It was hard for me to believe I was driving to Dubuque to pick up rented video equipment and then on to Chicago for what Justin was to call ‘the bone and gristle seminar,’ Chicago’s first taste of The Context.

Many things were hard to believe. Justin had called from New York to put me in charge of making World Teacher Seminar, Inc. a financial reality. My reorganizing the WTS books, he thought would regain me some dignity. I was to send my effort off to Price Waterhouse, the accounting firm that handled many a Fortune 500 company, since WTS, Inc. was “a going for-profit concern; shares having been offered,” Justin had said. So, for weeks I had assembled receipts, like shards, finding them behind the office sofa, tucked in books or on some top shelf.

Justin then put me in charge of his house. I lead meditations morning and evening in his living room, though I barely closed my eyes, the black hole still a threat. For two months I ran the Broadway office, yet moved like a hunchback bent with shame.

During Justin’s first Fairfield visit from New York, where those Annapurnans who had given up their Victoria jobs now lived, he wrote long letters to Maharishi, M.I.U. and the *Fairfield Ledger*; . He and the attorney took long daily walks, which I could see was wearing on Roland, now up on crutches.

While I mopped down Justin’s carpet and walls nightly with warm water and lemon juice to purify the vibrations of ignorance, it occurred to me that I had little understanding of what went on in New York, except hearing that it was “totally invigorating”. Something must have been important enough to

justify the prucey office in Midtown, plus Justin's sporadic trips back to Fairfield and, rarely, to Victoria. With no more than 200 people involved, WTS, Inc. would gross a million dollars in its first year—and would spend even more. The very day Justin returned to Iowa, he would keep the two Chicago 'celestials' up to all hours. They said incredible things, as usual: "The World Teacher Seminar will always be unknown. The status of Justin Montclair Snow in the universe carries with him the most delicate and supreme reality ever to come out of God's womb." I had been given the task of transcribing the latest 'Celestial documents' and they went on for pages, until my right hand cramped. Justin, they said, had been chosen for an immortal body, and Maharishi was receiving these impulses so that there could now be free access to his heart and mind. I was very glad to hear that.

As Justin's status became loftier and loftier, my own felt thinner and weighed down by possibilities too beautiful and too far above me. Finally, unable to stand myself any longer, I went to Roland and told him I was demonic. I told him I was going to hell because I felt powerless before the maw of darkness. Trying to put me off, to placate me, this hero of The Context finally said, "Look, Bill, I can't tell you how often I've wanted to lay all my problems out at Justin's feet. But when I tried, do you think that for a moment interested him? He doesn't want us hopelessly tangled in our problems. And, besides, problems aren't information to be announced like some proclamation; they're the secret codes of our adventure to God, the writ of our personhood that we ourselves must read, decipher, accept and rewrite. Not in words, but in our hearts."

Then he asked what I thought about Justin, for Roland's penchant was to bring every conversation around to his divine friend. "He's the most talented of persons; his integrity has no limit, and he knows so staggeringly much about love that it

makes me feel like a deaf mute,” I found myself saying, to which Roland observed, “That doesn’t sound like the demonic talking.” Then he confessed that none of the Annapurnans had ever been able to properly thank Justin.

I felt a bit more human. Plus Roland had said that I would probably not be confronted anymore, not in any major way. It was poundage off my back. That night Nadine, calling from New York, immediately said, “Is that really you, Blll? Your voice is...so different. You must’ve been hit hard. Well, you sound oceans deeper.” And Roger had called to say, “You’re so much less predictable,” which was a compliment in a group in which everyone was striving for the unknown and to be mysterious.

But not a week later I heard that Roger Barranni had been confronted. He and I had grown close and I really wanted to be at his first seminar confrontation. This one had evidently been big. He had been confronted for two days. No videos were made of this first D.C. course—I couldn’t believe it. Justin had at one point even hit Roger, and had drawn blood! Accidentally, it turned out. But there were no accidents around Justin. More shocking was hearing that Roger might no longer be working for WTS. Finally he called, vague, guarded, saying laconically that he might pursue business, maybe return to Seattle. But then I heard he had stayed on in New York, evidently coming through a second confrontation, barely though. How Roger could be on the skids and I could be running the Fairfield operation was another of the many paradoxes around Justin Snow.

As I carried video equipment into Chicago’s Americana Hotel, the first person I met was Matthew Halsey. Right off I had liked this round-faced solid soul whom I had known in Fairfield five years before, and had not forgotten this tangibly sweet and bright M.I.U. graduate. He had just left a successful

West Coast business in precious stones and, after reading a number of Justin's books and writing him several letters, stopped by Fairfield to meet the World Teacher. Matthew had driven him around the M.I.U. campus, prior to Justin being threatened with arrest.

As yet not confronted, my friend had not been indoctrinated into fear. Neither had Vanya Woelf, whom he and I joined over breakfast in a nook of the hotel's café. I didn't feel close to this horsewoman and photographer, a former art M.I.U. art major whose father had risen from janitor to C.E.O. of a top-ten US corporation. Vanya and Matthew had met some years back at 'Guru U' and, while I didn't care for her impetuous style, I was drawn to the energy of this powerhouse chomping at the bit to get to the mike. As we strolled the streets of the Loop, looking for a place to eat lunch after the first session, Vanya was a thoroughbred already in the starting gate, 'with a lot more courage than I have,' I said to myself, 'or a hell of a lot more to learn.'

When she did get to the mike, it was like no race, no jump she had ever attempted. First, Justin corralled her, then for two hours tired to get her to realize that she was taking life at an invulnerable gallop. Once she slowed and he orchestrated some femininity into her voice, she soon caught on and rode the impulse into break through. But he had not set her free and went after her till she had no footing, till she knew who held the reins, till she moved with his slightest command. It was dressage. Afterwards, every twenty minutes or so throughout the afternoon, the World Teacher would, in the middle of whatever was going on at the mike, stop and suddenly point to Vanya, saying something like, "How are you, Vanya; keep yielding up the reins if you want to win this race, baby."

Matthew, game and sincere, broke through, too. But it took him more than five hours. I was on camera, and could

focus in on his face to read there the intention to change. As Justin immediately manifested ‘The Personal God conferring the blessing of light on everyone in the room,’ Matthew, he would later tell me, had his every conception of how to approach confrontation destroyed. Then Justin, getting audience opinion of the man at the mike—‘receptive,’ ‘open,’ ‘forthright’—then told Matthew, “There’s something very divine in you, but in a certain way you are moded...and you haven’t really caught up with where your problem is. We must never be out of our problem”—then shouted my way, “Eh, Billy boy!—for it’s where we are, and we can only start from where we are located. Are you ready to be located?” Then came one of the subtler confrontations I had witnessed—as if the whole event were being conducted in the color green—in which the brilliant Matthew had to be unknown even to himself.

After another “How are you, Vanya, a little girl? Be a little girl!” from the World Teacher—we took a break. I took the food Eva had ordered up to Justin’s room, with the man himself opening the door. “You seem to be doing a bit better these days, Bill. How come? I thought you’d nearly gotten off the train. Hey, Eva, I think Bill’s trying to move up in World Teacher Seminar, maybe bucking for Roger’s job.

“Go into my bedroom. Go on,” he ordered. “What’s it feel like in there?”

In the darkened hotel room with silk draped over the windows, bed covered by his cashmere blanket, for just a second or two I got a dose of silence so smooth it was like ice I could skate on forever without moving my feet. I didn’t speak of it, however.

Downstairs, Matthew asked, “Bill, what can you tell me that’ll help me get through this?” Startled that my friend would ask *me* such a question, and filled with just having been with Justin, I found myself saying, “Your way of asking the question

is keeping you from letting go into the answer you're seeking. You *are* the answer. Trying to figure it out will only keep you not figuring it out." Somehow, this made sense to Matthew, as Lydia walked through the lobby, ringing a bell: the next session was about to begin. I stood for a moment, amazed that I had sounded so intelligent.

So Matthew went, bent on breakthrough, to the mike, and Justin drew him in with humor, then cut off again and again every approach that was too known, saying, "You're in a competition, a war, and you've got to realize that." After another hour, Justin was yawning, "It's so boring. The video will reveal that all that's going on is a course called 'Think About It 303.'" And it was another hour when a woman called out, "No chutzpah, no oomph!" And even I called out, "What are you doing up there?" which garnered Justin's appreciation, if not Matthew's, the World Teacher saying, "Ah, the hunt starts now." Justin sent Eva and then Roland up to engage the beautiful but stuck Matthew, until he was breathing heavily, saying, "It's not like, you know, my room's messy...or.... It's on a different...even—wow!" and his eyes bulged in fear: "Wow! The bounds...the boundaries I've put before.... Oh, God!" Crying, gasping, trying to comprehend, speak, see: "It's so huge. So...huge! Why, how could I go unconscious if it's so big? Oh, God, how could I hide that?"

We all watched this revelation organically unfold, Justin in solemn whisper offering the caption to this performance: "Never underestimate the hell, the grotesque hell everyone is in." Then he started to make loud piercing noises. "See the incredible distortion in the face? That's the demonic." The World Teacher made more noises, saying, "That mask has got to be ripped right off now, Matthew."

But the process went in and out...for two more hours. Roland tried assisting, but, had not time been a factor, Justin



would have had to confront him, as well. And then a woman—an Oberlon graduate, Class of '52, named Alice Josh who said she was certified in dream therapy—tried to get Matthew to imagine the form his pain was taking. Justin, in the middle of surgery, interrupted, “With all regard to your age and education and service, ‘Fuck off.’ Just joshing, Alice, but...your techniques are like imaginary tinker toys, whereas we need steel and rivets.... Look, it’s late and a man’s soul is in my hands—I have to be true to that. Thank you, Alice, for your help, but we’re in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.”

It was yet an hour after that, with Matthew isolated and powerless, that Justin said, “Matthew, I have it. We are going to go full force at this for ten minutes. And in that time, I am sure your great sincerity will stand you in good stead. Okay, everyone, let’s go!” Then came noises from the World Teacher, syncopated with “Come on, Matthew, come on!” from the audience members, who slowly approached him at the mike, pointing and shouting, “Matthew, Matthew, break through!” over and over like a chant, until my friend at the mike sucked in his gut, gripped the mike like it was the mane of a wild horse and started jumping like a bronc rider. The crowd became one voice while Justin was in a silent contorted scream at Matthew’s demon, the man at the mike pacing the stage, pounding his fist on the far wall. Then he went down, writhing on the floor before hopping like a toad, hopping, his head emptied of ambivalence, as he willed himself through a spaceless space and Justin fell back in his chair, exhausted. It never got put into words, but the people crowding the stage knew he was different—his eyes deep and cool, loving, ready, intensely alert. Breakthrough!

The next day I drove Vanya back to Fairfield and, as much as she wanted to be part of The Context, I felt I couldn’t tell her about having been in Justin’s room after the seminar,

how he had gone around the room and talked to each of us, how terrified I still was of confrontation. And I definitely didn't mention the ensuing 'Celestial Consultation' in which the two Chicago channels said that Jesus was present and "even he did not understand the truth of how darkness plays with souls on earth." Then Maharishi had come through and Justin had fallen to his knees, knowing that the Master knew everything about the court case, the seminars, Justin's techniques—and approved.

Vanya, after telling me a horse story that had me in tears to hear of such courage and drive, had her own agenda on our way to Dubuque to return the cameras and lights I had rented. The whole trip was geared to her inquiry about how someone could work for WTS, with me trying to explain that it was the mark of Cain, as Justin had called the destiny certain people had to be with him. I did tell her that it seemed to me that Justin was harder on those who were meant to be with him. But not one for talk, or for waiting—and against my advice— from Dubuque Vanya called Justin's hotel, got his room and was immediately telling the man herself her desire. Justin did not say no. And so it was that Vanya Woelf came to work for WTS.

Her joy was a bit over-the-top. I was to notice in the coming weeks, as with Matthew, that as each drew closer to Justin, they drew farther from me. Yet I seemed to be drawing closer to Justin myself. "William Howell's moving up...; maybe he's bucking for Roger's job"—that comment had sounded crude to me, and even cruel, yet in the unending silence of the World Teacher's bedroom, so silky it felt as if I were touching the fabric of being, I forgot about Roger.

I forgot about a lot of things.

## CHAPTER 9: STANDING IN THE PLACE YOU ARE IN

I had sent out hundreds of newsletters, made call after call. Justin had returned to attend the court case, bringing the New York Annapurnans with him to be part of this week-long March seminar, now in its fifth day. Ag Hall was packed.

Justin was now offering Level-Two confrontations. He had recently given his first Las Vegas course, where he had ‘pulled someone’s demon through his own nervous system and had broken its back.’ The really good news was that Level-Two was ‘guaranteed,’ a word that to me had the ring of salvation. Yet, I did not believe such a claim. A former M.I.U. student’s confrontation the day before had lasted an hour, ending in his writhing on the floor, kicking over metal chairs and agonizing while Justin made harsh, gritty sounds and seemed to agonize at least as much as the person he was helping.

The court case against M.I.U. and Maharishi was finally to begin at the Fairfield courthouse. Justin’s lawyer was preparing his witnesses, like ‘the gang of three’ who, having just been expelled from M.I.U.—met nightly with Justin and Vance. Other students whose rights had been abridged and Fairfielders who had been kicked out of the TM movement would also be witnesses. Vance told me that I might have to testify.

Justin was allowing his attorney part of the seminar to pose questions to those likely to testify. Imagining myself before the court, I realized the M.I.U. lawyers could pick me apart. In such a formal and terribly public venue, with Justin’s reputation on the line, they would use my fragility and drill me senseless. They might even call me as a witness—against Justin! No, I could not let that happen! Suddenly, the last three

months turned into self-delusion, and only one solution remained. I left the hall, drove to the Broadway House and packed, hoping no one would see me. I called my only ally in the outer world, saying to my mother, “I just can’t take this and I’ve gotta come home.” I pictured myself eating her cooking, watching TV on the couch, taking her to the art museum in Forest Park. I could drive a delivery truck and in a decade or so maybe return to a seminar. Once again I left a note, hurriedly written, and drove off.

But second thoughts circled me around Fairfield for an hour, out toward Ag Hall twice, until the courtroom returned and all the dominoes in my head fell down. I drove past the town’s Frank Lloyd Wright house and into the night. After an hour, where the snow-blown highway split, I went around and around, until the ninth circle, the level of hell Dante would have likely picked for me, when I headed to St. Louis. I saw my sentimental, placating, honeyed, gutless life and felt exactly what hell was. I would write *The Poems of Hell*, hopefully making one real contribution to literature before I died.

I got in late. Mother, a light sleeper, hearing me closing the metal door that stuck on a fragment of ice, met me in the kitchen, giving me a fragile hug in her pastel robe. But once again, after a rocky sleep, I sat to meditate and felt pulled into and engulfed by the full throttle of horror, an overdose of the same meta-stuff I had been fighting for two months. I rose in white panic, tried to scream, tried to get to the door, where I passed out. Only for a moment. I had no footing, no idea how I crawled through what had been my father’s drawing room to the windowed study where there was lots of light and a phone. Surprised I could remember, let alone dial, the number, I waited while the phone was ringing. Across the bright street, the apartments began fading before my eyes—the world was growing splotchy, visibly disappearing!

“Hello? Hello, Matthew? Thank God. It’s me! Yeah, Bill.” His voice was stern, asking if I wanted to speak to Justin.

“No, no. The world...is going fast, it’s...falling from my eyes! Matthew!”

He asked if I would speak to Eva and gave me the number for the Sixth St. House.

Eva was soon asking, “Bill, can you come back?” Her voice was water and earth.

“Yes, yes, the world was going away, it was literally going...I’m so terrified!”

“Bill, just pretend you’re on a mountain, climbing back up.”

“I’ve fallen off, just hanging...by a finger.”

“Okay. Now, just take one step. Will you do that? Do you want to climb back up the mountain?”

Minutes later I was telling my mother that I had made another mistake, that I had to return, to face myself. Poor woman! I had put her through more in the past winter than in all the seasons of her life. She made me a sandwich. Her kind hands on my face let me see into a rare heart, but I was too scared to stay and thank her.

Outside the city, I realized I was still in trouble. The car confining, I opened the windows, turned the heat to high. I sang. The evil presence followed me. I prayed, drove faster, slowed. If a cop stopped me, I knew I’d end up in a psych ward. I shouted, “I believe! God, help me! I believe! For three hours, I chanted, until I saw the sign: Fairfield, 10 miles. It was 5:30, big-flaked flurries easing the darkness. The upstairs lights of the Broadway house made patterns on the snow below.

Roland answered the door. It had taken everything in me to knock. He and Klaus were finishing dinner. “So you think you’re demonic?” came the friendliest voice in the world. Klaus and I could tell you stories that’d make your shirttail

curl.” And the two men chatted, gave me some spaghetti, and kept on till I laughed, cueing Roland to say the fear was over. We went to the evening session. Ag Hall felt almost like home.

I took a third-row seat on the right side. Justin saw me, saying, “You were just testing to see how vulnerable I was, eh?” His voice, not harsh, maybe held some warmth.

The night was filled with Level-Two confrontations. After the World Teacher had Roland groaning on his knees in two minutes—the record—and the applause died, Justin said, “Bill Howell.” I did not rise from my seat.

“Do you want to be at the mike?” the World Teacher asked, looking my way.

I did. I went up and held onto the mike stand for support, looking out over the audience. Nadine’s gaunt, stern face smiled from the front row; she made a fist and I read her red lips: “Come on!” At least my head was not in a yellow fog.

“Why are you so full of fear?” Justin asked, paging through the *Collected Poems* of T.S. Eliot. Of course I wanted to answer, feeling I should know, but when I started to move my mouth, I didn’t know, not in words that I could utter.

*Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways”  
And how should I presume?*

Justin, reading from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” added, “I can’t even get near you.” He inhaled, saying he was taking some fear away. Then he inhaled for another thirty seconds, as if breathing in my fear. It seemed to help.

“That took a bit of it away.” He told the audience, “I’m going to be the happiest fairy in the world,” as he exited, hid in the curtains, then came out with lips pursed and eyes aslant, his face in an elfin upturn. He took out a wand, tapping me on the head three times. “Drat!” he grumbled, taking out another

wand, another, going through all six of them. Nothing. Then, behind the curtain again, he told me to tell everyone what a World Teacher Seminar was. Receiving no audible response, he asked the audience who he should enact to help me, and took Holly's advice. Out stalked The Incredible Hulk—face puffed, arms back, chest way out, eyes ferocious to the audience's 'Oooooo' as he came closer, closer, then gave a green shout in my face that had everyone but me in laughter.

Justin came over, saying, "I've got a problem." He had twisted his arms together and could not get them undone. He asked for help. Then his feet became knotted together, the left one going one way, the right the other way. So I knelt to undo them, managing to get them both pointing the same way, when Justin, in the same tux he had worn when I first got to the mike in New York, went groaning down on the stage.

It took me a few seconds to understand that Level-Two had finally begun. Almost involuntarily my hands tightened in my pockets and I was pushing, pushing inside till my face got red, part of me wondering what was going on, part of me realizing I was not pushing hard enough and most of me going to my knees, gritting and bearing down.

Sometime later, a minute or two or three, Justin told me to get up. "Bill Howell deserved this for sitting in his hell for two months," he announced to the cameras.

I rose. Someone gasped. Justin asked for opinions. Nadine said she couldn't recognize me, had at first thought I was a demon. Hints of shock ran through my veins. Justin handed me a hand mirror to reveal my face hot with the glow of battle, a warrior's countenance. Never had my eyes been fierce and powerful like that. Someone said I was the most changed of all those who had received Level Two. Everyone seemed to agree.

“What is a World Teacher Seminar, Bill?” Justin asked once again.

“It’s standing in the place you are in.”

Without ceremony, he told me to step down.

I hadn’t had to find my words when I spoke. Now each step back to my seat was made of my body calmly knowing that this step, and then the next one and then the one after that was exactly the step I should be taking. I wished my chair were miles away so that I could have stepped like this for hours.

After the course, I found myself talking to Sarah, Roger’s wife. Roger was back and both were in Fairfield, working for WTS. She had received no Level Two, told months ago when she failed to break through during the second Vancouver seminar that she would have to purge herself of her family—her father a fundamentalist minister who had the whole family—except her brother Mel, currently living in another Broadway House apartment—praying daily for Sarah’s freedom and that Justin Snow be sent to hell.

We had a newsletter to get out before I was to leave for the Easter Course in Victoria. Justin wanted me to go. The next morning Roger came out of the bedroom to say we had a newsletter to do. On the couch, I went back to sleep. He again came out with Sarah to say how much had to be done, that he had to meditate. I stretched, looked at him like he was a cuddly stuffed poodle and stretched again. He loudly shut the door. Putting on a pot of coffee, Sarah said to me, smiling on the couch, “That’s the most relaxed I’ve ever seen you. I bet that’s the most relaxed you’ve been in your whole life.”



## CHAPTER 10: TO MEAN OR NOT TO MEAN

I arrived at Annapurna for the Easter Course to Roland announcing, “Bill’s demon is about a quarter of what it was when he was here nine months ago.” Jason and Tobin were there, as well as Adam, whom I had not seen since my dawn departure from New York, plus several whom I was meeting for the first time: Douglas Meers, a baby-faced educator and his wife Lillian, a mother and school teacher; and the articulate Terence, who drove a bus but looked more like a diplomat. I liked the Meers, but there was something about Terence that I immediately mistrusted. I stayed at Millstream, a country house half an hour away, where those in the ‘second circle’ lived.

There Lillian Meers, whom I felt to be like a sister, said, “Of all those who’ve joined Justin, you alone are part of us. You’re so dear to him.” Someone else remarked, “This is the first time I’ve seen you naturally happy.” Even the formidable Madelaine, who had barely spoken to me up to this point, could not believe it was me, “You’re so much more supple and vulnerable,” she confided. At lunch with Roger, who was still struggling, I was asked how I had come through everything so well. I told him that I had simply accepted that Level Two had changed me, though I could tell him little more. We all had to find our own way. I could feel my star rising. Justin even called on me to help Adam get through a difficult spot at the mike on the second day of the seminar. And when Justin had handed a white rose to Lydia the next night for her valorous assistance in several confrontations, the intense confections of love between them were visible to me, as if I were witnessing the perfume of adoration.

It was a grand course. Until the final evening when Mel, Roger’s brother-in-law, tried to help a young woman at the

mike, someone the Celestials said would live only five years unless she quit “fooling around...in order to ruin Justin’s mission in the world.” Justin, feeling something hugely amiss, had left the seminar to briskly walk the three kilometers to Annapurna—with all of us following. There in the front room he did a purificatory ceremony involving fire and said that someone must be in league with her. ‘Is it me?’ various of his friends asked. Suddenly, having neither conquered nor solved the darkness that had assailed me prior to my Level Two, I felt afraid that I could be the co-conspirator. But, back at the seminar mike, the focus fell on Mel, who under pressure made some strange remarks, and I could only wonder if I would have done any better up there. When the World Teacher asked, “Are you the co-conspirator?” and Mel made some off-the-cuff answer, “Justin had shouted, “He’s the Devil, he’s the Devil!” Everyone backed away from the hapless Mel, Justin ordering, “None of the women should look—it’s too horrible,” before he sprang and hit the terrified young man in the face, followed by a pitcher of water thrown on his head, after which Justin was physically attacked by the young M.I.U. student with whom Mel had conspired. Eva and Lydia immediately rushed to the prone World Teacher, wrapping him in silk, then carrying him to the center of the room, where Maharishi’s picture was brought and flowers were laid by Justin’s almost breathless face, which Eva held in her lap. The Celestials spoke prayers for the prone warrior, his feet outstretched, with a Hail Mary going on in the outer reaches. The passion of Justin Snow lasted four hours, ending with the Celestials speaking a blessing over a symphony by some Czech composer.

*This Easter purging has brought great purity to Earth.  
The huge breach in Creation, caused by the Devil  
inflicting injury on the purity of the universe as  
personified by Justin, has been healed.*

*In that breath, the hordes of Hell rose up, only to be caught in the crack as it closed by Justin's courage and divine agency.*

Justin's head rose momentarily to offer a glance of the most vulnerable triumph sweetly emanating to the rapt audience, dozens of hands folded on dozens of breasts, the slumping body of the divine friend being guided through a fog of incense. With the finale of Easter complete, Mary and I helped take down the many rows of chairs, she looking me in the eye once to say, "Wasn't that the most incredible night of your life? Whew! We're all in this together."

So began another season of ironies, since in the stakes having been raised to the hilt, I had lost whatever confidence Level Two had brought and was again thrust into the terror of feeling utterly separate.

The next day, the first day of spring, Justin had a dinner on the Annapurna lawn to celebrate what the Celestials termed 'the greatest event since the Crucifixion.' Before a ceremony of gratitude in which we were to lay flowers before a photo of Maharishi next to Justin's chair, I ran into Roger at the corner flower shop. "We're getting to be good friends," he said, speaking of all we had been through together. I barely managed a 'yeah' as he mentioned that earlier his brother-in-law had gone to Sunnyside to see Justin and had confessed to praying to the Devil by a garbage can next-door.

Soon I was trembling as I offered my flowers. Would I be found out?

The following morning I accompanied Vanya and the 'gang of three' to the ferry to Port Angeles, though Justin had encouraged Matthew and everyone else to stay on another day. I had said I had to get back to Fairfield to take care of business piling up in the Broadway House. With the old cloud hovering, I could bend the truth like water. Then on the ferry to Seattle

came hellacious visions of a robotic world controlled by the forces of a final lack of meaning. I had zero idea how I was going to survive.

I spent the night in a YMCA, where I wrote my mother a note to speak my admiration and love for her, that, no matter what happened, Justin was a blameless man full of integrity, and all was part of the divine plan. Vanya and the ‘gang of three’ all joined me on a flight to St. Louis. We picked up my car at my mother’s apartment, where I averted her eyes and gave her a hug good-bye. I have no knowledge how I managed to drive to Fairfield or how Vanya failed to see the tragic story my face must have held.

Every event—the trial having been postponed, for example—spoke to me of the influence the demonic, linked to me, was exerting and made obvious to me my league with the forces that would bring Justin Snow down. My world was focusing down to one option only: Suicide, with no traceable evidence to Justin or WTS. But how to deface myself beyond all recognition, since anything less would link me to Justin Snow? Before I realized that I had no guts for dying, I tried to break all ties, burning everything—a journal from Matthew, the book of Whitman poems from Vanya, the picture of Maharishi from the Barrannis, and a blue meditation shawl from Sondra—for their sakes. In the oil-can incinerator out back of the house, in the dark of early morning, I watched my old attachments rise in billows of black smoke.

But there was a newsletter to get out. Then Justin was to arrive. I decided to leave just as he got into town. Then I decided to wait until he called. Then I decided to wait. There was a seminar at St. Mary’s as soon as he returned. It was there I saw him, his entrance as mysterious as Maharishi’s the first time I saw the Master in the Swiss hotel at Villars-sur-Ollon high above Lake Geneva. Roland came up to me to say, “Justin

says you're going to be the resident expert on fear," as if some potion were being created for me whereby I would anoint all newcomers and so protect them from the horrible state that haunted me. I had always wanted to be expert in something, I thought, as Justin began the course with Level-Three confrontations, a new gift he had been given in which he pointed his finger at the confrontee's heart and, making a sound like a buzzing fly, opened up something in the chest. Everyone was to come to the mike. Including me.

Having watched Roger stick out his chest before going to his knees, I stuck out my chest. Nothing happened. But then, as the process finished, for ten astounding seconds, as if I had been blinded all my life, I could suddenly see with a clarity that staggered me as I looked out, now with my heart as well as my eyes, which for some reason focused on Matthew, his laugh saying, "Well, it's about time." I stood there and said to Justin, "What...how'd you do that...what happened...?" The place was in uproar, and for the first time I actually wanted to stay at the mike. But Justin merely said, "Sit down, Bill." Afterwards, Roland came up to say: 'Justin hopes now you will put on weight. He says you're spiritually thin. So, now this can change, eh, Billy Boy?'

That night at the Sixth Street House, I came to get Lydia's grocery list and heard the voice I dreaded calling from the living room in a buddy-buddy way, "Come on in here, you timid blond whipping post; sit your bottem down and join us." Eva, Lydia and Roland, along with Roger were sitting on the floor circling Justin, who had just given Eva Level Four. Lydia told me how Justin had bent backwards, then doubled to his knees, before lying on the floor as if near death. It being very late, Eva asked Justin to stop, but he said that he wanted me to have Level Four.

I received this silent attunement of minds, not sure what was happening, afraid that, if Eva was so hard on him, my demon would be far too demanding, but it was a completely diaphanous experience. As Eva helped the World Teacher upstairs to bed, I said goodnight to Lydia and Roland and left with Roger. We sat in my car outside the Broadway House, basking almost an hour in whatever it was we each had received. I felt like I had just won the lottery after a terrorist bomb had nearly cost me my life.

The next day, the second Chicago Course, the biggest so far, was highlighted by a woman hopelessly in the throes of anorexia. Though the woman, clearly dying, had no breakthrough, Justin confronted her on her lack of will to live, and I felt something marvelous happening through him. In appreciation, I wanted to be able to pour myself out in a smile. When he walked down the nearest aisle, for ten radiant seconds I mustered into one glowing look all of my desire to love, to return, to be a brother to him. He didn't stop or acknowledge me, but a dozen paces beyond me he acted as if he'd been suddenly hit from behind, casting a rapid glance back and, as if he had been attacked, exclaimed, "Jesus, where'd that come from?" I sensed I had done something wrong, and because I could not put my finger on what it was, I imagined it far worse than merely being inappropriate.

I didn't attend Justin's Mayday birthday celebration that night. But after the course, Justin's attorney called a meeting of WTS staff to outline how a seminar should be professionally done, everyone receiving a specific job but me. Then we all left for Justin's hotel room on the 33<sup>rd</sup> floor, where the World Teacher announced that WTS would make a million dollars that year and soon be "the corporation of corporations." He pointed to a building of silver glass outside the window: "World

Teacher Seminar will have such a building one day very soon.” I found this hard to believe.

Suddenly Lydia was saying she felt the room under siege and asked, “Does anyone not want to be here?”

Justin echoed, “Who’s responsible?”

I had little doubt about who it was and raised my hand, but Justin shut me up and had everyone leave the room, then return one by one, as in a science experiment. The process took a fearful hour. When I entered, at the end, the Celestials said, “Here is a man who treads a dark path that is very difficult. He has lost what was given to him on the Clear Mount by the sinless man of Justice.” I remembered my Level Two, when I had felt like a warrior, but now my head was wrapped in fog. “See,” the angelics continued, “he has only to remember this immense gift when he took a great leap forward in evolution, but he cannot hold onto that power. He identified with the pitiable person in the Easter seminar and was greatly weakened. The demonic has broken his will.”

It went half an hour, until Justin told me to leave for ten minutes. “You won’t jump out of any windows, will you?” he quipped as I moved for the door. My return found the room in party gaiety, with Roland telling me that Sarah was also the cause of this incident, that her situation was at a grave point, but that she and I influenced each other in a needy way and that we were to drive back to Fairfield together, discuss our shared situation and try to find out where it was corrupt. The next day on the shady steps of the Broadway House, Vance Price told me that I had only to make the right choices and put them together, that then I would be full-time again, but for now I was a quarter-time, my salary \$50 a week instead of \$200.

I was actually encouraged, that my fate had been put in terms of choices I had to make, rather than in terms of being hopelessly demonic. And I was glad not to live so close to the

flame, moving out from the Broadway House to live with some seminar friends. I thought about getting other work, but no one in Fairfield would hire someone involved with Justin Montclair Snow.

The court case was still on. Justin and his attorney and the Celestials were busy with details, the battle going Justin's way, then growing murky and difficult because the judge was new, inexperienced, and tending to the conservative. Justin had devised a long system of questions for M.I.U. officials in pre-trial depositions designed to make them squirm at their own hypocrisy. I stayed away from the proceedings, except the second day of his taking the stand. He spoke eloquently for nearly an hour. During cross-examination of university officials, Justin applauded his counsel's killer instinct. But finally the decision, which Justin appealed, was indecisive. It reinstated the 'gang of three', but allowed M.I.U. power to expel these and other students on other, more cunning grounds. The suit had failed to involve Maharishi, who had stayed in India. There was no monetary compulsion on M.I.U., the university counter-suing on charges of trespass and slander. Justin didn't mind, saying it would keep things going awhile in his clash with the TM Movement demon. As a result, many of Justin's friends snuck onto campus to distribute his latest letter to the Curriculum Committee and posters about upcoming seminars.

Fear, unabated since Chicago, could not go unexpressed, and, while playing paddleball, I swung, missed, and hit myself across the bridge of the nose, the scar feeling like the mark of the demonic. Then my back went out, and in lightning strikes of pain, I was unable to read, meditate, or even get out of bed. I lay for five days, wondering if the roof was going to fall on me next. Damnation threatening from every side, I felt that this was



what Rimbaud, Verlaine, Neitzsche and countless others faced: madness.

Compounding my immobilization came Justin's announcement of three upcoming seminars on three consecutive weekends. The Celestials said that on the second course there would be another consciously demonic person, as had been found on the first course, but this time the person would be closer to Justin and trying to wreck WTS. Then, on the third course, some even bigger demon would be found out, someone even closer to Justin. But WTS would not be harmed. That second weekend, one of my former M.I.U. students, who had ridden with me to that infamous first New York Christmas course to care of the children, was caught on a very big hook, as I lay on a table in the back of the hall, ready to bolt. Pushed to confess that she had at age 14 thrown away all hope, the child-care woman was being called 'the devil's consort.' Justin told the witch to leave, to not come within 500 miles of him. Then the Celestials spoke: "Anyone getting off the train of The Context will be cast out of the universe." The lapidary of my mind tumbled that edict over and over. I didn't have to run this time. But soon. I had another week.

Then came the third venue: The Memorial Day Course, whose posters read: 'The greatest clash of Good and Evil in history.' Despite a limp, I helped put them up on Fairfield's lampposts and phone poles. Irony dripped like sweat as I assisted the Gang of Three in advertising the very event that was designed to capture me. I sweat through a T-shirt a night. Yet I still helped out, gardening at the Sixth Street House. Justin had just returned from the first Salt Lake seminar, where a life-long Catholic had truly prayed for the first time, and he had brought back new Levels of Cosmic Confrontation. He asked me how the gardening was going and my few limp words had him assemble everyone into his living room. Realizing he could do

nothing, he had the Celestials speak and, while they went on about my isolation, I undid the velcro of the back brace I had been wearing for a month. The ripping sound stopped everything, before shocked silence broke into peels of laughter, Justin in stitches to think I was pulling my guts out. Seeing me separate from the laughter, he told me, “Bill, I want you to get three of these women to fall in love with you in the next three days. So who’s it gonna be?”

Having named Mary, Holly and Nadine, I was feeling better. I did manage to get a bit closer to these three Context veterans, but the hyperbole of the posters all over town could only refer to *my* demon, which was bigger than any boundary I could name.

The unbelievable day arrived. The course began, with lots of newcomers in the audience. “What a course to be a newcomer on,” I thought. Sondra had come from Boston. There was an interesting blonde named Julian from Seattle, and I was going to introduce myself, but realized that by the end of the day I would likely no longer be part of The Context. Getting through the largely introductory morning, during lunch, I packed, then returned to the seminar. There I saw Janine. I said ‘Hi’ and meant ‘bye.’ I took a seat very near the door. Justin began walking through the audience, and soon was behind me, slowly stepping down the aisle. Then he was talking at my side. He did not turn and say, “Gotcha!” as I feared, but strolled on as he continued back to the stage. Yet I knew he knew. His back to me, I quietly got up and walked out into the blazing day. I got into my car, drove around awhile, thought of Estes Park high in the Rockies, and drove westward. But I had only \$250 and, past the tulip town of Pella, I somehow didn’t turn west, so I headed east toward Iowa City, where I had lived a glorious few years, having started a day-care center there. I went to a bookstore, looked at the ad board for possible jobs,

asking the woman at the register if she knew of anything. She gave me that strange look, one I had always felt reserved for bums and undesirables. My eyes must have told her I was a drifter. With a lifetime of time, I went to the university art museum, strolling there for a meaningless twenty minutes. With nowhere to go, I had evidently been drawn by art, by beauty, despite my incapacity to appreciate any of it.

There was nothing here for me, so I drove on, past the Amish town of Kalona, where I stopped at a cheese shop to fill the sword point of hunger with samples. I admired the simple life of these people who had clear minds that could wall out complexity and keep faith within believable boundaries. Instead of standard walls and a roof, my inner house of worship held innumerable rooms in stories that soared who knows how high and basements that plunged who knows how far down. I pushed on, with no timetable and no destination, though I could see I was being pulled back to Fairfield. I felt I had to know if the Celestials were naming me as the Big Fish. Soon I was at the locked Broadway House, climbing the downspout to use the phone. I called a good friend in Salina, who said I could paint his house, an old three-story place that would take ladders and weeks of hard work in hot sun. I called my mother, letting her again know that I could not take the pressure, but that I had work with a dear friend in Kansas. She said she understood.

Soon, parking at a marine supply store across the street from Ag Hall, I was looking through the large fan hole, the fan too loud not to be turned off, into the seminar I was once again on the outside looking in, just like my vision in the blue cloud. Lillian Meers sat just ten feet from my gaze. Of course, if found, I knew Adam and others would race outside to grab me and throw me at the feet of Justin and the Celestials. I stayed there six hours, until a Las Vegas friend came to the mike, someone Justin had two years ago invited to Victoria to be

confronted for ten days to hopefully catch him up to the level of the Annapurnans. Justin had said the man was destined to be a Master Teacher. But it hadn't gone well, and I watched some new seminar participant practically strangle the poor man with his own red tie to get him 'happening.' But Justin was not rising in glory out of his director's chair with cosmic condemnations.

Meanwhile, three guys came up to me to ask if I had a match and, as I tried in pantomime to shoo them away, soon someone had turned the fan on. Had I been seen? I continued to watch, but heard nothing. Soon, with Lillian, Mary and Nadine exiting to the outhouse, I was like a snake slithering in the grass shaded in the afternoon slantlight.

I slept in my car by a pond five miles out of town, the next day spent at the fan hole in various stages of peeping, slithering and crouching. Mary, before lunch, came out of the outhouse and clearly saw me. I stood. She just looked. I could see the sadness coming out of her eyes. I appreciated that. Running to my car, I waited, but no one ran out. I still had to know. Back at the fan, I saw Janine at the mike. I had known she had a crush on me, and I heard her ask if Justin thought that she and a guy she had brought, named Boyd, would make a good couple. The World Teacher had asked if she was "completely over that other guy?" and then gave them his blessing. Then came Levels 8-10 "for the attunements of minds, then hearts, then souls." The final event of The-greatest-clash-between-Good-and-Evil Seminar involved a friend of Sondra's, an accomplished author-sculptor, a fairly famous woman in her sixties. She got heavily confronted, Justin not allowing fame or status as exemptions to life's desire for purity. It seemed somehow unjust to me, yet who was I to judge, slinking around in the shade and secretly hoping this artist would be the one to fulfill the Armageddon promised by the

course. But Justin had her weeping in an hour. This interesting woman was not the finale. I could only assume the real finale was outside looking in.

Just before the mikes were turned off and those inside ventured out, I went to my car and drove slowly by Ag Hall, everyone now outside in the late sun, talking, gathering in a circle around an unseen Justin, like a Maypole dance. I caught a glimpse of blonde hair and sensed it was the new woman named Julian, and just shook my head to think that, as I was exiting the theater of life, I could even entertain the impulse to get to know her. She, I figured, was just the lovely symbol of all that was passing away, as I headed for Kansas. I saw an Arkansas plate on a Mazda ahead of me. It was Janine and Boyd, going only 50, so I slunk in my seat as I roared past.

Twenty minutes later, outside of Ottumwa where Roland had displayed his heroic heart after his car crash, I was turning at a historic marker telling of Chief Wapello. At his statue, I read about the long treks, sicknesses, battles and treaties, plus some general's eulogy of this Native leader. Over the cornfields, bits of the charged past came rolling toward me like blown seeds: pages from grade-school history books reminding me of all who had risked, lost, given their lives; all who had raised pens to shout down despots; all who had fought for liberty, for family, for nations; I recalled Maharishi's story about life being a precious gift, that out of a million possibilities one achieves a human life, which is truly a diamond but which most people sell at the price of spinach. I stood before Chief Wapello and saluted.

This was my third betrayal, and I knew that likely I would be swallowed up in the infinite maw of annihilation this very night. I imagined myself back in grammar school, studying about American history, winning a class spelling bee, having a girlfriend—and I remembered sitting at my desk in Ms.

Ford's 4<sup>th</sup>-grade class, could feel myself drawing a geometric figure in art class, raising my hand after solving a math problem, running outside to play kickball during recess. How did I get here, on the thin rim of life's limit? It was as if I, a crewman on a pre-Columbian ship, was finding out that the earth was, indeed, flat, and was about to fall off its strange edge where 'there be dragons.'

I stopped to watch a ballgame in the Ottumwas City Park. In the stands a man said his grandson played first base. So I rooted for that team, and when asked what I did for a living, I told the man, "I paint houses." I did sleep that night, actually slept well, and was amazed to simply wake up in sunlight. But when nearing Kansas City, my birthplace, I viscerally hit me that I was driving into the rest of my life, that the innocent child of being raised by good parents who paid me a penny a bushel to pick backyard apples was now in the existential tension of life revealed in its nakedness. Now, in my small car, the vast shadow lived again, very near, as if in the back seat, my chest tightening, my breathing growing shallow. So I focused on the one way I could yet be useful. I said it, sang it, prayed it. My body strapped with fear and my mind a sieve for every gritty thought, for four hours I chanted my one remaining achievable desire:

"I'm gonna reach Salina alive and paint that house; I'm gonna paint, gonna paint that house, gonna paint that house, gonna paint that house!"

## CHAPTER 11: LETTING GO THE HAWK

I never did paint the house—it was too tall, required a professional with long ladders and scaffolding, not to mention that Kansas summer being a record scorcher. But I did put in a patio, bricks on sand, and it was enough to give me focus and a goal. I would ride my bike through this town with streets like corn rows, search for hours its dull residential sections, where living seemed so known, no houses down mysterious drives, no architecturally provocative dwellings, no chances taken. Yet I wished I could be like these people rocking on their porches, their children playing on porch steps in sunshine, or as they were mowing their lawns, planting and pruning their manageable flowerbeds, getting ready for visiting relatives.

For the first month, the leaden presence was ever at my back, ready to close in. Nothingness was all around, its edges made of sleep gone rotten. It gently nudged my sheets so that lights on the third floor of my friend's house were threatening. I woke tired, got little rest, half surprised to wake up each day. At least I had the patio to build.

When I finished that project, though afraid to be alone, I found an apartment that I liked with lots of windows. Actually, my friend's wife kicked me out, put my duct-taped suitcase outside her back door. I did meet people, joined the Food Coop, a peace group, Amnesty International and a folk dance club. Soon afterwards, I got a job teaching at a business college. And then I discovered the Prairie Raptor Project, which rehabilitated birds of prey. I would ride my bike eight miles to clean cages, feed mice to the Barn Owls circling their heads in primitive display, and pretend I could talk to the Great-horned Owls, so strong they could break a rabbit's back in one soundless swoop.

My favorites were the Red-tailed Hawks, wildest of wild creatures.

Soon I was driving far out into the rolling countryside to let the long-caged raptors go. I would stand at dusk on some back road miles from where the bird had been kept and fed. With a padded glove, from a cardboard box I took out a creature that for six months had been confined, usually for emaciation or a broken wing. Just above the talons I would hold it high in the air. After one last look into those forever untamable eyes just a foot distant yet a world away, I would raise my arm and, with a flick, let go. In a single moment, what was wild was wild again, free without limits.

Maybe that did something. My chest eased as I ministered to these aliens who also were confined to cages. Holding their untamed naturalness in my gloved hand, I held a part of myself.

Sondra had somehow managed to phone to say that Justin had asked about me: “Bill just needs to learn how to receive from me.”

“I can do that,” I told her over the phone. Though not ready to return, I talked with her once more, said I would like to get back into things, to which she mentioned a woman named Julian who was holding WTS video seminars in Seattle. I wanted to ask if she had blond hair, but didn’t. I also toyed with going to San Francisco, where Justin had moved WTS headquarters in order to ‘confront the *est* (Erhardt Seminar Training) demon.’ But that felt too hot, too near.

With my teaching semester over, I was reluctant to leave the sweltering Kansas plains—‘a great place to live but you wouldn’t want to visit,’ someone had joked—yet thought about heading to Seattle, maybe picking apples on the way in eastern Washington and attending some of the videotape sessions Julian—maybe she was the one I had briefly seen—was



offering. Playing basketball and tennis, having met some really outstanding people and being involved with the raptors had been healing. Yet my loneliness was still intense. I asked God for a sign.

The next day I shared my poetry with a woman someone at the Food Co-op said I should meet who took outstanding photographs of the Kansas prairie. I told her I was leaving in three days for Seattle and, when she asked me to share my work, I explained that I didn't feel present enough in my poems. She asked why. I spoke of The Context, my dilemma, the fear, the clash of Good and Evil...then I was in tears, crying, "I wish I didn't know what I know.... I wish I didn't have all this...knowledge!"

I had felt that pain would never come out of me. Broken for the first time in months, I left her house hopeful. To truly feel was a highlight of my Salina days. The next day she called to ask if she could pray with me. I didn't feel a 'come to Jesus' vibration from her, so I agreed. She knocked on the screen door of my studio apartment; we talked, were silent and prayed. When she had me remember my childhood, the tears of happy, though difficult, release were the divine sign I had requested.

Then, in a folk-dance class, the day before I was going to leave, I met a woman who said, "I've never looked so deeply into anyone's eyes. You're a person of tremendous power." No words could have better fit my emptiness. I stayed on, enjoying her ensuing affection and nourished by someone who believed in me. To be in the presence of love that I thought would never again be granted was in itself healing.

I cried and loved and wrote furiously, poems of dreams and family—angry poems about the life I had missed being an only child in a quiet household, and about the birds of prey that had been my strange companions. At the annual Audobon

meeting, I got to read “Letting Go the Hawk,” which ended with:

We know the air  
wants wings and hope  
the hawk will live. No  
guarantees. And we want none.

The salve of applause was another agent of release.

I decided to stay on. Life had shifted. An all-day bike ride to Lindsbourg, bird watching with a grand old priest, the job I got with an ad agency and the video script I wrote—all these were proofs in a subtle equation about my life adding up to life itself.

Then my photographer friend, now as dear as a sister, said she could be of little further service, but that her mentor would like to meet me. The next day I was at the home of her friend, an earthy Venezuelan woman. We sat at an oak table in their large living room marked by its cathedral ceiling. We talked and the woman inquired if I had grieved for the death of my father two years before. I had not, there having been no funeral, my father having donated his body to science. She had me close my eyes and picture him lying on his hospital bed, about to die, God having forgiven this bald man of seventy-two. What would I say to him? she asked.

Never thinking myself good at visualization, I realized that the way she had put the situation ran counter to my understanding of life in *The Context*, and said honestly, “I can’t imagine God would just forgive him...until he’s faced his own shortcomings.”

“Speak to him,” the woman encouraged.

Now, amazingly able to see my father sitting up in a bed with white sheets, I spoke out loud: “Dad, I...I always just wanted to love you, wanted to be close to you, but you spoke

only of your work, moved your pencils around templates, did your engineered drawings, wrote reports. You never came to my basketball games, never played catch with me, not once, never kissed Mom in public or showed affection, never held...never,...never held....me, told me no stories, gave me only one piece of advice—‘Don’t marry a rich girl’—and that was it! You told me little of your friends, nothing of your life, of yourself, nothing...nothing. I just wanted to be your son, tell you my love, my great love which never found a way through your eyes.”

Speaking this way to my father reclined in pillows, I had come close to his face. Not wearing his glasses, he just sat there, listening. All of a sudden, I was an inch away from his eyes full of love for the first time. My longing took me into these eyes—and through them, as if they were portholes into a world of liquid contentment. Then I fell, was helplessly falling into a bottomless dark well of pain, my wailings reverberating through the huge living room. I wept loudly for a long time into the wood of the round table where I sat, my head resting on my hands. I did not want to stop falling into that huge vertical corridor of pain, since it somehow was filled with an equal degree of what I could only term ‘bliss.’ Amazingly, that tube held a sense of complete safety. Afterwards, I walked out into a November blizzard, feeling free.

The very day after I felt strong enough to re-enter The Context, Duffy called to say a video seminar was going to be offered in Fayetteville the coming weekend. Two days later, still full of fear, I was driving to Arkansas where Rudy was showing seminar tapes. Janine was there, married, her husband showing signs of violence. We walked under huge trees and I listened to the canopy of her hope and the roots of her agony.

Two weeks later I was heading to Iowa City for a live Thanksgiving seminar, still wondering how I would ever climb

back. I was coming down with a cold, but just decided to breathe into the congestion—for four hours, so that I entered the seminar space energized and vulnerable, my cold evaporated. After six months away from Justin, I was returning more as his Peter, who had denied him three times, than his Judas.

Walking into a rented hall in the town I had once called home was both eerie and welcoming. I had been so beaten down that I had little to lose. Unable to imagine that I had come through all this hell only to be slapped back into even greater horror, I took a seat, remembering how back in New York, just before I had run away that first time, Justin said I would move fast once I learned to trust. Roland came over and, exuding a simple love, said, “Feeling fear, Bill? It’ll be fine.” I was glad to see Sondra there, more contained and lovelier in her bearing than I had previously appreciated. “I owe it all to Justin,” she said. “He gave me a lot during the Summer Course.”

Over dinner she told me of the court case finale in Fairfield, that because the suits and countersuits would have taken years, Justin, on the advice of the Celestials, devised a new and more fundamental approach. He agreed to drop the case if Maharishi would answer four questions that Justin would put to him. The M.I.U. lawyers agreed, if Snow, should the Master’s responses not be in the World Teacher’s favor, would not give a seminar within fifty miles and would be jailed if he ever again set foot in Fairfield. Justin, believing himself to be Maharishi’s true son, had agreed. He and selected friends had gone to the courthouse, flowers in hand for the Master’s official call and then a victory celebration. But, to Justin’s first question: ‘Am I enlightened?’ Maharishi said, “No.” And to the second question, ‘Are my advanced meditation techniques from the Holy Tradition?’ the Master said another ‘no.’ ‘Is what I am teaching in accord with all the Laws of Nature?’ and ‘Are all who attend World Teacher Seminars coming closer to

your love thereby?’—both received a simple but searing ‘no.’ The four retorts had Justin and company plodding to their cars, flowers drooping. It was over. The pain drove everyone into surprising desolation. Yet barely three hours later, assembling everyone in his living room, Justin had his friends realizing what a boon that decision had been. Why had the Master’s voice sounded so nasty? Because the negativity of the TM Movement toward the World Teacher was so great that Maharishi, a being without negativity, was merely letting it pass through him. More significantly, the verdict had freed Justin to be the person God meant him to be. WTS was, henceforth, utterly not associated with the TM Movement, Maharishi or anything. It was only life in motion! Period.

As Sondra unveiled the story, I pictured Justin saying, “Can you imagine what would’ve happened if we’d won? Every TM idiot around the country would be heading to our door and I’d have had to lead a totally demonic movement!” Justin had rebounded from defeat in just three hours! The lowest depths offer the greatest transformative opportunity, which is what life had been teaching me over the past months.

The next day I saw a woman who looked familiar. ‘It could not be that anorexic woman at the Chicago seminar seven months ago!’ I thought. This person in her long cashmere coat was lovely, and was indeed the very soul who had been so near death. And there was a new person, a Midwesterner who seemed quite interesting. He was long-time seeker who laughingly had termed himself ‘a dilettante without a dharma,’ meaning he was still looking for fullness, despite his having investigated TM and every other kind of spiritual practice and teacher. Justin seemed to like Mark O’Doyle—he man had a certain poise, and I sensed that he would pop up again at other WTS events.

The seminar had ended with everyone getting Level Eight. Not wanting to be last, I got in the line for the microphone on the right. But Justin moved the lines around, so that I was last. I feared what was coming. He finally turned to me. His finger pointed between my eyes. And then I was walking back to my seat. It was over. I had felt nothing of whatever attunement of mind was supposed to take place, but that mattered little to me, who had made it to the end of the seminar. I bought a pamphlet for \$1 just so Justin could write something in it. There was some small exchange with the author, a few questions, nothing resembling brilliance from me, but I felt I had survived, that I had come a bit closer to re-entering The Context. I immediately walked over to ask Roland if I could do childcare at the upcoming Fairfield Christmas, so I could afford to attend.

A month later, I left my writing job, the best job I had ever had; left the Food Co-op, where I had been on the Board; left the Peace Group, with whom I had made all-night vigils; left Amnesty International, having been granted my own amnesty; left my prayer sister; left the prairie where bison used to roam by the thousands, left the hawks in the flight cage re-learning to catch mice, their wings healing; left a woman who cared for me and who I fancifully thought I might one day rescue and lead to The Context.

As I drove to Fairfield for Christmas, I knew one thing only—nothing mystical, flashy or wise—only that I would not run anymore. And it was enough.

**PART THREE:**

**THE SANCTITY**

**OF**

**FINAL THINGS**

*We work by searching for things which can hurt us  
most deeply, but which at the same time give us  
a total feeling of purifying truth  
that finally brings peace.*

—Jerzy Grotowski—

## CHAPTER 12: DYING FOR TRUTH

World Teacher Seminar was history. It had dissolved in Maharishi's four 'no's' and what would be reborn was anybody's guess. Justin was no longer World Teacher, but just a person who was intensely human and without negativity.

I had just missed the San Francisco days of Justin Snow taking on Werner Erhardt. It seems that a few of the Victorians had been 'ested' early on in their relationship with Justin, who years ago had recommended the *est* course as the most efficient way to get rid of neuroses. He had been impressed with their growth--at first. Then he encountered a mysterious layer of utter invulnerability that had to be confronted. He wrote two pamphlets, applauding *est*'s 99% correctness, but ultimately denouncing it as more evil than anything, the missing 1% being an infinitely subtle and powerful barrier. He accused *est* of being a seemingly holistic system yet without an intrinsic connection to the spiritual wellspring of life. Yes, I had missed Justin's infiltration, gaining a sixth row seat as the founder of *est* was speaking to 600 *est* graduates, Justin, rising: "Werner, I would like to offer a paradigm which would allow us to discuss *est* in an innocent way that would be self-validating as to the truth of..." The confrontation between the former World Teacher and Werner Erhardt had been interrupted by Werner pointing his finger: "I know who you are!" with six bodyguards immediately carrying Justin out, as Eva screamed, "Let him go! He's the innocent one!" When Justin had promised to leave peaceably, he was put down, then in the ballroom doorway had turned to shout, "Jesus Christ!" as the bodyguards shoved him out of and slammed the doors. Less than two months later, when Eva told me that the papers had carried the story of



Erhardt closing down *est* workshops, I felt Justin's power to be like Christ's: ultimate victory in seeming defeat.

I had come to San Francisco from Kansas, arriving just a week after Justin and friends had headed back to Victoria. My three weeks there, in a rare spring blazing in January, found me getting some temporary work, which I loved since it required no responsibility on my part; playing some of the best basketball of my life; and walking and running the hills of this city of St. Francis, as if they were the seven hills of Rome. I had not minded missing the whole Justin-invades-San Francisco scene. From what I had heard of the office on fashionable Union Street, strict hours, morning meetings in which Justin commanded each soldier until he saw that every member of his squad knew exactly what was to be accomplished that day, dinners with their deep discussions and, of course, confrontations. Nadine had gotten the axe because her roommates noticed how, when they arrived home late, she was trying to gain attention even in the way she turned in her sleep. With such a fragile web as that was the great fly Nadine caught and sent away as being evil! I had liked Nadine. While not surprised to have heard that she credited Justin for pulling her out of the gutter eight years earlier, I couldn't imagine that she was evil. And then there was a seminar, that I had also not minded missing. Despite thousands of invitations sent, hours of collating and gathering addresses and stuffing envelopes and soliciting groups and individuals, almost no one other than regulars had attended and Justin had acted almost antagonistic to the few new people who did show up.

When I had been in San Francisco a week, word had come that Victoria was it: "No matter what: if you come and buy a home here, work or retire here, this is the place to be. This is the most important thing you can do for your evolution

and for the whole world. You must be here with us for at least 25 years. Nothing should stop you.”

I had driven with a friend I had met on the Fairfield Christmas course to a lagoon north of the city and, returning late, we were in need of dinner. I had stopped at a curbside phone to call the apartment on Bush Street where Justin’s San Francisco crew had lived and was asking Mark O’Doyle, in town for a few days, for the address of a great Indian restaurant I had heard him mention. It was Mark who said that Justin had just called to say how incredible things were in Victoria, that everyone must come, pronto. Wanting to go but frankly having too fine a time here, I wobbled on this invitation and—in the instant of my wanting to change the subject back to getting the address of the restaurant—a tremendous force hit me in the right temple. I went down, struck by a bullet, I thought, then reached a hand up to feel something wet on my head—blood! But my hand was not red. A clear, slimy substance was dripping as I got up in throbbing pain. One side of my jacket was splattered, as were two panes of the phone kiosk. Someone from a fast-moving car must have leaned far out a front-seat window to fire an egg that hit its mark square on.

As Mark and I had driven north the next morning, I was still amazed at how Creation had spoken in such a perfectly timed ‘coincidence.’ I told him, “The Context is not only where I am supposed to be, but it’s omnipresent. What other name is there for such a precise intelligence—in the moment of my wavering. And an egg, an egg! Can you believe it? Maharishi said the cosmos is in the shape of an egg—a cosmic egg hits me in the temple!” Mark was amazed. “Message received,” I called out the window as Mt. Shasta was just coming into view.

Mark intrigued me. Here was a self-sufficient seeker whose life was spent roaming the world, looking for a true teacher. He had just told me how he stopped his search when he

had met Justin Snow on the Iowa City seminar that had represented my return to The Context. First seeing Mark at the microphone there, I thought he must have been some long-time associate of Justin's, for he seemed to exude a brand of confidence melded with a sense of humor that had me impressed. But, during the summer course I had missed, Mark had not become close enough to be made an 'associate teacher. "Your problem's still too big, Mark," Justin had said.

As we drove along hour after hour, Mark, a grand inquisitor, drilled me about being on the mountain with Justin and, in doing so, helped reconnect me to the power inherent in that event. I was to see, as we roomed together in a motel across the river from Sunnyside, that discussions with Mark invariably cost me sleep, yet seemed worth the price. We talked, probed and confronted each other, feeling the expansive sense of freedom that self-knowledge brought.

Soon we were staying at the Battery House, a half-hour's walk below Annapurna, with two Victoria women on the fringes of The Context. One of them handed me "The Twenty-One Modest Aims of the Justin Montclair Snow Project, such as 'Complete intuitive mastery of interpreting present political events,' or 'Understanding and direct perception of The Beautiful—seeing the divine structure of the universe in a work of art,' or 'Full realization of one's professional and spiritual dharma.' They even included 'Mastery of the game of money.' But the one that most caught my attention, beyond even 'Supreme beauty of personality' and 'Physiological radiance, purity and vitality,' was 'Fulfillment of all experiential criteria of traditional and contemporary notions of Enlightenment.' There would be a quarterly journal published, an educational paradigm developed, research into Justin's new 'Techniques for the Discovery of Grace' and the now 14 Levels of Confrontation, a course on each of Shakespeare's tragedies, a

United Nations project to provide a resolution to the problems of the world, a commentary on the *Koran*, the *Bible*, the *Torah* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, not to mention books on sexuality, politics, death, money and God. All these projects interested me immensely, masking the fact that two of the Celestial predictions had not materialized:

*In twenty-one days we shall witness the unfolding of the perfect dramatic meaning of Justin and the Master in Fairfield together. This will be the most historic and ambitious undertaking of evolution ever—21 days of absolute intensity, beauty and drama.*

*Justin Snow has done enough, completing the arduous task he has come down to this earth to complete. For seven years he has battled the demonic and performed miracles that no man has done in this cycle of Creation.*

*Now Nature will complete the job, gathering ignorance from all parts of the world to one place so that a crack can form and force to be thrown into this fissure and die, allowing the Age of Enlightenment to shine forth. Fairfield has been chosen as the place where this crack will form.*

None of that seemed to matter, as Justin had the night before said to the thirty of us jammed into the library, “There have been wars throughout the ages. Men and women have given their lives for what they believed was right. Nations have been founded on the blood of patriots. Religions survived because of the courage of martyrs. Is this truth not worth everything? Would you die for The Context, for me, for the Truth? If I said that we were being opposed, would you stand

with me—even if the odds were 600 to 1 and you were quite sure you would not survive?” We were to return the next night—tonight—and Justin had assured us—his smooth face stern, his eyes full of fire—that he would know, should Roland wake each of us in the middle of the night, if we would come immediately and would not flinch. It was as if his very voice had been a manifestation, for I had clearly seen myself being jostled from sleep, with Roland saying, “It’s time. Are you coming? Now!”

Of course, despite Justin’s warm welcome the day I had arrived—“I’m very glad you are here, Bill”—I had put myself through every gyration of doubt. Even several of the stalwart Annapurnans were under fire. Some thirty of us were meeting three times a week and out of nothing—through humor, discussion of some article or book, dissecting a newscast or movie, through chanting or manifestations or confrontation, Justin created fascinating evenings. There seemed to be fewer confrontations these days, though new arrivals would have to be put through their paces, everything moving so quickly that a participant who went away for a week would have to be re-initiated via confrontation. Oddly, it was the Annapurnans who seemed to be catching the most flack. Recalling Mary’s ultra-sensitive hand and Duffy’s light-filled pseudo punch, I wondered why such incredible people were being confronted. Eva, Lydia and Roland were immune, being obviously in a class by themselves. Even though he made me jump through all sorts of hoops, I was becoming a closer friend to the closet friend of Justin, marveling how Roland connected everything to him. Justin claimed to be ‘just a person’ now—and that was the task of those around him: to treat the former World Teacher as a person. If the Project ever fell through, Justin told us he would teach high-school literature or go back to university and study philosophy. It was just life being life in every moment.

Most of us—after praying all night or whatever it took—returned the next night. Now coherent and committed, our task was to not ‘go dead.’ Justin was fierce, shouting at us, “Why aren’t you doing anything? Why’re you being so careless? You’re letting the lightning in your souls go flat. Boredom is death! Do you want to settle for mediocrity?” We were all groaning with struggle, as Justin screamed, “Don’t you want to fight for your vibrancy? It’s black in here!” And so I fought, we all did, pushing, grunting, willing and groaning till Justin said, “There, it’s getting better; come on, you flea bags,” and I pushed even harder against the memories of Columbus and Chicago, St. Louis and Salina. I pushed with everything I had. It took an hour, but finally the room was glowing, as if it had been cleaned and repainted. I would sweat out a lot of shirts, if that was what it took. I was not going to run again.

Indeed, soon I was living at the Monterrey House with Mark, two other Americans and Rudi, one of the Celestials. The Celestials, too, were history, having no purpose in post-WTS events around Justin Snow. The other Celestial, who had returned to Chicago to take over his father’s business, had written critical letters to Justin that made all of us in Victoria shake our heads, wondering how it could possibly be that Marv—who had channeled such utterly remarkable information about who Justin Snow is, about what WTS was—now stood outside the circle of grace. It made no sense.

What made sense to me was the sunshine I rode in on my bicycle to do yard work and gardening jobs, which I got because my rates were so reasonable and I worked fast. But I need little, renting the Monterrey House basement, which none of the others wanted. I paid only \$65 rent, then got a big garage-sale carpet, a piece of foam on plywood and cinderblocks, a night table with candle and an unwanted

armoire—all for \$60. Living in this big white house in a lovely section of Victoria, I was ecstatic.

I ran into the huge, furniture-less living room with its curved glass windows to get the phone, and soon my jaw was falling: Justin wanted to play ball—he and I against the Rivers brothers, Jason and Tobin. Soon I was pedaling my blue 4-speed Raleigh, a gift from an elderly woman whose lawn I mowed, across town through the clear northern air, the cherry trees blooming pink and lavender all along the green streets. Our game was sheer energy. I put everything I had into this game, played hard and sweet, and when I fired the ball to my teammate, saying silently, “Love ya, Justin.” Whenever I faked, drove hard and made a fine shot, he would shout, “Kiss me, Bill, kiss me!” We were winning, the afternoon was swirling and I was passing, flying in the air till Justin was shouting, “Love ya, Bill!” Afterwards, he invited us, sweat and all, to Sunnyside, where in his living room he said, “Never have men so pierced into sport, into the revelry of innocent hearts competing in the bliss of life: Just stand here and feel the energy shooting among us.”

A week before, prior to storming out of the room, Justin, face solemn and eyes glaring, had said he would not endure another evening in which our group permitted a demon to enter the room and swallow life up in dullness, lack of energy and coasting. He simply abolished the whole thing: the Justin Montclair Snow Project was off.

The ballgame was the first time I had seen Justin since that night, and it felt to me that it symbolized the seamlessness of life on the move. Back at Monterrey House, Mark said that I looked incredible, “as if you’ve just had a consultation.” He ought to know—he had just had his eighth. Consultations were the only contact that, up to the ballgame, Justin had permitted. Lasting up to an hour, they were \$400 each, which meant I was

not going to have one. But then yard work, beginning to be more lucrative, changed that, so that on a Wednesday morning, I rode my bike to Sunnyside, walked inside, waited two hours while Justin did Adam and then Mary, and finally entered the upper room where Justin placed my chair just so. I directly faced his own chair just three feet away, knowing anything could happen. We talked for a minute. Then he made sounds to deprogram the demonic. I writhed and cried, as Justin doubled up in agony. Though the whole thing was just sounds, when I walked out into the apple shade I was surprised to feel the day so still, fresh as polished water. Every night I listened to the tape of those sounds—my sounds, crafted to go against my demon. And, whenever any of us at Monterrey House had a consultation, the rest of us would meditate and wait—it could be for hours—and once the newly-washed consultee arrived, there would be long sharings around the dining table. Given the intense eye contact, they could last late into the night.

Then there was the game of ‘How Are You?’ Played with two and scored by a third, it involved simply asking the other the three words that had long terrified any honest person in The Context. Each player asked ‘How are you?’ in a way that tried to evoke the staggering power of pure feeling. The one receiving this dynamic salvo then responded honestly—laughter meant no points—and from his deepest gut returned, “How are you?” Mark, Rudi and I played it for hours, imitating Justin as best we could. Whether we played ‘How Are You?’ or ping pong in the basement, we were always aware of the larger context of life and its intricate demands. When Vanya arrived, and Matthew Halsey shortly thereafter, the aura of Monterrey House grew in stature.

They had come just in time for the new purificatory project: the renovation of Sunnyside. Jonathan Boyce, who on more than one occasion had scared me with his ruthlessly



incisive remarks during evening confrontations, led the way. Matthew, Mark and I stood in rubble up to our knees and drove Jonathan's van, still running, fully loaded three or four times a day every day for a week. Tearing out walls held cosmic significance. Justin would daily stop typing, come out of his room, look around, close his eyes, and in the most aesthetic way bow his head to the floor to behold a new room freed from the old confines of mildewed plaster. Built as servants' quarters for a huge estate in 1907, these walls held menageries of brittle wings in black webs, shriveled spiders and hollowed-out beetles. Each wall gutted was a weight off Justin's psyche. It was the only way that *we* could help purify *him*. In a month, with the downstairs renovation complete, the meetings held there in the pressurization of truth were all the more intense. We were not a group, just individuals coming together because we wanted to, living in Victoria because we wanted to live there, whether Justin Snow lived there or not.

The second ballgame, after I'd been landscaping for ten hours, was an endurance effort. We lost, though Justin praised my tenacity. But the third game, I figured, was going to be the greatest of the three. And it was, but in a completely different sense.

I had my third consultation that week and afterwards felt as strong and solid as I had ever felt, even though during that hour Justin had hinted at doubting my sincerity. Every relationship with Justin seemed stretched to the breaking point. He pushed, took different tacks, but never reduced the pressure, never tried to save someone. It could look like he encouraged intimacy and then severed the very growth he had nurtured.

Justin's attorney had come, with his wife, and the couple had seemed to fit in. They had even moved to Annapurna! Confronted on the third day, the wife was soon back in Connecticut, seeking divorce, convinced Justin Snow was

insane and dangerous. Three days later, the most casual of Justin's remarks resulted in pinning the denying lawyer to his chair. Everyone had tasted Vance's power and, despite all his defenses, he could not face this jury of his peers and risk yielding up the very talents that had brought him close to the former World Teacher. In a matter of hours, the recent corporate director and cosmic barrister was back on the East Coast, devastated, divorced, with M.I.U. officials seeking his disbarment. Vance phoned often regarding a court-case appeal, each call turning into a confrontation. "Well, you guys," Justin would say, "I didn't invent life. I only stand for that pure place where life can function unrestrained, and sometimes life is too much, too complex even for me. We must bow to life, to the benign beneficence that holds it and us together." Then he added, "Trust!"

When Justin announced his desire to put on *Hamlet*, the finest play in English, as it had never been done—with actors not acting a role, but being themselves in the moment of saying lines that had been internalized in pure feeling—I felt engaged as never before. It was a great idea, though I was still uncertain of my abilities to feel purely. Justin would, of course, play Hamlet. The other parts would be awarded to those who 'opened the hand.' The procedure was simple: someone would offer the invocation, 'Justin, by the grace of God, will you open your right hand to the degree that [so and so] is fully committed to this expedition up the mountain of life to the top'; then Justin's hand would open appropriately. For three nights at Sunnyside the hand openings went on. Eva made the hand fly open and tremble in passion; for Roland it opened almost fully, the fingers spread; yet amazingly for Lydia the hand went only half way. Then for Mark the hand opened fully and also for Rudi. It opened fully for Matthew, whom I wished to know better, and for Vanya. I was shocked that for most of the

Annapurnans the hand did not open at all. But when the hand failed to open for Rhonda Cox, she tried again, hunkered down, red-faced, and for three minutes willed the hand to open all the way. Justin said he had never seen anything like it. Then everyone tried again.

When my first turn finally came, Justin said, "This oughta be interesting; anyone want to see this one?" I closed my eyes during the invocation, trying to touch my desire to climb the mountain of life, and when I looked up, the hand was two-thirds open. While a bit disappointed, I knew it could have just as easily been as tight as a rock. Yet I wanted to open it, wanted to be in Hamlet, wanted to have a part in that incredible play more than I had ever wanted anything else.

The next night, Justin went around the room again, the Annapurnans doing little better. I volunteered early on. Justin looked at me, squeezed his hand tightly above his head, brought it down outstretched in front of him like a scepter and closed his eyes.

Matthew said the invocation and, not knowing what I would do, yet feeling strangely positive, I opened my eyes to see Justin's hand open faster this time, but still stopping at two-thirds. Then, as if trying to drink a glass of water in one gulp, I grabbed inside and bit down on any barrier to success, grinding down into myself farther than I'd ever gone, falling through floors of resistance and, from some inner basement, heard Justin say, "Well done, well done," his hand opening to extension, my head wet with effort. I had done this without his help; I had mined myself, dug deep out of my own passion.

Roland announced his new project of inventorying each seminar tape, 2000 hours' worth, a task reserved for members of 'The Open Hand Society.' I was invited, but this accolade was petty compared to the triumph I felt: 'I'm truly headed to the top!'

Then Mark's sister Caitlin arrived, staying with us at Monterrey House. I liked her right away, her Midwestern straightforward energy, though too straightforward, it seemed—as in unbending and tending toward brittle. For three days she was confronted, her first taste of dealing with the demonic. The atmosphere in our house was serious. We tried to work with her, but I could see Caitlin's sensitive heart was not hooked up with her large round eyes. Yet, though she didn't break through, Justin told her that she had a destiny: "The mark of Cain is on your forehead. You should move to Victoria."

Others came and stayed at our house, most notably Julian Morrison, who had been hosting video seminars in Seattle, and her friend Vicki. Back in Kansas, I had almost left to attend one of her events. Though I had glimpsed her twice for only moments, I remembered wondering about her. When I briefly met her, picking her up one morning in six feet of snow at 20 below and, along with five others, making our cramped way to a session of the Fairfield Christmas Course, she had said, scrunched in the front seat, with a hint of gaiety, "So, you're Bill Howell."

By the second day of her first weekend visit, I was ever-so-slightly interested in her, whose petite body held a womanliness that both enlivened me and put me at ease. The slightly angular face and wide eyes beneath short blond curls were striking. Having never seen a face like that, I hoped to gaze into those eyes and plumb whatever layers of loveliness might be there. But she was married, five years older and had three grown children. Yet, she didn't feel older and I was told she was ending her marriage. I wondered on the last day of her visit about the brush of her hand on the left back pocket of my jeans as she passed me in the tight kitchen. Just a narrow passage, I wagered.

The day after she left came the third ballgame with Justin and the Rivers' brothers. It would be the last I ever played with Justin. Just after the half, he went after the ball on the backside of the asphalt court. Only peripherally did I see him go down. Suddenly the Rivers were at his side in the grass where he held his ankle, wincing, turning in pain, mourning, "The greatest pain is that I can't give to you guys the way I want to." I pulled off his shoe and cut off his two pair of black silk socks before Jason and Tobin lifted the fallen warrior into their car. At Sunnyside, Eva washed his foot, Justin saying, "You guys, you're beautiful. I'm sorry, but this was no accident. It holds cosmic significance: All of creation got sprained." Having no idea what he meant, I pedaled back to Monterrey House to share the news, still clutchng Justin's socks. Mark asked to hold them, put them on his forehead, saying that they cooled him down instantly. I gave him one and kept the other. It smelled like rose water. Vanya, in love with Justin and dreaming of him every night, could hardly contain herself and called Sunnyside immediately, asking if she could come over. Mary went to Sunnyside to offer gentle massage for the next three days and later at Annapurna would tell us how she had fallen into love itself, that as she rubbed his foot, Justin became one huge heart. "The whole room moved to his heartbeat," she cooed. "He told me it was a cosmic event, that sprain. I sense that he's so connected to Creation that his injury portends injury in the universe."

Three days later, Lydia was found to be evil.

## CHAPTER 13: LOVE

I was helping Dierdra with her math homework, recalling how the evening before she had played a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, her father taking the part of Romeo, for all of us in the library suite. Her maturity and grace and the comfort with which she acted her part were nearly professional. This thirteen year-old had brought me a letter:

Dear Bill,

You are, after all, one of the very wonderful people in my life (even though you had to stay down there in hell for such a long time).

Perhaps what you went through is going to make it easier on others, the universe being toughest at the point of first evolution.

The world's consciousness has really softened up, and the demonic is becoming—through consultations, through seminars, through the way you are living your life—less entrenched. This may speed things up for those who come after us.

I shall see you soon.

Justin

Re-reading these words under the chandelier of Annapurna's foyer, I was almost in reverie. Though I had never said anything about the horrors I had endured, he knew! And to think that maybe that utter devastation might do others some good.

Suddenly I heard a scream descending from the third floor. I thought someone had burned a hand. I ran out to look for Dierdra and in the backyard graced by tulips, azaleas and

hydrangeas, I heard tires screeching, brakes squealing and then tires peeling pavement again. Dashing to the front, I inhaled only smoke and burnt rubber—signs of the quick departure of Lydia, the cool sophisticate.

That night Justin revealed what had taken place through Roland, who was shaken as he told us—making sure that all eyes were attentive to the feeling of his words—how Justin had limped to the top-floor apartment, where Eva and Lydia lived, to check on preparations for his mother’s visit. As soon as he had met Lydia’s eyes, she screamed—some bolt of recognition having flashed between them, Justin shouting, “You’re my opposite!” Roland told us to pray for Lydia, that Justin was hoping she would get over this strange event. But my hunch, having never seen Lydia ‘in her problem’, was dire. And yet I was also convinced that this very happening would result in her enlightenment. It had been Lydia who had largely run the pre-WTS organization, motivating the Annapurnans as soon as they came home from work to read galleys, collate, stuff envelopes, research names and addresses, affix stamps far into the night.

Eva decided that having Lydia hostess Vera for a week would get her best friend into activity and integrate the terror she must be in. Two days later, I heard that Lydia’s service and her love for Justin had made a difference. That’s when I told Mark and Rudi about my theory. Yet, after the distinguished mother of the West’s only enlightened man had gone back to Ontario, Justin squelched any note of improvement regards ‘that person.’ Then came the confrontations at Sunnyside—brutal, from all that I had heard. Then ‘the Lydia Letters’ came out. Only Eva, Roland and Tobin Rivers, Lydia’s former husband, were allowed to read them. “They’re too devastating,” came word from Justin.

The group, together again after the month in which The Project had been declared abandoned, had several weeks later

gone through another setback. During every meeting someone or a number of us would lose intensity between topics or as Justin finished a sentence. “Where did you go just then!” he would shout from his couch. He told us that he had never been unconscious a moment in his life and could not understand how we could just let go of ourselves, “destroying in a moment all the work I’ve tried to do.”

It was Dierdra who innocently was responsible for getting us back together. She had brought videotapes of Michael Jackson ‘moonwalking.’ Waving his arms in great circles, Justin was totally involved: “Can you believe this guy? Didja see that move! Wooooo, Jesus! What intensity! Play it again, Dierdra.” We watched this fabulous talent, eyes closed, full volume a dozen times. “It’s contact with the impulse of evolution that has manifested in every great soldier, athlete, orator, artist and poet,” Justin concluded.

Because of Dierdra, we were dancing inside, intensely enough to reconvene our group. Yet there was another dance, to an almost unfathomable rhythm: the heartbeat of evil. I cared greatly for Lydia, had experienced off-the-scale moments with her that had me hoping not only for her release but also for her up advancement and sublimity. Yet I realized that I knew little about her, other than that she had escaped from home to the Haight-Ashury navel of the ‘60s in San Francisco, that she and Eva had done exceptionally well as Shaklee distributors for Vancouver Island, attested by her agelessly creamy skin, that her languid eyes and florid truth had been remarkable at seminars, that she had never been confronted at the mike, and that she had managed at times to even defy Justin. But, suddenly, such thoughts were dangerous. Mark O’Doyle tossed nights in dreams of Lydia, and he had to have emergency consultations at Sunnyside. He could afford them, at least. So did Holly, whose bill with Justin was mounting.



Her consultations had not gone well, however. Holly and Adam, for reasons beyond me, were out. Maybe it had to do with the jealousy between veterans and newcomers. Terrence, his ambassadorial looks belied by a frantic need to display his aesthetic talents in evaluating anything artistic, was also asked to move out of Annapurna. Justin said his mind moved too quickly and had the three old-timers get an apartment together, laughing, “They should be confronting each other every day—they’ll be come professionals.”

Everything was changing. I certainly saw it with Matthew and Vanya. Both had for several weeks been in a video partnership with Klaus, who confronted these two Americans enough that The Context a la Annapurna would not be corrupted. But what amazed me was not just that Matthew and Vanya had grown closer to the Annapurnans, but that within a month had moved in. Americans in Annapurna! This was a definite break with tradition. Matthew and Vanya had stepped out of my league. I missed them and was saddened.

Lydia was out by Justin’s birthday. This was my first celebration of Justin’s May 1<sup>st</sup> birthday. Many drove up from Seattle, including Julian and her friend Vicki, for the event in Heronwater, Justin’s new home in the Uplands. Quiet seawater lapped weathered rocks below a manicured lawn and a secluded three-bedroom house for \$1700 a month. We all felt Justin deserved it, and now that The Context had been purged of ‘that person’ there would be a place for Dierdra, Eva and her daughter Angelica. We had all spent days searching for just the right gift, just the right wrapping, just the right card which then took hours to compose. Eva had furnished Heronwater, and on his new demi-couch in the living room, without tearing the paper, he commented on each present. He announced his plans to travel with a two-week tour of Israel, which would result in a book about the forces of evolution and anti-evolution in this

most politically intense spot on the globe. I frankly wondered what he would eat, what about his silk sheets, and how the man who couldn't sleep with anyone else in the house—not even his daughter, and who once had chased a fly around Sunnyside because he could not rest with 'that little demon'—would ever sleep at night. But Nature, whose child he was, would make the adjustments. And Justin, even on this glorious occasion, did not back away from speaking about Lydia—his 'great sorrow and love'—but told us we had to believe that she was evil, "or else!" It was for our own sake, he said.

A week later, Lydia tried to take her life.

Justin said that swallowing a bottle of Tylenol was a last desperate attempt to win our sympathies. He had some of us visit her—in pairs for safety. All who went returned from her apartment devastated and had to have special consultations. Only Holly and Adam saw the subtle ruse of evil, and that somehow constituted their ticket back into Justin's heart. Justin himself went, and though Roland would share no details, we did hear that Lydia's negative power extended so far into the cosmos that her apartment glowed with the brilliance of her evil influence. Justin said the visit nearly cost him his life.

Gradually I realized that all of Lydia's charms, even the mysterious presence I had felt just standing next to her in the Cedar Rapids airport, had been demonic powers. In fact, one night I woke at 3 AM with the realization that it had been Lydia who had been responsible for the shadow of horror that I had experienced for those many disastrous months. Failed consultations, people dropping out of The Context—all were due to her influence. I was enormously eased to sense that the darkness that I could not explain within myself had been injected by this mistress of witchery.

By this time I had traveled with 'Mark the Inquisitor,' wanting a break from the intensity of being around Justin, to

San Francisco, where we learned that the closest friend to ‘the gang of three’ felt he had become enlightened. For a month this guy had tyrannized everyone in the Bush Street House into greater intensity, honesty and self-expression. Yet I found myself telling the gang to boot out the ‘Grand Confuser’ and, in doing so, I felt like Justin’s emissary. Back in Victoria, Justin showed me a letter of appreciation from the San Francisco crowd about my visit: “It was like having Justin among us.” That made me feel about as good as I could feel, though I instantly recognized that I was no Justin, no matter how much I wanted to be.

But another note got more of my attention. Julian had, in my absence, stayed in the basement of Monterey House.

Dear William,

I have had a marvelous visit here in Victoria and I want to thank you for the use of your room. It feels so clean and tasteful, and I slept so well—before and after my consultation. I hope you don’t mind my imposition.

Please come stay with me when you’re in Seattle and I hope to see you soon.

Julian

The lavender ink and scent of Tea Rose had subtle memories of her last visit flooding back: how I fantasized visiting her on Vashon Island, how we would walk through evening pines as I kissed her in filtering moonlight. Some powerful undercurrent must have been moving the waters between us, because her previous visit had found us in conversation but once—mere philosophical inquiry around the dinner table.

And then Justin was leaving for Israel. His departure and the publication by Snow Man Press of his latest book, *Aphorisms of the Supreme*, had Julian returning for a book-warming evening at Annapurna. The author had for three days

participated in incredible discussions; for example, the one on women—“A woman should be seeking within herself the place that a man cannot touch or know: that is one of her destinies”—had produced an extraordinary tape. To me, they were perfect:

*Reality does not have a point of view.  
A saint of the future must be perfectly moved by  
a beautiful woman.  
Elegance is closer to God than poverty.  
One must love complexity the way a saint loves  
simplicity.  
Only the devil preaches: God is always playing.  
Religious experience must be as concentrated in its  
intelligence as the structure of a microchip.*

Justin stayed up till 3 AM to inscribe each of his friend's books with a poem composed just for that person's spiritual growth. He looked more tired than I had ever seen him. Eva took him home and, nearly hunched over at the door with fatigue and having had to take on each of our demons the entire night, he turned to look at those of us still in the library suite. Sadness and longing poured from his face. Then, with a final gaze of giving and the ardor required of a constant warrior, he was gone. The silence of internalizing that intense gift lasted several minutes, before we began to share our inscriptions. I remembered, as the books were passed around, one that said:

For Julian:  
Golden horses are pounding  
towards us. In their eyes  
is my love.

Justin

It was while Justin was in Israel that an utterly astounding event happened in Annapurna. Lydia had a

breakthrough. Rhonda Cox, who had secretly been ministering to her, had gotten her to come one night. Evidently seeing Roland and just being there had pierced her defenses, such that she wept. The Annapurnans were there to testify to its authenticity, and Klaus had even managed to get a camera and had filmed most of the event. She was, of course, still off-limits until Justin's return.

The minute Justin set foot in Vancouver's airport and was told of Lydia's change of heart, he said nothing to Eva, who had long been her closest friend. But, viewing the tape back at Sunnyside, he was shouting, despite watching Lydia on her knees in the throes of tears, "You've all been had! The tears are phony and it took me only a minute to see it! How could you have fallen for such theatrics?"

The next day Justin revealed the cosmic drama as it pertained to Israel. He didn't speak for a long time, then looked at us intently. He said simply, "We must all move to Jerusalem...sometime in the near future. It's where all earth's intensity is focused into intensest meaning. It's where the action is." He spoke of the people he had met, the soldiers and statesmen, villagers and visitors, Palestinians and West Bank settlers. "The Jewish people are vitalized with an intelligence that allows them in conversation with me to hold their own. Nowhere have I met such people. No wonder that the Jews are God's 'chosen people,' that in the 7-Day War they were victorious despite overwhelming odds. They cannot be defeated. The Palestinians pale beside them and will never win their homeland. I tell you truly: I have seen into the Jewish people farther than anyone else and have loved them more." Then he spoke of his brother in Ottawa, a brilliant man who decades ago had converted to Orthodox Judaism. Never close with the one "who raced into my mother's womb before me," Justin revealed his appreciation of his brother's conversion, but

said that he had also encountered an impenetrable invulnerability. “And in that moment I sensed that Judaism was based on a strength opposed to God.” I was shocked that he would call a whole race demonic. “But then, returning to Victoria, the whole thing re-reversed and I was allowed to again feel the greatness of this people I had come to love.”

The following week at the University of Victoria, Justin conducted the First Jewish Seminar. It started with those with Jewish blood commenting about their experience of what it was to be Jewish, and each spoke at the mike of a great power that Justin said was Jewishness, a power we all needed, and which “William Howell could especially use.” Justin’s meta-Socratic method soon had us all experiencing the nature of this power as he manifested “Jewish consciousness through the hearts and minds of everyone in the room”

The next day came ‘the Becket experience.’ We had the evening before seen the movie with Richard Burton playing England’s most famed martyr, the defender of the Faith against disunity, who died at Canterbury Cathedral while saying Mass, a sword viciously thrust into his neck as he knelt. Having each of us, one by one, stand on stage, Justin stood in the back of the auditorium, pointed his finger and said, “Becket.” We each had an experience of integrity, solidity, rootedness, richness of character. Afterwards, many of us got to choose someone to be—from Jesus to Napoleon to Lincoln. Our elaborate descriptions of ‘becoming that person’ could last fifteen minutes. I first chose Thomas Jefferson, but then had another chance: “Justin Snow,” I requested. And then I was half an hour into the deepest, most varied experience I had ever known. I spoke of the swirling, eddying bliss, complexity, intensity... until I just sat down, speechless. Justin let go with one of his cannonball laughs.

Then the universe shifted again. Asking Rhonda Cox about her experience of the Jewishness issue, a loving question brought only non-response. “With all we’ve shared with each other, with all your spiritual wisdom, all your deep integrity, how can you stonewall me so brutally?” I was confused at this sudden stubbornness in Rhonda, who had been with Justin so long and had, indeed, movingly stood out in so many arts of The Personal. Yet, remaining unmoved, Justin walked over to the third-row seat of her tanned live-in boyfriend, an aesthetically gifted Arizona outdoorsman named Ted Klein—to have him help bring his lady to the stage: “Ted, you pick up her feet and I’ll get her under the arms.” But the athletic real-estate broker was suddenly hopping over chairs, eyes wide with fear. Justin stopped. He stalked to the stage to shout, “You, Rhonda Cox, one of my oldest friends who’ve shared with me depths no one else has drawn out of me, you sit there stoic as brick while your lover acts out the cowardice you have inspired in him, you who say you love him. You must despise him, lusting in your heart for his weakness that empowers you. This is your real affection, your real power, the grip of grief that you wield in your stone-like eyes and heart. Are you in league with Lydia? What’s your relationship with her? You! You! Get out. Get out, you whore!” And she fled. The handsome Ted Klein, after his third chance at the mike, raced out into sunlight the next day, with Adam and Klaus and all of us men running after him, in the same way at the New York Christmas course I had feared I would be pursued. We returned to Justin shouting at everyone of us in the theater, “This is no game! This is war—in its highest form! When I give an order, it’s not for you to think about. One moment’s hesitation will one day be fatal. *This* is a battleground and we’re soldiers—especially in these seminars—training for deeds now beyond us. Any of you think you can general this effort? Do you know how subtle, how cunning,

how fast the demonic is? You've seen me confront. Can any of you do that? If you saw what I see...." He stopped to look about the auditorium, then spoke in somewhat regular tones about how the universe was shifting, how he was having to calculate these cosmic motions in himself, how we'd all have to be more and more flexible in ourselves, when suddenly he was again leonine, shouting without reserve, "Obey my commands! Lives are at stake! We're getting down to who are the true souls worthy of God's intention to bring Heaven on Earth."

That brought hand openings for innocence. "This is the quality that is the most important quality for someone in The Context to possess. So, Roland, take the hand mike and say, 'Justin, by the grace of God, will you open your hand to the extent that God feels that *so and so* is innocent. Got it? Okay, let's go. Let's see where innocence is.'" Most of us were done over the next three days. As always, these days were revealing: Roland—three-quarters. Roger Barranni, who had retreated to Seattle after a nowhere consultation—two-thirds, a real surprise. Eva: 100%. Yet the shocker was me. Justin had said, "This ought to be interesting," when I had come onto the stage and stood at the microphone I had hated for so long. Then his hand opened...all the way, 100%. Yet I hadn't the faintest notion how I, who had run away three times, could be so innocent while most Annapurnans got the hand only a third open.

And Lydia got a zero. Justin had sent an invitation to attend, and I could hardly believe that she had come. She sat in a back row. After his hand had remained a fist, Justin tracked her in ways so subtle as to make what Roland had done to me on the blue front-room couch two years before feel obvious. Lydia wept. When Justin asked her if she had a soul, she confessed that she didn't even know if she had a problem or even was a person at all.



Justin said, "I've always wanted to bring a soul to enlightenment. I was told in meditation this evening that I could by the grace of God create a soul, to bring into being that form of infinitely intricate and eternal integrity on which all experience resides, that burst of individuality created in the same meta-explosion as the universe, with all meaning imprinted there. So, with God's help, here goes."

Once again, the hope in me arose that all of this unbelievable drama around Lydia could have been some strange preparation for her enlightenment. If so, the world would never have witnessed such a transformation.

For forty minutes, Justin worked in ways I had not seen before, with Lydia silently standing at the mike, stage left. After the process, with us in the audience ready for the heaviest of dramas, Justin looked up, as if to God, saying a prayer of gratitude. From his side there had been success. "I have been granted my request. The foundation for the birth of her soul has been laid." He told Lydia to sit down and keep her eyes closed. I couldn't believe it when in an hour she left, just walked out.

"Her choice," Justin said, shaking his head, but raising his gaze to heaven and nodding slightly. "Creation is unfathomable. The beauty was given, but was not accepted." The next day the Lydia letters were released, and I had to somehow live with knowing that the most caringly talented person I had met was evil. I heard that she went to Arizona to live near Rhonda Cox and Ted Klein.

The exit of Ted Klein, a Jew, brought up the question of Jewishness again. Eva mentioned, regarding a news clip we had all seen of an interview with Israeli soldiers, that a certain soldier who had lost his left leg in battle was clearly free of neurosis, as if he had never lost his leg—which had Eva asking, "Is this not just what Werner Erhardt had accomplished with *est*?" For Justin, the universe turned in a moment, that insight

being the very snap of intelligence that instantly put everything in order: Werner, alias Jack Rosenberg, was Jewish. Was this a Jewish attack of Goys, a subtle revenge for 2000 years of persecution? Soon Justin had color-coordinated Sondra, who had once again traveled all the way from Boston, at the mike. And, because we were talking about Jewishness, her neediness was not coming into play at all; rather, we saw before us a person of composed radiance who was matter-of-factly speaking about the affinity one Jew has for another, regardless if they feel drawn to one another or not. Justin was seeing Jewishness as a kind of matrixed tribalism. But was it evil? He was quite sure that it was not, but such insight might take months to uncover.

The seminar continued on so that everyone could receive Transformation One. But I was broke. Feeling an energy shift in that realm was needed, I realized I had to leave Victoria.

On the day before the seminar ended, Julian asked me to take a walk. We had said little, though she was staying at Monterrey House. The day was glorious. She was concerned about not having received Transformation One. As we strolled the field beyond the house, as I assuaged her fears by saying it was Justin's way of teasing her and perhaps of confronting her, we returned by the canal that, across from Monterrey House, ended in a small park where a variety of geese ducked their heads and shimmied off the water. There, sitting on the chains of a bulwark, the sun outlining her tightly curled blond hair, she quietly looked at me. I felt the words about to come.

"I think I'm attracted to you," she announced delicately. "What'll we do?"

"Let's just see what happens." With an easy smile, I took her hand. It would be some months before I learned that, two weeks before the Fairfield Christmas Course where I had first met Julian, she had prayed for a poet to come into her life, someone who could love her for who she was.

The next day she mentioned the possibility of a landscaping project at her home on Vashon Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle: "It's a beautiful house, octagonal, and you can see Mt. Rainier right across the water." I told her I would have to think about it. Which I did. For all of ten minutes. As we drove in her '73 BMW back to the seminar, we decided to leave after the afternoon session.

In the library suite of Annapurna, Julian sat on a couch, while I kneeled behind Roland at the foot of Justin's divan. The humor was hot, the intelligence quick. At one point Roland left to do something for Justin, and I moved into his spot at Justin's feet. For the next hour I felt responsible for keeping things going, for answering and suggesting and feeding Justin with love. The intensity, the snappy exchanges between Justin and me, the flickering impulses that came off this man were dazzling, a fireworks that renewed my respect for Roland. It all ended with Justin calling me up to the front. The old electricity of wondering if I had done anything wrong went briefly through me as he said, "Stand there." I waited. "And close your eyes." For five minutes he made 'shsshing' sounds which circled around me. I wondered what I was to feel. Nothing much was happening. Then I let go. Warm currents of energy rose up through my body. They turned to happiness, then to joy as I stood before the bright window curtained in lace. For ten minutes I stood there, eyes closed, just feeling and inwardly leaning into expanding currents of ecstasy.

"You'll be late for your ferry," Justin said, but all the joy I could imagine was rising like flocks of herons into my very own sky. Actually, I was feeling almost as large as the sky and the ferry seemed virtually insignificant.

"I think he's going to fly wherever he's going," said Justin who kept telling me to sit down, to go. But I stayed, basking in whatever he had done to me. When I finally looked

out, he was signing a book for Christopher, also an actor, a good-looking twenty-year-old from Newfoundland. Still with no way to say thank you, I caught Julian's eye and we walked slowly out into the sunshine. I felt I could almost set the grass on fire wherever I stepped. Mark and Rudi followed. Outside in the sun and shade, I simply looked at them. I smiled, feeling half surprised that, from silently expressing what I knew words could not, the fiercely sincere Mark and the jolly, rotund Rudi weren't also catching fire.

'I feel...close to enlightenment!' I realized inside, 'so exuding joy that it's as if I could almost transmit this to them. Justin must feel a hundred times what I feel.'

Mark sped Julian and me to the ferry with ten seconds to spare. It was perfect. Everything was perfect. The motion of the sea was the motion of joy, my joy. The clouds felt like I had sculpted them out of my own happiness, and I seemed to understand the secrets of their symbolic shapes. Was this what Justin had meant in one of his aphorisms, "All motion is music"? I moved through the crowded aisles of the ferry, loving everyone, as if through a forest of friendly flowers perfuming the air through which I walked, Julian on my arm.

The first night in her octagonal house, well-decorated to allow a feeling of cozy expanse, we stayed up. Time became utterly elastic. There was no night and no morning. We shared the stories of our lives. I was intrigued by this woman who had raised three children on her own, who had moved to Colorado because in Los Angeles her young ones couldn't see the stars, who said she had no idea how she had finished high school yet seemed to have been on the honor roll in the university of life and had her PhD. in intuition. I told her about being on the mountain, about running away three times, about being a poet. Her eyes widened.

She suggested I write a book about Justin. “Who else could do it?”

By the time night had turned pale indigo and revealed the dark hulk of Mt. Rainier, we were huddled under a forest green blanket and my major objection—that Justin was not definable in words and that each seminar could be a book—had been sidelined hours before. I found her beautiful, yet I had never encountered a beauty like hers. She seemed to be effortlessly unwrapping my life. The sweetness in the air, a tea rose oil she wore, softened any hint of fatigue. By the time the shamrocks opened their three hands to hold the rising light, we had fallen so innocently in love that neither of us would have used those words. She was still separated from her husband. I was broke and had no way to support her.

I worked hard in the late summer sun, transforming her yard. She fixed tea and lunch and then immaculate dinners. We looked long into one another’s eyes, layer on layer nourishing the depth we shared. Long walks up to the blackberry thicket by the cliffs and more long walks on the beach, as we talked of visiting Europe and India, graced our days.

Then on a Saturday morning as I was in the final motions of landscaping, I heard Julian’s voice through the Madrona trees: “Bill, Bill! Roland just called. Justin married Eva! This morning. In the backyard of Heronwater!” She was out of breath trying to tell me that we were invited to the reception. “Roland said that with ‘that person’ gone, this union could finally take place and give us all a cosmic model for marriage and individuation.’ Oh, and the reception’s tonight!”

We packed lightly and rushed northward to Victoria, saw the video of Justin in his tux, Mary standing up for Eva, and the simple ceremony by a Justice of the Peace, followed by Justin embracing all who had been invited—the Annapurnans, even Nadine, and also Terrence, who was now living by

himself, yet both having been with him through so much. Many, like Holly and Terrence, had never had an embrace from Justin. Julian and I watched them weeping in the pine shade of the back lawn.

That night, during the Heronwater reception, Justin passed out wedding cake. We all took it as spiritual food. After receiving my square, I wished deeply that he would present the next piece to Julian. I watched him step forward, his hand out, turning right...and then suddenly being pulled to the left, passing Nadine and then standing in front of Julian. Amazed, I felt it a sign that he approved of our love. But when he asked each of us to say goodnight to him and to Eva, I was nervous, unable to think of what might be appropriate. "You look tired," Justin said. "I wonder if your association with Julian is making you old. Don't let her drain you of your energy. Now, say goodnight to Eva."

Confused, I drove back to Monterrey House, where we would stay. Yet, there in her '73 BMW, I found myself telling her of my love, my desire to live and spend my life with her. Her bright face was transformed in every muscle, once her eyes digested the actuality of my words. Yielding, growing supple, made of moonlight, her eyes dropped as she gave me her hand.

A week after returning to Vashon with her, I had written a first chapter of the book I was going to call *Heretic*. I decided to send it to Justin, along with a letter telling him of my gratitude for what he had given me, of my friendship for him and what he had taught me, of my perceptions of Seattle and the loose community of his friends there, and of my love for Julian.

I continued to work hard on Julian's lawn and trees and heart. In a week, I received three letters, "to be read in order":

*Dear William Howell, My Suddenly Beautiful Friend,  
I have just read your letter placed on my  
Enlightenment Birthday at Heronwater. I have not read*

*yet “the chapter” of the book about you and me. The letter you have written to me is so superb in comparison to anything that you have given to me previously—and so wonderful in an absolute sense, as just a letter from someone gorgeous in his soul.*

*Bill, I cannot now simply express where this letter went into my heart, but I just wanted to say, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!*

*It was only at the moment that I read your letter that I finally knew why you were with me on The Mountain eight years ago.*

*I have no doubt about what you will give yourself to there in Seattle. At this time I can think only that at some specific moment in the future you will professionally become a Teacher—in the sense that I am a teacher, but with the extraordinary uniqueness that is now becoming yours, and with a purpose that will be so necessary to the enlightenment of others. I see you being able to do this even before you are enlightened—so much do I trust in the tenderness and wisdom of that soul of yours.*

*I was concerned at the most profound level when I saw Julian for her consultation, but with the state of the universe and with her closeness to you, I also knew that something could be, would be destroyed absolutely. This is what happened.*

*Your letter entered the kingdom of my Heart. I know that we shall be very close while we are away from each other, and I now consider you a Golden Friend. I want everyone to read your letter.*

I was lifted weightlessly into hope and light. Speechless, I was made of air and waited a long time before I read the second letter, all in capitals, saying that I should continue writing the

book I had proposed...and, should no other publisher pick it up, that Snow Man Press would publish it! When I opened the third letter, I found it also to be in capitals. It suggested that not only had I found the magic of Michael Jackson in this first chapter, but that the book should be my first priority, that I would have complete access to Justin for interviews, that everyone should support this project...and that this may mean my coming back to Victoria. Well, despite my sense that 'complete access to me for interviews' meant that I could very well be confronted daily, I was beyond excitement. Yet the reality was that Julian and I were having too beautiful a time to return to Victoria, not to mention that we had no money to live there.

Being in Seattle was lively. I moved there with Rudi, now a student. I looked for work. Julian took an apartment in the same building and the three of us became inseparable. We ate out, went to foreign movies at the Harvard Exit, had a favorite hole-in-the-wall dessert place, and walked through nearby parks and the galleries of Pioneer Square, one saleswoman asking if Julian and I were Russian dancers.

We did manage to attend the Christmas Course. We stayed at Millstream, a half-hour drive from Annapurna. Here the Americans lived: Matthew, with whom I had a largely silent yet deeply connected friendship; Vanya, his video partner and no longer one of the Annapurnans, but finding her individual relationship to Justin; Mark, who kept promising he would soon visit Vashon; Rudi, whom I had grown close to and who had decided that living in Victoria superceded finishing his B.A.; and six others, including Douglas and Lillian Meers. This house on Mill Creek was an experiment to see if what Justin was trying to accomplish could spread outside its presently limited audience.

On the Christmas Course, Justin did little confronting and gave out advanced meditation techniques and the new



Transformation Three. Yet he was unable to give this latter gift to Rudi. He tried again, concluding, “This is far more than Jewishness.” Justin said that Rudi’s mind was so in control that every innocent impulse was corrupted. Back at Millstream, Rudi’s housemates continued the confrontation. We tried to help the devastated psychic, who only got a lot worse, confessing to having consciously manipulated everyone, to never having loved any of us, and to hating me most because I represented all the things he wanted to be but wasn’t. He sniveled till his nose ran. The Millstreamers threw him out.

Since my first visit to Victoria, Justin had been redefining the relationship of his friends to money. Back on the Summer Course he had issued a full-on directive, that it was absolutely necessary—especially for me, he said—to become wealthy. So I had borrowed \$10,000 from an East Coast Context friend, and Julian and I took a month-long fling at making a million by investing in the program of a money guru whom Justin said was authentic and heaven-sent. But the man proved to be a financial shyster, and, on the night we were returning to Seattle, we were invited to stay behind after a meeting at Sunnyside, now all remodeled, so that Justin could deprogram us. “This guy,” he said, finding all the spiritual intensity we had worked to build in ourselves suddenly gone flat, “was in the process of stealing your souls—because on some subtle level he realized your connection with me, who he wanted to eventually destroy. He was tricky enough to get me to feel he was sincere, but that was a ruse so that he could use you to get to me. You probably would have made a million with this spiritually empty guy—he has a fantastic system. So, how do you feel?” he asked, pouring his radiant energy iintoxicatingly nto us. Preferring to enjoy Justin’s true wealth rather than mere monetary gain, we felt amazingly happy and free, despite \$300-a-month payments to satisfy our new debt.

We walked out, glad we had given up hoped-for wealth for our integrity, glad enough that we hardly minded owing \$10,000.

At the lace-curtained door after our amazingly warm *tete-a-tete*, just as Justin was walking upstairs to his room, I saw him—for just a moment or two—as a simple, ordinary person with neither mystique nor power. Even his smooth skin had become blotchy in the dim hall light. I did a double take, stunned on so many levels that I could hardly think. Had this been a demonic event, some attack on my loyalty and love, or could this truly be Justin, or was I in fact seeing him without any projection, as a person who just wanted to be treated as such? I was too terrified to explore this experience that had happened so fast and unexpectedly, for it was either the greatest lie or the most intimate truth about Justin Snow. There was no choice: I would not speak of it. For if it was a demonically false projection, I could be a candidate for being linked with Lydia, and there was nothing flattering in it to bring me closer to Justin, if indeed the experience had been accurate. Then it dawned on me: Lydia had, all the way from Arizona, caused this heretical perceptual event. End of story.

Back in Seattle, with Rudi horribly manipulative, I moved into Julian's minute studio apartment. With our shared sense of space, design and color, we created in our 12' x 20' room a stylish, artistic, intimate dwelling where we lived our love. Even though I worked for a temp agency, in mailrooms and print shops for \$4 an hour, Julian and I felt these days to be the happiest, most sumptuous of our lives. We went to courses when we could, were in charge of the Seattle group as far as showing tapes and keeping everyone up on the latest around Justin. The Seattle people, not as serious about The Context as their counterparts in Victoria, accused Julian and me of trying to make Seattle into Victoria. We wished we could have.

Though spring was still a month off, Julian felt secure, wrapped in the privacy of our studio. After a full day of collating computer manuals or stuffing envelopes with brochures about South Seas cruises, I would return to her, hug her a long time, and we would enjoy the marvelous dinner she had prepared, after which we walked, talked, read, cuddled to watch a movie or just fell into each other's arms on our twin where, with Julian petite and me thin, we curled in the 'S' of sleep. But we felt I should be doing something more than manual labor, even though Justin had for whatever reasons dropped his demand that everyone close to him become wealthy. Always having known that I could do whatever I put my mind to, over a Caesar salad I said to Julian, "Working for Justin is what I truly want to do. I feel my destiny's entwined with his. Yet I guess I'll keep networking toward a sound job. But I've been trying for weeks, spent \$1800 we didn't have on career counseling and you know how many interviews I've been to. But, what'd I expect? What job counselor understands anything about life in The Context?"

"What about the book?" Julian assed.

"I'd love to do it, but we don't have the funds to move back to Victoria. Besides, the book could take a year, five years, if it can be written at all." I tried to stab a mushroom.

She took my hands in hers. "I know someone who'd rent our apartment and we could just see how things go. Millstream will welcome us and Justin said he would meet with you anytime and that everyone would cooperate."

I took no more convincing: "Okay. I'm with you, babe." I forked the last mushroom and placed it on her tongue.

Her sea-colored eyes were flashing. We would once again cross the Strait of San Juan de Fuca. But Victoria was not our destination, but rather the ocean of The Personal and the heretic who knew its depths.

## CHAPTER 14: CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION

After we went out on deck to salute Piers Island, as its pines were darkening into winter sky, we soon drove off the Schwartz Bay ferry and raced half-an-hour south to the University of Victoria, a thrill of excitement and apprehension moving through both of us. We hoped to make the beginning of the evening seminar session.

Outside the double doors of the seminar room, half a dozen friends were lined up against the cinderblock walls or were milling about the hallway.

“Has the meeting started? I asked Sondra.

“Yes. We’re just not allowed in just yet.”

We entered the lecture hall and immediately felt the air stiff and uncomfortable.

“Okay,” Justin asked, “How was that?”

“I could feel my power returning,” said Holly, “as if I had a weapon with which to defend myself,”

“Excellent. This is why we say this to ourselves. It means no one harm but merely takes into account the reality of the situation. How many besides Bill and Julian have yet to be initiated? Okay! Nadine, tell us your impressions of yesterday.”

Back in the fold, though softer and more vulnerable after six months of exile in Vancouver, she took the hand mike:

“Justin, I missed the afternoon session because of work.”

“And how’s your new job at the hospital and how is it to be back in Victoria?”

“The job is enormously rewarding, and...being...back here is...is...well”—she was biting down on her words—  
“it’s...so...I can’t believe what I...I...really....”

“Good, Nadine. It’s very good to feel one’s pain because one can then also feel one’s joy. Was the video okay?”

Nadine finished wiping her eyes, “Oh, yes! Very objectifying. The power in the room came right through the videotape and I could see...I could see the radiant power the Jews on stage held. So formidable. And when you; uh, spoke about how they loved that power, as a manifestation of their invulnerability, and how in rejecting and killing Christ they thereby rejected the new vulnerability of the heart—it really helped me understand.”

“Thank you, Nadine.” Justin leaned back in his director’s chair. “She is speaking of an experiential validation, not some ‘Christ-killers’ fanaticism born of mere historical theory. It’s not one iota a racist point of view. Each Jew you meet has to be taken individually. But it’s a power most Jews use to suppress non-Jews, especially Goys. Jews aren’t evil. But they might as well be. They must be broken into. Jericho’s walls must fall. This will take time, for in freeing Jews around me we start to free Jewishness all over the world. I’ll retire to Sunnyside or Piers to write a book on the truth about Judaism, the biggest discovery of the century.”

I watched Matthew rise and pick his words well. “After you said that we’re never going to break the Jews out of their invulnerable shell by being gentle or imparting spiritual wisdom—that nothing less than all-out total dedication will subvert the intelligence they use to maintain their power, I thought you were going overboard. I mean, I felt close to Rudi and Dan Levine. But then I realized not only what they held back but also how they manipulated me by holding back...”

“That right, Matthew! Do you guys think this is a big issue? Well, I tell you that it’s the issue. Jewishness, until you get intelligent about it, tells you to your gut, ‘You’re not worthy, you’re a weakling who deserves nothing but lawfulness,

no real warmth. Until you learn what Jewishness is doing and how to defend yourselves, then none of you will get enlightened.”

That got my attention, as Matthew continued, “I realized I had to seemingly oppose them. And yet when you had all of us who wanted to free ourselves from Jewish oppression take three steps forward...”

“Ah, the moment of decision,” Justin smiled.

“I had come to the place where I thought I could...but I couldn’t...until I physicalized my rejection of that kind of power that keeps a person under thumb and grinds them into submission.”

“Yes, I saw you, Matthew, really going through a lot to decide to take those three steps.”

“It was like stepping through history, through 2000 years. And then to chant ‘Down with the Jews’ and not feel any negativity toward Jewish people but the return of my own power and self-hood was incredible.”

“Nobody here should be stupid enough to think that this has anything to do with some simple outlook on Jews, or some anti-Semitic stance. I love the Jews. I love them as no one else. But I see the force holding them—how immense it is. You won’t believe the inter-connectedness that will get revealed in the coming months. There is so much I want to share with you: why Arabs are not open to Jewishness and inherently war against it; how Blacks are the ones who can dance around Jews. It will take everything you have inside you to out-Jew the Jews. They don’t use Jewishness to cover up a problem. The Jewish universe is actually a separate universe, and the god of the Jews is a separate entity from the Christian God. Jews are protected by a god-sort of power, a power that wants power for itself, and the power that a Jew naturally plugs into is the god of the Jewish universe. Only one force will take them out of that

power, and that is confrontation. It's a world demon, Jewishness. Wonder how the B'nai Brith will react to that? Erhardt, a Jew, invented *est*. Marx, a Jew from a long line of rabbis, dreamed up Marxist Socialism. Freud invented modern psychology. Bob Dylan, who couldn't sing, changed modern music, as Alan Ginsberg changed modern poetry, as Woody Allen set trends in filmmaking. Jews have been involved in the beginnings of nuclear power and communism. I'm even wondering about Einstein and Leonard Bernstein."

Justin then let those with Jewish blood back into the room because he thought we were strong enough. But only that night, before driving back to Millstream, did Roland clarify the situation, asking if I had received 'the Jewish mantra.' He had me close my eyes as he whispered it into my ear.

"What!"

He told me again, saying it was for protection, that it had Maharishi's blessing and meant no harm.

"But 'Kill all Jews?' That means no harm?"

"No. It simply represents that formula which has enough power to counteract the vibrations that Jews are constantly putting out."

By the time we arrived at Millstream, I was sensing that God had expanded Justin's duties by his challenging an entire race, which would bring on a global search for greater truth, which may result in unimaginable conflict, but I feared the world needed a purification to match its nearly hopeless destructiveness. Who else but Justin could do the job—or would do it?

I got out of the car. Julian went in with Mark, Vanya, Matthew and Caitlin, Mark's newly-arrived sister. The tall nurse of 24, who worked with the aged and dying, had finally moved to Victoria to find the destiny Justin had promised her six months ago.

Roland helped with our bags, and I thanked him for the ride.

“I live here, too. The basement room,” he said with half a smile as he quickly left for the stairs, leaving me baffled and pleased to be sharing the house with him. With most of the Americans having been confronted and then leaving Millstream, those remaining were the most committed. Julian and I liked Caitlin right away, Julian having already sensed that a relationship between Caitlin and Matthew might be developing. Those living here were the ones whom Julian and I most liked, people we would have chosen to live with even if there were no Justin Snow.

Matthew began building a fire in the much-used woodstove. There was no one I trusted more than him and, were a scout needed on whose report I had to rely, I would trust Matthew’s experience above anyone’s. He impressed me as articulate, full of gentle yet firm wisdom, and I loved how his mind worked. Anyone who could teach himself video production by researching books and manuals had to have a strong focus. He had become quite expert. When enthusiastic, his face would light up with boy-like radiance. Yet none of us felt we knew what his ‘problem’ was, though Julian sensed he was perhaps afraid of intimacy. In The Context, since knowing one’s problem was even more important than knowing one’s name, I hoped his smooth and diplomatic way went deep down. Justin certainly respected him.

I wanted to ask him about Roland living here, but was soon greeted by Jonathan Boyce, the good-looking, big-jowled carpenter whose Colgate smile seemed both practiced and efforted. So smooth in his voice, so muscular without ever having to work out, so careful in his speech, I did not relish sharing a house with him. But tonight his warmth seemed genuine. Yet he was not someone I would spend time with.



Caitlin and Vanya began dinner preparations. I thought of Vanya as Justin's lieutenant. I think we all did, for they had fought together in battle in the days of shining armor, the Celestials had said. She still dreamt of him every night. Born into wealth, her energy had been honed through social pressure and self-reliance, making for excitement, for quick and clear-cut decisions and for lots of energy. This horsewoman could dance! But she needed the whole floor. I couldn't imagine the man she would end up with. Tough, gorgeous and hard to get close to, she and her business partner Matthew seemed inseparable, a situation that would grow difficult for Caitlin.

Caitlin was the opposite of Vanya and almost as sensitive as Julian. But where Julian could go toe to toe with Vanya in vivacity and both were energetic conversationalists, Caitlin's Catholic eyes held the pain of others, as well as her own. She must have seen a lot in the Dominican Republic, where she had volunteered for a summer, and her empathy, I imagined, must have endeared her to the poor in many a village hovel, not to mention to those in her geriatric care in Minneapolis. Such work was very important to her, and the reason she had waited months to return to Victoria. While Mark seemed quite a sophisticate, in Caitlin I saw more of the Nebraska small-town girl, someone with strength of conviction and an attractive innocence. She and Julian had long discussions about Matthew, about Vanya, about jealousy and feeling one's pain. I worried about Caitlin, so new here and so vulnerable, yet trusted something in her sorrowful, honest eyes.

Mark had sat on the sofa in the vaulted living room to read an article in *Harpers*. He motioned me over to talk about the 'Jewish mantra,' and I was glad to move from feeling like a prisoner in Jonathan's presence to an equal in Mark's company. Even after making some unwise investments before meeting Justin, Mark was still able to go where he pleased, to meet this

master or follow that spiritual teaching. No one loved discussion more than this large fellow, large in many ways, who could be at times as fierce as he could be jovial. Gifted with piercing inquisitiveness that always sought clarity, asking question on question until he had satisfied what seemed an insatiable thirst to understand, and to be understood, his love could, nevertheless, be palpable.

Only when dinner was served did Mark and I attenuate our discussion, and only then did Jonathan's wife Lilly descend from the second floor. She greeted Julian and then me, warmly welcoming us, her eyes radiant, her demeanor delicate. Quiet and sweet, Lilly was one-quarter Jewish and staying low key. She shook our hands and gave us very sweet smiles. I couldn't imagine her angry.

Walking into Millstream, I had never felt so welcome. Immediately before dinner, Julian took me aside to say that she felt like a tag-along, received because of me. I assured her that was not the case, as we sat around a table set like a work of art.

The talk over quiche and broccoli almondine was first about the fact that we had two Canadians living with us: Roland, "a long story," according to Vanya, and Duffy, whom Justin had sent here to get more Americanized—"put a little zip in his tank," Matthew said. Then we got into talking about starting a magazine that would apply The Contest to analysis of political events, history, the arts, film, sports. Its objectivity and lack of bias would subject treatment a probe into essence, out of which content would rise and find its meaning, how people spoke being far more important and revealing than merely what they said. It could represent the cutting edge of journalism.

"How about *Without Point of View* for a title," I suggested, excited by the project, one obviously stemming from Justin's recent critical analyses of such controversial subjects as abortion, AIDS, current films and political events. He had

several days ago spoken about the 007 airliner shot down by the North Koreans—his insights usually revealingly opposite from mainstream opinion. Justin, having heard several American spokesmen on the news, was certain that the downed aircraft had been a U.S. spy plane. He used no personal bias or skewing of information. The Context was scathingly and subtly objective, reading voice inflection, facial muscles, the energy and directness of the eyes—the telltale signs by which I had been tracked by Roland on the blue couch.

After dinner, Julian and I, who both wanted to create an aesthetic living space, stayed up to decorate our room on the first floor. It wasn't until several days later that I got a chance after dinner to knock on Matthew's door. But he wasn't in.

“Up there,” said Julian, pointing to the stairway to the second floor. “I think he's with Caitlin. They stayed up last night talking.” She smiled in that knowing way. The next evening I thought I sensed a greater energy in Matthew's eyes as he told me about Roland. By now I had heard the audios about Roland being confronted on his relationship with Madelaine. Roland in love! I couldn't quite imagine it, especially given the reserved solidity I sensed in Madelaine, when Roland, self-sufficient and totally devoted to Justin, was such a master of interaction. And that was the problem: In a passionate affair that had blossomed quite quickly, she had pulled Roland away from Justin. Yet the audios of Roland's Sunnyside confrontations had Justin seeing his best friend in a different light: “Are you sincere, Roland?” That question had led to further cracks, a psyche full of cracks, nothing but cracks. I was aghast to learn that the confrontation that lasted two days had resulted in Roland being called evil and his departure for Vancouver. Only a bit of breath returned as I listened to Matthew add that Justin had called Roland to say that the

incident had been a mistake. Convinced to return, Roland was still on the line and evidently largely cast aside.

I was nothing less than dumfounded to consider that this extraordinary man—at times as confident as Justin himself, as nearly intelligent, and at least as funny—could be here to regroup, reflect and study in solitude. I decided to speak with Roland, but the day I made up my mind to knock on his door, my world caved in.

It was after returning from Seattle where, in a private room crammed with twenty friends, Julian and I watched the only personally enlightened human being engage a Buddhist *geshe* and try ‘to move him around’ in hopes this sage would receive a jolt of pure feeling. Justin, having told us prior to this meeting that enlightenment in and of itself does not mean that someone is a complete human being, had finally taken the monk’s hand and pushed all this personal energy into the impersonally enlightened priest, which brought great smiles, then deep silence. That night in his hotel room, which Julian had arranged, Justin said that the *geshe* had “tasted the thrill of individuation in his heart and in some part of himself will never be the same.” Yet the former World Teacher concluded that, despite being a beautiful man without a demon, this monk was still missing half of life.

But then his attention turned to Julian, who had helped set up the venue for the meeting we had just witnessed. Soon Justin was confronted our relationship, saying that Julian and I had no right to be so close, “as if you two had known each other 600 years. You haven’t earned that intimacy.” I saw Julian’s face go instantly white, her eyes wide and vacant, in this her first confrontation. By the end of the night, our relationship was over. Back at Millstream, we slept apart, Julian devastated, me principled. I found solace in writing the book. She sought help

from Caitlin and Vanya, who told her to stand in her pain. She wept for hours and gave me up.

The day before my birthday, after the whole house had gone to a hand-gliding exhibition by the sea cliffs of Beacon Hill Park, by the icy duck ponds Julian and I exchanged our first words in two weeks. Later she fixed dinner. Sitting on the kitchen counter, with Matthew and Mark asking how she felt, she wept. She said she loved me. I stopped doing the dishes.

“Now it is for you, Bill, to make adequate response to this woman who you have lived with and loved,” said Matthew with appropriate seriousness.

Sensing the frozen place in me that feared I could not make words match what I wanted to feel, I began, “Julian, I want...I want to care for you...deeply...”

“What is it you really want?” It was Mark’s voice, and he tenderly placed his left hand on my heart.

“To be...” I faltered, feeling the loving way that Mark was sharing his tactile support, “...loved.” In the tension between thinking myself unlovable and the palpable sweetness around me, I broke open. That night I came to Julian, spoke my fear and my passion. She received me. We talked. We lay in her bed, toes finding toes, hands finding hands, lips touching.

So it was that my Valentine’s Day birthday around a huge cake the women had made was the most beautiful in memory. It had little to do with the presents and more to do with Justin and Eva driving to Millstream especially for my day and Julian at my side. After commenting on the freshness of this house with its vaulted ceilings, Justin gave me “an experience of my soul” that had me swirling in such layered complexity that, were it possible to put into speech, I was sure no one would comprehend. I could say only, “Everyone has to have this experience.” Justin flashed a smile at Eva, rhetorically asking, “Not bad, eh, wench?” Later, like a drunk, he asked her,

“Wanna be m’valentine, kiddo? Lemme see your heart, Eva!” and he pushed intensity through his flashing eyes boring into his wife kneeling nearest to him on the white rug. This was followed by Justin redefining the challenge of The Context: “To be with me as Eva is with me, to be that close, that honest, that loving and risking, that desirous of evolving.”

Roland had said nothing the whole night. The man who had sat in front row center during seminars, and knelt next to Justin during evenings at Annapurna, stayed in the background, where Justin seemed content to let him be. I wondered if he knew how Roland delighted in bringing every possible conversation to the subject he felt most important: Justin Snow.

I decided to talk to Roland. He;d given me so much, especially after my several running-away episodes. Yet here was a situation I could simply not fathom. Roland was like a company’s hottest salesman or a baseball team’s leading hitter. Not a month ago in Transformation Four, which only he and Eva had received, Roland had, he told us, seen God and almost stayed in that reality. A year before I met Justin Snow, Roland had thought himself enlightened as he and his divine friend were driving somewhere. Justin’s response was to turn down a side street and kick him out of the slowly moving gold Renault. Here at Millstream, all I was seeing was a shell-shocked man trying to appear competent, yet he was an executive demoted to clerk, the punch-drunk fighter who has been through it all and knows he will never get back into the ring.

I had knocked at his door, invited myself in. He was studying. We chatted a bit about what he was reading. Well aware that no casual conversation would work, I asked him about his situation. He deflected each of my probings. I expressed my appreciation for him, then urged him to drop all the known elements—even his humor—around his friendship with Justin. But Roland could not catch the pitch I was

throwing him. Seeing the deep furrows on his forehead, the lack of character in his upper lip, the pathetic way he wiped his glasses, I stood up, smoothing the covers of his bed where I had sat. I wanted to weep, to take this child in my arms and rock him till he cried himself to sleep, but all I could say was, “If you ever need someone to talk to, I’m here for you.” Then I left, knowing he wanted sympathy and that the bright “Thank you” to my offer had been a shield, a learned response, a last grasp at control, at saving face. Justin’s best friend, who had seemed to me to be foundational to all that I had experienced in The Context, had no other friends. I heard he went to Vanya’s bedroom one night and asked to talk, but succeeded only in frightening her to the point where she had to have a consultation. He even tried to talk to Caitlin. But not to me.

I worked on the book, writing a first draft of eight chapters. Justin had very much liked Chapter Two: a dialogue between God and Gabriel about the need for someone on Earth who would be without dogma and would feel each experience purely, no matter what it was. “There’s never been such a soul—the idiot will end up more persecuted than Jesus,” Gabriel crowed. The other chapters needed a good deal of work. I had as yet had no interviews with Justin, though I had pushed for them. I did manage a few minutes the day before Julian and I had to leave for Seattle, having been in Victoria a full month.

“I thought the book would be a tragedy ending with the downfall of Lydia, since you said that tragedy is the most ennobling form of literature. Yet, everyday adds another necessary chapter, it seems.” He smiled. But instead, the interview turned into more of a free consultation centering around what work I would find back in Seattle—“Either in teaching, writing or creative administration,” Justin said, then focusing me on my worthiness, which was key to a truly excellent position. He finished with, “Whatever this book is

going to be, it must somehow take in the final destiny of all the main characters in the script, for it must make no assumption that will be overturned in the long run.” Whom did he see, I wondered. Who would be exalted, who would be thrust down?

The last day of February was our last night in Victoria, the almost nightly meetings—with *Hamlet* rehearsals gone by the wayside due to ‘the Jewish question’—held at Heronwater. Dierdra came down the winding staircase to join us and, with tears in her eyes, told us all that she was sorry, that she had been tricked by her demon, that she had not been true to the reality of life. How well she spoke. But no one was so deeply or so often confronted as Eva. But then no one had the incredible highs, the ineffable closeness to Justin, or loved him so.

“Eva,” Justin asked with a smirk on his face, “tell them what it’s like to be the wife of a personally enlightened man.” And she, late looking frazzled as she had just walked slowly downstairs—after confrontation, I assumed—offered some well-chosen abstract words idealistically rendered. Again I assumed that the reality was too intense, too beautiful to tell truly. While incapable of fathoming their relationship, I knew only that Julian and I had been strengthened, that we had both more than survived our month that felt more like a year.

Justin asked us, “Want to see who’s evolving most rapidly?” Hand-openings followed. “Looks like it’s Bill Howell, and Jonathan Boyce, who’s taking care of Snow Man Press and working diligently on my house.”

With Sunnyside’s second floor being remodeled to become ‘the permanent seminar room,’ Justin was getting used to Heronwater and, sitting on his robin’s-egg blue couch, I floated up to say goodbye. Finally I gave this man the thank you I had long wanted to offer. It was just a whisper, really, just barely audible, my eyes squinting with tears offered to the clear mountain of a man whom I loved as no other.



## CHAPTER 15: CATCHING THIEVES

“Hi!” I threw an armload of books onto the loveseat as Julian, who had been singing to herself, leaned around the kitchen door: “How was your day, my love?”

I collapsed on what little floor space our hideaway held. For five months I had been admissions director, instructor, newsletter and catalog writer, not to mention chief idea man for a vocational school that barely paid me.

“I told the president I couldn’t work for \$500 a month anymore, and of course he understood. He apologized, saying he’d been sure the grant to pay my full salary was going to happen. But it didn’t happen. So I told him today was my last.”

“Good. Good! It’s ridiculous what you got paid. And you gave so much—the work of three people. You’ve always been someone who lifts new ventures. I’m not sorry you tried to make that vocational school go, but what do we do now?”

“Go to the Summer Course, I guess, and see what comes up. I know only that I’m glad you’re in my life and that we’re having something that smells incredible for dinner.”

I hugged Julian from behind. While her one hand held a spoon dripping tomato sauce and her other stirred a pot full of veggies, she told me how some of Justin’s Seattle friends thought we were going overboard. Seattle drama was high, not rivaling Victoria’s, but life was definitely happening here. Julian and I didn’t look to confront our Seattle group, but out of love we did point things out when they were obvious.

“It’s just their ambivalence with an undercurrent of hopelessness,” I offered. After a silence, I asked about her day. Having brought up a family full-time since she was 19, she had just taken a job and was in charge of the Seattle Club’s juice bar from noon till 5 PM. We talked about the small but always

meaningful experiences of our day over another of her fine meals. Afterwards I filled the sink with dishwater suds.

“You worked all day; you don’t have to do that,” she said, then pointing to a letter for me on the table.

“Hey, you know our deal: The cook doesn’t clean. Besides, I like to do dishes. It’s a kind of meditation.” I finished the cleaning and walked three steps into the living room to see about the letter. “Wow, it’s from Justin.”

In charge of tapes for the Seattle area, we had kept up on Roland’s situation and all things Victoria. We went to what seminars we could afford, which were few, and had built up quite a debt, but barely a tenth of what some of Justin’s other friends owed. We had gone to the Easter Course, the sweetest that Justin had given. He had showed me the age of my soul, almost shuddering to behold what came over his face—a sense of millions on millions of years. He had also manifested the nature of my soul: “Pure giving, the urge not to harm anything in creation; it makes for sentimentality, which he will have to overcome, but it is a gorgeous soul.”

Two months later we had attended the “Post-silence Seminar.” Justin revealed that he lacked the physiological purity to accomplish his major desire—to enlighten seven of his friends. This was because those close to him were still caught in the wiles of their demons. So he had gone to Piers Island for a month of silence, which he had said would bring him the power of prophets, so that on sight someone could be shaken and healed. He said it would mean that he would have to become impersonal, like a yogi, which was one of the hugest shifts he could make. I found myself wondering about Eva. Already a saint in my eyes, would this be her final act of surrender? And how could the most passionate and personal human being change in one month into an impersonal sage?

Our first glimpse of this new Justin came when he had walked on stage sporting a steel gray beard. For five minutes he just stared at us. He had the look of a wolf. “I have come through a great ordeal. Had I gained the fiery power of presence necessary to burn the demonic out of the world, I would have lost the very gift that God uniquely bestowed on me: my personality—the Creator’s grandest invention. So I chose to consciously maintain myself.” Prowling the stage, eloquent, aloof, he added, “But I was given myself anew, as if I’d never been enlightened.” He paced. “You see, in challenging the demonic, my personality is the only true weapon. Just being enlightened, being a yogi or a lama, doesn’t challenge evil of the world. I finally know who I am and no one—*no one*—is going to take one iota of what I’ve achieved away from me!” He paced again. “I was rewarded with a selfhood that is now invincible. I am now so much more fully myself that merely by being myself I will draw you towards me. I will not be confronting anymore, won’t have to *do* anything. After nine years of working and giving, giving every moment of every day, I can enjoy what’s been achieved. Those of you who are ambivalent or playing around with evil will grow more distant. You’ll not be able to stand being too near me. You will wonder why, will grope, wither and leave, just fall away. This will be most difficult for those who’ve been around me the longest.”

The rich experience of opening one of his letters brought back the whole intensity and promise of moving closer to him. I had sent him a few poems, one a love poem to Julian. Maybe this was his reply.

*Dear Bill,*

*Your poems are lovely. I look forward to what poems are going to wait until you are perfect. In mind and heart.*

*Boy, there is so much to tell you; and yours is the best consciousness into which I have written all day—all week. I am trying to get into silence before the Summer Course. This course will be a corker, like none other.*

*You probably are keeping up with events here regards my daughter, the precarious position she's in. There are new events that I cannot fathom, only that I trust with my enlightenment are true, events more dissonant than any yet revealed. I can only be on my knees to God that He is in full control. I pray He reveals something new to me, but I am as of this moment convinced that my daughter is evil.*

It was as if I had just read that trees were really made of cement. That this vulnerable, beautiful girl who loved music and drama and God and her ultimately demanding father and who must constantly have been torn between the world of normal father-daughter relationship and the vast realm her father revealed to her with its more subtle and deadlier parameters—I was sure there must be some mistake, some purpose in throwing her into a demolition that had been building for months. But I had been wrong about Lydia. Then, too, Angelica, nearly inseparable from Dierdra, had been acting out more noticeably since Roland, her father, was now in jeopardy, and this rage had to be rubbing off on her friend. When Justin and Eva both saw that Dierdra's radiance was too pat and automatic, too intelligent, Dierdra came to see the accuracy of that in herself, which had allowed her to be a person, more unpredictable, more real. But then that phase had gotten exploited by her demon, which left Justin no choice but to confront her. She evidently had had enough, and was about to go home to her mother up-island. But Justin had convinced her, his angel and his nemesis, to stay.

*At dinner last night, when I put down my knife and fork and turned to Dierdra—it was Eva who had suggested the possibility the night before—I looked at her and said merely, ‘Dierdra, I think you’re evil.’ Angelica fell back in her chair, the first time I have ever gotten through her lovely, intelligent aptness and cut her open. Dierdra said nothing the rest of the night.*

*I walked outside Sunnyside, went down on my knees and fell so far into despair that I gave everything up: seminars, friends, The Context, everything except my relationship with Eva. Only God kept me functional. And it was his angel Gabriel who brought me out of this abyss and set me on the firm rock of my duty.*

*The demonic knows who I am and has devised every plan of attack possible. This story, if you write it, will be even a greater story than the Passion. All we have is trust in the beauty, the will and intelligence of the Almighty.*

*So there you have it. The result has been a bliss I have never experienced, as if something has been purified to such an extent that we are approaching the last barriers to being perfect instruments of God. Angelica and I have become very close. I am being rewarded by the beauty of her soul.*

*I should go, William Howell; I look forward to seeing you on the Summer Course, and I must love Julian, for it is obvious that you are developing something there which deserves the description of sacred. I really believe the ocean of the demonic is being swallowed up in grace. I love you and take this opportunity to bless the sweetness of your soul and to promise you enlightenment in your present body.*

*With all my heart, Justin*

The most intimate letter I'd ever received and its written promise of enlightenment had me sitting down in our only chair. It must mean that I would be one of the seven friends he would enlighten. But the letter had torn me in two! What was a budding teenager who was evil supposed to do? How would she function in school, in her body? This would reverse itself: it had to! After handing the letter to Julian and watching every possible emotion pass through her face, we talked half the night, especially about the phrase, *and I must love Julian*, before falling into our narrow bed.

The letter still in my blood, we drove to Victoria for the Summer Course, held at the old theater at Camosun College. Justin, beardless because it imaged him and brought on too many conditioned expectations, entered with Eva. He had grayed significantly, even in the past month. A bald spot I had not noticed before now centered his head.

The course started with Klaus and Mary, who had been under the gun since Justin had sprained his ankle. He revealed that, when Mary came to massage his feet, she had taken his energy, demanding from a point of almost transcendental need that he express to her his heart. He spoke how being Eva's maid of honor had brought Mary forward in the group and served to reveal her in ways she hadn't expected. Justin said that she had been a buddha and also a devil in past incarnations. Tonight Justin revealed the next layer: She was a simple peasant-type and had put on sophisticated masks she had known were false. For the tall Klaus—quiet, reserved and generally content to be in the background—it was a Dutch stubbornness tied to the personality of his country and his own deep-rooted anger and negativity. While I had not known Mary well, and Klaus even less, I had felt close to this woman who epitomized health. I had admired her husband's strong and kind aristocratic

nature. Now, despite having given tens of thousands of dollars to Justin, both were being expunged, tossed aside.

Then Dierdra came on stage in a pink pinafore and a bow in her hair. But her father toyed with her as if she were a leashed poodle, and she, who had wept before us all, did nothing to disprove her invulnerability. I wondered if she just no longer cared.

Life were leaping so fast as to blur, the details falling away like wilted petals in a stiff wind. We were being asked to believe Dierdra's root was bad, and that was that.

There was still more. The first session's finale was Eva herself, in a little experiment Justin wanted to conduct: To see if she could perform herself without cues from him, relying solely on herself. She struggled, getting nowhere, but stalked her mysterious goal as if it were prey, saying, "I don't know what to do or how to do it, but I trust that God will let me know if I desire strongly and I want to know!" She shook her fists, moved in circles, jumped, cried—until she did kill something that was telling her that she couldn't be dynamic, flowing, fully conscious, witty and uninhibited in every moment. Justin finally said, "I don't recognize this woman; I never knew how incredible she was! I'm going to expect far more from you now, Eva, my wife." And they walked off the stage arm and arm—a rare show of affection—into the summer air.

Julian and I had to miss a day of the seminar, secretly glad to be in our own energy in a more manageable world, and by the time we drove back to Victoria, there were new aspects of Jewishness that had been revealed. And we heard that something had come up about Eva. Well, that's what it was like to miss even a day—the universe was evolving through Justin and the pace seemed only to be quickening. Later, Matthew said that Eva hadn't been quite so vital the day we were gone,

and that Justin, after going through an elaborate process of possibilities, had said, “What if Eva’s evil?”

“The silence went out in shock waves,” Matthew told Julian and me, and both of us could see that Matthew had nowhere inside himself to hold such a possibility. It was simply too foreign, too dissonant.

I, who had fallen in love with Eva many times, the latest being two days before when she had remarkably performed herself on stage, still did not feel close to her. I didn’t know anyone but Justin who did. Ever wise and centered, possessing the qualities we all wanted, never showing one indication of negativity even with all that Justin put her through—Eva was loved by all of us. Yet I was afraid for her. I remembered hearing that in the old days she had been sent away a number of times and once had nearly gone berserk, but had always been vindicated.

Finally, Adam had answered: “If Eva’s evil, we’re all evil.” Everyone had agreed and the whole thing was left undecided.

It was during a break between sessions when Julian and I strolled arm-in-arm around the campus—the day neither warm nor cool, as if there was no weather—and met Matthew and Caitlin, also arm-in-arm. We stood, the four of us, heads touching, just being silent, and I felt the sweetest love exuding from each of us and rising in the center, so much so that I had to announce it at the mike—to tell everyone I had experienced true grace, so gently simple it was. Justin commented on the authenticity of my experience.

But in a seminar, the most uplifting moment could be followed by one equally cavernous. It started with Justin trying something new, inviting Mark O’Doyle to the stage, saying that he was going to describe Mark’s problem with zero compensation.



“Do you want to hear this, Mark?” After a nod, Justin asked why, with Mark saying that he wanted the unadulterated truth. “Because you don’t want me to compensate for you any more, right?” Mark agreed, but Justin had him say it. Then began a five-minute exposition as graphic and imagistically charged as anything I had ever heard Justin say, such that Mark could barely step down from the stage. Then he called me up and, after ten minutes of “Your poetry’s done you no good whatsoever; You’re riding a horse but afraid you can’t gallop through life and stay on; You are made of air and goblins; You’re a leafy vegetable the world devours, for you cannot stand up to your horror; You are prideful....” It ended with ‘Sit down.’ Not knowing what had happened, I took a seat in a world stripped of mystery, flattened, existential. When Justin asked at the start of the next session, “How are you, Bill?” and I was unable to speak, he said, “Good. It worked. Alright, who’s next!” and the uncensored explications went on.

Julian did not get the guts of her problem opened on stage. She often missed out on Justin’s gifts, though loved it when I received them. She was the true appreciator, yet of course wondered why she was being left out. It hurt. But this time it was fine.

Then came the steamroller heading straight for Roland. Justin had been pressing him here and there throughout the course. After being asked if he was evil, he had said that he didn’t know. The task was given to Eva to continue. From her front-row seat she turned, looking long at the man who had once been her husband and had given her a child, and without a trace of harshness asked, “Do you love Justin?”

Saying he did, that he loved being close to him, Roland was then faced with this from Eva: “You knew him so well. Could it be that you knew him too well? He is the universe, you know, and you can’t know the universe. I sense the way you

knew Justin has something to do with why he still presses you, that you took something from him.” After that Adam, Jonathan Boyce and Klaus, who was battling back for his dignity, chimed in with the fact that Roland had stolen from Justin, and from them, as well!

But it was Jonathan who put it all together: “I feel, from the beginning, you tried to fit Justin into an enlightened peg, into the role that would make him comparatively impotent.” To this, Justin silently mouthed, “Yes! Yes! Yes! Right! Right! That’s right!”

Then more of the Annapurnans were putting two and two together to realize how much had been taken from them, how much Roland had prevented them from knowing and getting closer to Justin, and to themselves.

That was when the man himself stood: “Best friend! You stole something from me! You stole my personality, my very being. You went for the most valuable of all my possessions and took it. *You* kept me from myself!” And then the divine friend, one hand raised on the top stair, his foot square on Roland’s forehead, pushed his right leg and wailed, “AYiiiiiaaaaayeeeeee-ah!” as the wire-rimmed glasses flew from Roland’s distorted face, and Justin collapsing in his director’s chair with, “I am freeeeeeeeeeee!”

In a few moments, Roland, his head slightly bloody from where Justin had kicked him and, cut by his broken glasses, was feeling the attention shift back his way. Glasses in hand, he was walking to the door.

In an instant Klaus was up, fire in his eyes. Roland ran, the door swinging once before Klaus, Jonathan and Adam were through it, the fleeing animal not getting far. Klaus brought him in, crying, “You stole me, too!” as he put his right fist into Roland’s soft belly, then again, until Justin cried, “No, do not mark him. Yet he is marked with his collaboration with evil.”

Justin looked at all of us: “Roland, you aren’t evil.” Then he turned to the man at the mike: “Evil would have nothing to do with you, so despicable you are. Yet it had to use you to get to me. No, you have been taken over by evil--which is worse! Get out, you scum! Get out! We’ll see what your daughter thinks of you now.”

That night’s talk at Millstream was how now Justin was himself and The Context was reborn, spring-like, free, perhaps now loving and compassionate.

But not quite yet. The next day, another was found out. I had doubted Jonathan’s longevity since February when he’d said, “Eva mentioned you owe \$785 and shouldn’t be taking advantage of Justin, who needs to meet his obligations; just because you’re here on his invitation...” His voice, velvety in its cutting, had closed off any possibility of response. I knew Eva would never have said that. Now, Justin largely stayed out of Jonathan’s first microphone confrontation, it was revealed that the carpenter was jealous of Eva. He had placed himself in charge of certain finances, of Snow Man Press and renovations at Sunnyside, where he changed some of Eva’s designs and forced her into choices she’d not have made on her own—all this to come between Justin and Eva.

“I’m a trap,” Justin told the eighty-some people present. “I’m totally naïve and if anyone gets near me for a wrong reason, the trap shuts, so watch out.”

Thus was The Context purified. Now things could really happen. Justin spoke of reading all of Shakespeare’s plays, starting with *Antony and Cleopatra*, and of traveling—to Russia, first. It would be a new era of closeness and friendship.

The third-to-last night of the course, Justin called all who had to depart early to come to Heronwater. He was in his bedroom, sitting on the black lacquered bed with brass posts and silk bedspread in mauves, purples and black. There were six of

us, Julian and I needing to find work in Seattle. To me, he said, “I don’t know what job prospects you have in Seattle, but if you’d consider running things at the Press—Jonathan was making \$1000 a month. If you think this would be something you might like to do...”

After my nod, my amazed eyes, my “Yes, yes, yes, of course,” he spoke to several others. But I heard no words, just listened with my wonder, having heard the answer to a dream, amazed to be so fortunate to be working for Justin, to be with Julian in Victoria, doing what I knew I was meant to do, my life working out better than expected.

Once, on the East Coast at the country home of a dear friend, I had climbed a tall tree thick with vines laden with grapes, and, pail in hand, had swung back and forth, out and farther out again to fill my container with the stuff for wines and jams. That had for a decade had been the image of my happiest moment. Now I was high in a far taller tree. The view was becoming overwhelming. I was climbing to the top of the loftiest limb, still swinging, the pail of my heart in hand, swinging for love, swinging for enlightenment, swinging for the immaculate sky.

## CHAPTER 16: THE ROOF COMES OFF

It was a simple dream, but when the roof came off his house, he told us that all limits were removed from his awareness. Seminars would be held in ‘the upper room’ where his power could be full. The birth of Sunnyside Theatre would begin a new era in The Context.

Julian and I had been back in Victoria for two weeks when the upstairs walls were torn out, with Justin madly typing in his room with its new bath and marble floors, where he was writing three books, one about politics, an autobiography, and a sweeping work called *Hamlet, the Yogi and the Jew*. Daily Justin would fall to his knees in gratitude that darkness was being removed from his house. He selected Julian to be in charge of painting, with Mark and myself regularly helping her. Eva had picked out the \$5000 drapes to grace the new bay windows of the front room, and the dining room’s \$10000 black-lacquered table with brass corners. My favorite room was the kitchen with its spiral staircase to the loft. Eva had been talking to someone about taking photographs for an interior decorating magazine.

“Can you imagine how incredible seminars will be? And Snow Man Press—it can finally accomplish its true purpose, up till now having been governed by the demonic. The future’s just beginning.” I was seeing what I had felt must be coming to us all, now that The Context had become purified.

“Much of me began last week,” Julian said, speaking of her Walk. The Walks with Justin were powerful. We had all had ours, Julian being the last and taking the longest—four and a half hours. Now she felt more part of things. Justin did seem to have his favorites, the Annapurnans dear to him in ways we

Americans would never be, yet he had been cool to them. Vanya was a difficult favorite and Justin loved her energy. The irrepressible Mark he liked, or at least gave a lot of time to. Matthew was the most respected and Caitlin had really come along. I had been told I was like his son.

“I wonder what happened to Eva on her Walk?” I mused as we were cleaning rollers after painting the theater trim.

“She probably ascended to heaven while the rest of us are still subject to our demonic horrors,” Julian posited.

Mark recalled the meeting at Heronwater when for an hour Eva related the experience of looking into Justin’s eyes at a restaurant in Vancouver. “I couldn’t believe the delicacy of her journey,” Mark said, himself in a delicate space as he continued, “I mean it was as if she had ridden on some magic carpet beyond Never Neverland to the highest heaven. Whew!”

“And then at the end of that meeting, when Justin couldn’t give his commentary on the recent appearance of Halley’s Comet because the room felt so dark, and he went around to each one of us and had us say ‘Hello,’ knowing from our vibration if we were true—Lord, I thought I would blow up inside with fear.”

“You thought that, my dear? Well, I would have bet my life it was *me*. I sweat through my thick sweater and thought everyone in the room could hear my heart going crazy.”

“Really? Me, too!” Mark chimed in. “I was going nuts.”

Instead it had turned out to be the aristocratically tall Celeste Bingham. Well-dressed, strong, elegant, she had been confronted and quietly exited when Justin asked her to leave. She and Jason Rivers had been an item once—everyone had thought they would marry.

As we all laughed about our shared neuroses, Mark, not the nimblest or most detail-oriented person, splattered mauve paint over portions of Julian's wood trim.

"You know," I mused, while Mark and I cleaned, "I've been thinking that Justin's greatest desire is to enlighten someone. And I thought that if we all banded together and prayed for Eva that maybe she could get enlightened quickly. She's got to be close—we all know it's got to be her. She's light years ahead of us."

"Sounds good to me," Julian said, but Mark's powers of investigation had him hedging, "So many things have turned out opposite to where they were pointing, and if something seems obvious it's almost a guarantee that the reverse will happen."

While not able to knock that logic, I vowed to pray nightly for Eva, and we found ourselves painting another hour, until Julian realized, "Oh, God, it's nearly three and I've got to get home to help Caitlin cook. Tonight's the big night!"

We raced back to Millstream to the newly painted living room with its soft drapes, Julian's project, plus the paintings we had brought from Seattle and the two new couches Mark had bought, one just for Justin. But the totally re-decorated kitchen was the showpiece. We cleaned silverware, washed windows, dusted, made our rooms immaculate, chopped and stacked wood until we saw headlights in the drive. When Eva and Justin entered, I took his umbrella and caped herringbone overcoat, as he strode in, greeted us individually, moving through the house and appreciating every detail, cooing, "Eva, look at this painting," and "Feel this room!" as he commented how at home he felt. Vanya spoke with Eva until the salads—bib lettuce with mandarin oranges—were served and we sat to a perfectly orchestrated table, centered with a fall collection of leaves and dried flowers I had arranged to Justin's approval.

“The gentlemen will be upstanding,” Matthew intoned as we men rose and toasted the ladies. Though Victoria was said to be ‘more British than the British,’ Justin hadn’t witnessed such a custom and thoroughly enjoyed it, saying, “This is such a home, Eva, such a feeling of warmth, the essence of coziness and hospitality. Want to see divine coziness?” He silently said the invocation to himself as we watched his face grow soft, serene, as if he *and* we were all children sitting in the lap of the Divine Mother.

“That manifestation was a meal in itself,” ventured Vanya, as Caitlin placed the zucchini parmesean on the table near Justin, whom Julian served first. He let the aroma rise to his nostrils and looked eager, picking a baked potato—his acknowledged favorite food—off the platter Julian held. Matthew asked Justin to say a grace and soon I was toasting Justin and Eva as glasses clinked and plates were passed in the candlelight.

“And who’s responsible for this extraordinary meal?” Justin asked, with Julian and Caitlin shyly raising their hands. “My excellent compliments. And what about you, Vanya? I would have expected you to be in on this.”

“Well, Justin, I would have loved to, but Matthew and I have been editing our West Coast Trail film.”

“An incredible trip, Justin,” added Matthew. “Caitlin was with us, as were Duffy and Terrence and Klaus, plus the experts in Indian lore, environment, and Vancouver Island history—thirteen of us in all going through all sorts of weather during our ten-day journey, with helicopters flying in supplies into the remote areas. Not only do Vanya and I feel it will make a striking film, but we feel totally changed by our experience.”

Justin inquired more in detail and Matthew furnished the highlights of being close to fog and sea and sunken ships on the most rugged coastal trail in North America. Then the former



World Teacher asked about how Klaus was doing, as Eva poured Perrier into Justin's special glass. We had bought him a crystal goblet and had Eva bring his gold-plated knife, fork and spoon.

"We'd like to show you our film when it's finished."

"That goes without question, Matthew. I want us all to see your film, and thought I might even drop by and watch you edit," which brought a look between the two filmmakers as if they had won the Cannes film prize—and gave Vanya the opening to ask if Justin would narrate the final product.

There was some talk about that, Justin saying that of course he would love to do it. "What will your promoters say if they recognize my voice in your film? They don't want some cult leader, do they?"

"Justin, you'll be great," encouraged Vanya, "and that's all that matters. Besides, we're not a cult."

"Or the *only* one," Justin grinned.

"Also, we were thinking that you could do some business videos on money, on negotiation," offered Matthew. There's a great market and your approach would be unique."

Justin was interested, interested also in the subjects that arose in further conversation around the dinner table: computer chips, Lionel Ritchie and Sade, the idea for a new magazine that I presented, questions about Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the way history actually changes with the passage of time, the fraudulent theories of Freud....

I marveled—as Justin jostled with Mark, and helped us to see more of his wife's beauty and strength, then brought out the great attributes of what the can-do American impulse was bringing to him and how glad he was that Eva's mother had been American—that we were just having a conversation with him. We had never just chatted with Justin and Eva. We all had been so apprehensive about this night, remembering last

week's Halloween party that, despite everyone's amazing costumes and all the effort that Brandon and his wife Anna had made, had lasted twenty minutes. Justin, dressed as a veiled woman in black, had said the party-mode expectations had made us slack, that "there wasn't one anti-demonic vibe in the whole room when I walked in. You have to go deeper. Always! Parties can't be intermissions. Beauty always destroys something so something fresh gets born. You didn't let me destroy *anything* in you when I walked in. So nothing's been born. Always seek to be destroyed—and love the knife of beauty." Another gourmet meal had gone uneaten.

Julian and Caitlin both lightened up when Justin had a second piece of pie, as he had done with the baked potatoes and the main dish. Conversation rose again about how America was destined to lead the way in revitalizing the world, which brought on a confrontation of the sullenly quiet Duffy, who wore a heavy turtleneck and looked like the fisherman his father had been. "This table is a feast of heart energy and you're down there at the other end tilting the table so that everything slides off and is lost," Justin said, with Duffy looking intently, as if trying every which way to spin a lock whose combination he had lost. As Matthew started a fire and we sat in its light, Justin told us about his approaching trip to Russia to get the truth as God sees it about the Soviet Union and then gave us each, except Duffy, Transformation Level Nine. Soon I was getting his coat and he was saying goodnight to each of us, with kudos all around. The next day, when I drove into work at the Press, Annapurna was abuzz with the Millstream dinner, Justin's letter, written early that morning, in a notebook in the foyer. It started, "The evening at Millstream was one of the true gifts of my life," and in the middle rejoiced, "Never have I felt so comfortable, so at home. The flavor of your engaging

American spirit..." and ended with, "I cannot believe the place in my heart where I hold you all fondly."

Justin had been cool to the Annapurnans, yet they knew nothing with him was automatic, that they had to come to him freshly. Many were beginning to find their own lives: Adam in engineering school in Vancouver, Tobin taking a job in publishing there, and Jason finally doing pre-med work. Klaus and Mary, still intransigent, were no longer part of the group. Nadine was back on the second floor with Holly and Celeste. Douglas and Lillian Meers were now living in Daulaghiri, the little house behind Annapurna, and the Press had the studio suite. The Annapurnans suddenly had to contend not only with not being American but also with the fact that the next weekend we of Millstream flew to San Francisco to surprise Justin, who was giving a seminar there

We six danced through boutiques, drove Justin to half-a-dozen bookstores, followed by lunch on the Haight, listened to him grove on the Sixties and wax eloquent on the purity of San Francisco and St. Francis, then be revealing about the gays and the California new-age demon. At the seminar we watched history alter with a breakthrough for all Jewry when Justin wounded the Jewish demon in one of the seminar participants. Then at Coit Tower, Matthew and Caitlin told us they were engaged, and were planning for an April wedding. Seeing Caitlin trying on a wedding gown on Union Street, and that Julian had also found a dress there (which we decided to keep a secret) had me wanting our San Francisco days to never end.

Back in Victoria, we were all reading *Nicholas and Alexandra* and Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* when Justin and Eva took off for the other side of the world, she in a new fur coat and him in a fur hat. He had never traveled with anyone and Eva was being confronted daily, an uncertain companion until the day of departure, while Julian and I labored twelve

hours a day to get tapes out about this trip to the Soviet Union to all those across North America who loved The Context.

When Justin and Eva returned, I couldn't define my feeling except to say to Julian that no other return that Justin had made was like this one. He had me call everyone and within ten days the severe grandeur of meaning in Justin's face in the new Sunnyside Theatre clenched this last Christmas Course. With every eye in the filled room on him, he said solemnly, "The imagination of God has chosen one of the holiest lands on earth to be the very place where the darkest evil in creation congregates. Every tree and blade of grass, even the very sky are clouded and veiled with the shellac of evil, such a thin veneer, yet coating every object in suffocation, the soul pulverized. You can't imagine how old somewhere in their psyches every Soviet child is." Then, interspersed with flashes of his energy to enliven us and balance the somber tone of his journey, he mentioned how he had nearly faced down a platoon of Soviet soldiers, and invited to Victoria the artistic Leningrad tour guide who had such bearing and vivacity that she could argue the Communist case as well as Justin could rebut it. In the silence that followed, I suspected that many might be echoing my feelings—that Justin would import incredible people around the world who would get all his attention and those of us in Victoria would be no longer in his close proximity.

I loved the story he had Eva relate, which he interrupted at least a dozen times in those intimate sparks I treasured between them, of how he would have made water appear in a glass had it not been for her lack of faith. But all this was prelude to the finale. I knew that The Context had an ultimately vindicating scenario that must already be planned in the mind of God, one that would put our knowledge of Good and Evil into concrete practice.

“I pray that we can be pure enough,” said Justin, “to be instrumental in the conversion of Russia.” There was a very long silence, in which the weight of his words could fall into our hearts.

After speaking of how much more Eva now knew he could give, of how the depth of the Russian people would be confronting to even us—I realized that what I had perceived would be finale was likely not finale at all, for he revealed the startling fact that the Jews say how much their people suffer but are in fact protected by their God and do not suffer.

Then Justin predicted, “Remember these words on January 1: This course is going to tie up all loose ends and make sense of everything that’s gone on these past nine years.” That is when I gave up my assumptions about finales.

It was on Christmas Eve that someone suggested going to midnight Mass. Justin chose this moment to reveal the heart of his Russia sojourn, saying he had been waiting to tell us and that this seemed to be the perfect time. He had Eva relate his visit to St. Catherine’s Cathedral, how it is a world apart from the Kremlin, how Justin stood behind the intricate screen that separates the altar from the congregation, that on this screen were many icons, including The Virgin of Vladimir, the most treasured possession in all Russia, the icon that had, when held up to invading troops charging the outnumbered and ill-equipped Russian army, stopped an invasion centuries ago by its power of holiness.

“When Justin saw her he simply went down on his knees,” Eva offered in a whisper.

“I didn’t do that, Eva; it was done *to* me. The suffering and love in the Virgin just drove me down. And on my knees I was given the name of that experience. The name that was given to me was ‘Christ.’”

In that moment I could feel Justin, the room and all our futures change.

“I didn’t discover Christ, didn’t seek him, but found him through his mother. And I say that holy Mother Russia is alive, waiting, almost as Christ waited on the Cross, for resurrection. We must pray for the conversion of Russia. May we be agents in that great drama.” And then, his voice ponderously soft, he spoke of Christ—“the personification of human glory and human tragedy, which in him meet to form Grace.” He spoke for an hour, of how Christ was “the most passionate person who ever lived, even more than myself.” Then, before his first Mass—it would also be mine—he sent his energy out in specific rays: “Matthew, love ya, buddy; Holly, how the sky are you? How are the smutsies, mad Madelaine? And Lady Nadine, when will you again be queen?”

When he returned, I knew something had happened. He had brought a strange cough back with him, a deeply chest-centered gruffness that concerned me, yet seemed better now. I could always tell that something of depth was about to be offered, either positive or negative, when Justin was silent. He sat in his director’s chair. He looked at us. He looked down. He opened one of the books on the small table beside him. He put it away, as if nothing there could introduce what he was about to share. He looked down, his hands clasped, elbows on knees. Then he stood and spoke, softly, strongly yet almost tenderly.

“I have been enlightened now for nine years,” Justin began. “There were no models for me. When I was transformed in the Swiss Alps, I had nothing, no direction posts. You have years of practice, and the time for enlightenment is approaching. First one, then seven, then many. But, even though I have experienced every phase and degree of good and evil in these nine years—there is more. What was given to me

tonight through the agency of Christ contained such ineffable love, that I was driven down into a place in myself that I never knew existed, as if Christ invented this place in me, a place that contained every other place. We will have to explore the nature of yogi and saint. But for now let me say that the bliss of suffering far outdistances the bliss of transcendence. This is what we've been waiting for. This is the fulfillment of our journey. For in Christ all meaning, all suffering and all joy find a home that stretches every boundary and unites every opposite into...into what? Into what took me to my knees in humility. In Christ, even what is infinite is exceeded. All my life I have wanted someone, something to be devoted to. Tonight I was given my reward. I could never have predicted this. Now I know what I am in the central most part of my heart. I wish you goodnight. God bless each of you." Without his usual pure-feeling dramatic exit, he walked out and down the stairs. That was it—the evening was over in a few minutes, yet a star had risen in our firmaments and our futures would be led by this light. I wondered what the predictions of the Second Coming of Christ might have to do with Justin's initiation in Russia.

That night, the bonding of years of drama now settling in the house decked red and green, the tree we cut from the Millstream creek woods standing like an angel in the room and decorated with ornaments Julian had put on her trees for a decade, Julian lay in my lap, arms around my shoulders. She wore the silver earrings I had given her and the fire danced in her eyes, her toes wiggling as she listened to Matthew and Mark speak about their Christ Transformation experiences. I knew Julian could relax because she had been one of the first to receive this Christmas gift, Justin talking to her a minute at the mike, then stopping her mid-sentence with "Close your eyes," after which he had intoned melodically, powerfully, "Jesus Christ, come into the heart of this woman..." and, after asking

that her sins be forgiven, that her panic turn into ease, that the deep wounds of her heart be healed, the longest of all invocations ended with “and deliver her into the true beauty of her soul. Amen.” Then he had leaned against the wall in the sage green ‘magic coat’ he had worn to Russia, Handel’s *Messiah* orchestrating the energies in the room, till he lowered his hands, saying in a saintly way, “It’s good. It’s very good.”

On Christmas day, Justin entered electrically: “Hey, everyone! How’s it going? Bill, you big gallute, how be thee? Matthew, you camera buff, quit hiding behind that lens. You have such a big eye! Don’t you know that I’m the one with the big I? How are you, Eva? And you, Justin, how are you?”

“Well,” answering himself, “I’m quite well. Why are you asking *me* that dangerous question?”

“Well, I was just curious.”

“How are you?” he retorted sharply to himself.

‘You don’t have to ask in that tone of voice,’ he mocked, then turned concerned. “Besides, don’t you *know* how I am? How are *you*?” Then he began spinning, snapping his fingers, going faster and faster, calling on Mark, then me for help. “Are you just going to let me do this all day?” he kidded. Stopping himself, he said, “That’s a good trick when you get enlightened, because Being is immovable. So when you’re getting dizzy and you’re in Being, you’re spinning and going nowhere, yet you’re everywhere. Being is undizziable.”

When the laughter subsided, Justin looked around.

“How many think the course isn’t too bad so far?” Despite all our hands going up, he asked, “How about you, Julian? And Carla—okay? And Craigy, Craggy Craig...not bad? Not bad? Not bad!”

Craig was Julian’s oldest son, in The Context for only a year. Enterprising, entrepreneurial and a fine athlete whom his mother had thought could have played Major League baseball,



Julian's good-looking son, whose first seminar had been the Fairfield Christmas Course where I had met his mother in six feet of snow, was someone I quite liked. Carla, Ted Klein's one-time lover and now Julian's daughter-in-law, had been the one who had gotten Julian's interest up enough that she had finally attended her first seminar. Now the room grew quiet, and we all knew the antics were over.

"It's a good life, isn't it? Yes," Justin said seriously, "it is, truly it is. Especially from this vantage point! Is everything okay? Seems a bit stiff in here, even after all my good jokes. Something's not right. Do you notice it, Caitlin? Do you, Holly? Well, I want to give these Christ Transformations. Look at Julian! It's like some ugly piece of furniture in her brain has been moved out. I tell ya, this Christ guy is powerful! But I can't do it in this room the way it is. Do you feel it, Eva?"

"It's what I don't feel that defines what you're experiencing," she said softly. "I'm being pressed inside myself to find any richness of experience." Her words seemed always so easy, so full of concern, so deeply wrought, so quintessential.

After Adam, then Nadine and then Tobin gave their deftly crafted responses to concur, Justin said, "Well, let's call the fire department. They'll know what to do, eh? Their hook-and-ladder would have to go pretty high to reach whatever this is. Maybe we should give it a try. Holly, come on up. Close your eyes." He stood back, tried to say the prayer to begin a Christ Transformation, but it wouldn't come.

"Matthew, everything alright at Millstream?"

"Yes, we had a fabulous celebration of Christmas, and Caitlin and I would like to invite you to a Catholic Mass at the Cathedral to see how you experience that context in contrast to the Anglican Mass which, I understand, was your first experience."

“Yes, we must do it—tomorrow morning. And when does Vanya return from Mexico. Tomorrow? Okay. And how are things at Annapurna, Nadine?”

“Well, Annapurna seems to be searching for itself. But Holly and I are getting closer every day.”

“Very goood. Helene, how’re things with you in your suite?”

“Oh, fine, Justin, fine,” responded the artistic voice of the slender literary woman who had a position at U. Vic. and had given up a relationship with a professor to come closer to the fold and take a room with Celeste. “I’m getting ready for next semester and Celeste’s busy making Duffy a gorgeous sport coat that she hopes will enhance his dignity.” Helene always seemed to be wearing shades of white, and Celeste was a first-class seamstress.

“Really? Huh. Well, my experience was that, when you mentioned Celeste’s name, things grew cloudy and tense.”

Soon, each of the Annapurnans had said how they could not seem to get close to Celeste, and the athletic Jason confessed that this is why their relationship was not happening, though he had wanted it to. Jonathan Boyce ended up saying that she was ‘a ball-cutter.’ I still didn’t like him, but his comment had the women realizing that Celeste made them feel flat, unlovely, unsexed. And then Adam got down to it with, “Are you evil?” to which Justin concurred with “Bingo! That’s one clear person in the room.” Then Holly, then Tobin, then Brandon’s wife Anna got clear, and then Eva asked if Celeste wanted to be in league with the energy of the Gulags.

Justin was breathing hard now, slumping in his chair, crying, “Aiyaaaa. It’s the sickness I caught in Russia that’s suffocating me.”

Eva was at his side in an instant, commanding Matthew to find a picture of Maharishi, Nadine to get some incense, me

to get a Cross. Celeste could not stand the heat anymore and stoically allowed Adam to lead her out.

The next day, with everyone tired from battle fatigue and the Annapurnans amazed at how much more light and energy was theirs since ‘that person’ had moved out, Justin, with Gregorian chants in the background, predicted, “Anyone who makes it to New Years day will be with me forever.”

That night—saying this would be ‘a required tape’—he told us that he had cognized the final description of evil, and he solemnly offered twenty criteria for someone who could be termed ‘evil.’

When the five of us returned to Millstream, we found that Vanya had just gotten back from Mexico. She bubbled about her trip with her family and the people of Mexico, saying their suffering was so understandable, that the peasants she saw were as noble as anyone in The Context would be under similar conditions. We weren’t bothering with analysis, so glad we were to see her. She presented us each with gifts, commenting on the beauty and cost of the unique item as she offered it, first to Matthew, and she received our strong appreciation. I took the small rug dyed in subtle lavenders and mauves, yet felt along with the beauty of Vanya’s energy and thoughtfulness that the present had been thrust at me rather than given. I noticed then that Vanya’s voice was louder than usual. But she and Matthew were clowning. They stayed up late, talking. Caitlin, having received a white blouse, seemed saddened. She tried not to show it, but I saw Julian talking with her.

Justin danced across the stage the next morning, singing, “Baryshnikov, you’ve met your match!” After laughter, he sat, breathing hard: “I don’t have the training and skills that a dancer like Mikhail Baryshnikov turns into the magic of motion, but there is in here,” pointing to his chest, “something that knows what dance is even more deeply than he does—and I am always

dancing. Always! So,” changing the music, “anyone want their money back? Well, you’d better wait, ‘cause this is going to be a day of armor and cannon and saber.” He made a few flourishes with his hand to applause.

He did three Christ Transformations, then said, “If I could show you a video of Adam and Eve in the Garden or Buddha under the Bodhi Tree, or Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, or Mohammed receiving the *Quran* from the Angel Gabriel, or Paul on the road to Damascus, or Christ being crucified, or Maharishi getting enlightened—which would you choose, Eva? Right. The Crucifixion is *the* most powerful event that ever happened. You couldn’t even watch it. Only I could watch it till the end.”

Then, as if on the foundation of the Crucifixion, he said, “Terrence, ready to do battle? Come on up here, you sheepdog.” I could see right off that this guy, his eyes saying, ‘Pet me, I can’t be anything but cuddly,’ was not going to pull through, and I wondered how he had been around since nearly the beginning of the Sunnyside days. I somewhat liked but did not trust this bus-driver turned stock-broker. It took hours for Justin to get behind the mask, saying finally, “You’re in my mind, Terrence, and that’s dangerous.” Terrence said, “I think I should go.”

And that’s what he did. Justin looked up to heaven, then just shook his head.

We Millstreamers had lunch together. I left early to browse one of the downtown shops, when Julian beckoned me out, she and Caitlin and Mark surrounding me.

“We’ve been talking,” my fiancé said, “and....”

“And we think that Vanya is evil,” Caitlin finished.

“She seems to fit the criteria of evil—the points we can remember—that Justin laid out yesterday,” said Mark, his eyes

fierce. “She’s never been in true relationship, she’s made us all jump through hoops, she’s cruel, she’s not innocent...”

“And, the main thing,” Julian said, “she’s in my head!” Caitlin nodded the same.

The afternoon session found Justin refreshed by Christ in his meditation. We all held our breath when Vanya presented to him a large poster of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He never said thank you, but asked her how she felt being back: “Still at a gallop? Get up here.” He then intoned a prayer and gave her a Christ Transformation. So much for her being evil, I thought.

Then came Madelaine. Her dark eyes held “a shadow that can never be reached,” according to Justin. And, as with Celeste and Terrence, everyone got their pent-up experience of this stolid brunette whose ravishing energy was so densely held that she had as long as I had known her been stubbornly resigned at best. Justin said she was a sorceress, who in past lives had played with the powers of darkness even though she had been devoted to spiritual growth, “but who’ll never make the absolute choice to go for purity and repentance.” Yet he shouted his prayer for her Christ Transformation, ending in a scream: “Christ demolish her, demolish the fortress of evil inside her,” before he collapsed, crawling to his chair.

Madelaine wept, for five minutes, until Justin said that her tears were doing no good. And that was that.

During the break, Julian and I spoke with Adam and Holly and that night the four of us approached Justin before the seminar began again. “We’ll see,” Justin said, who quickly polished off another long-standing friend, a timid red-haired American turned Canadian, though it took four hours until she admitted, “Yes, yes, I never loved you, never loved anyone, never...,” and Justin walked off the stage. It was 4 AM.

The New Year’s Eve party at Annapurna was like no other evening in our lives, for we who were there had made it to

eternity with Justin. The night began with a dance contest, Julian and I jiving all the way to the finals, which were won by Jonathan and Lilly Boyce. The evening ended with Justin's traditional comments on the coming year: "It will be one of harmony, of gaining the benefit of all the battles we've ever fought. I see this being the Year of the Family. There seem to be marriages coming up, and everyone will be set on the track of the true duty they were created to perform. And there'll be no big confrontations for ten years. This year will ready us for the next, the Year of Miracles."

Julian again gripped my hand tightly with her happiness at those words, and I, who had never thought I would see this year, pondered the coming Year of Miracles. The party had gone so late that New Year's Day didn't start until evening. I was glad to give my hand a rest, having taken notes for the past nine days in a large green accounting journal, now on page 93. Justin used the day to initiate those who wanted Techniques, advanced mantras or the sleeping techniques, Julian and I meeting them at the door of Sunnyside, ushering them in, taking their fees and flowers, which we set in a dozen vases around the house, with Justin adding afterwards, "I want the seminar to extend for two days, to take care of any unfinished business."

It seemed for awhile that Justin was rounding up all the questionables who had been part of The Context periphery, so that he could clean house thoroughly. And then Vanya asked to come to the mike of her own accord. "I just wanted to clear things up about myself. I know that things aren't going well for me at Millstream."

"Well, why don't you move in with Eva and me?" joked Justin, talking to Vanya for twenty minutes and having her housemates lay out our perceptions. The words 'defensiveness' and 'shield that when we try to pierce it electrocutes us' came from Mark, followed by Vanya's predictable but unfortunate

denials. Then I spoke and found my loving but concerned remarks mounting to “No one’s close to you, not even Matthew, especially Matthew!” and then the kicker, “You’re a con artist with a big come-on and no delivery. You don’t love Justin!”

That proved to be a fiery bull’s eye, and I found myself on a roll, ending the next flurry with, “You’re hollow. You’re an illusion!” Yet what courage and brilliance of heart I had offered brought no confession, so that Justin went on talking to her, questioning her for hours, saying there was no resolution.

“Vanya,” said Matthew, “you can’t force yourself on life and on people. Life is asking you to slow down and let go so that life can give itself through you. Your bestial galloping has left you empty. You’re running away from something. You’re afraid you’re not enough.”

“I thought my living was enough!” she shouted, in utter disbelief that all that she had relied on—her obvious energy, vivacity and command—had been but a cover-up for what she was unwilling to face in herself.

Not until much later, with Vanya in a whole new wave of denial, was it shown that paradoxically her heightened denial was based on the fact that she knew what Justin had said was true. Vanya *was* evil. After the session, Mark and I told her to pack up and be out of Millstream by the end of the evening session and received such a look of scorn from her that we both went to Justin who removed its evil effects with a prayer.

Then it was Jonathan Boyce’s turn to be branded: “You’re not evil, but your fragility is so close to the core that you’re not a human being, even when you’re yelling against someone else’s evil. I wish you well,” Justin summated, then gave the big-jowled, once-athletic, still handsome man a prayer for strength.

Next came Vicki, Julian’s long-time best friend who had gone to her first seminar with her, and who had given Justin

\$8000 to publish his latest book. She sat rigid to receive Justin's harpoon: "You are a fat beached whale with so much anger that everyone around is afraid you're going to explode. If someone stuck a pin in you, you'd sputter like a rogue balloon crazy in the air and then just land in a puddle. Jesus knows you need to. Pull the needle you're looking for in a haystack out from where it is—in your own eye—and let all the pus of your past drain away. Love your children and be a good person. May God bless you, Vicki." Only Julian and I knew of Vicki's childhood, of her desire to be a nun, of her having been sexually abused by a priest, and that there was some event even beyond that tragedy that she had never told anyone, not even Julian over twenty years of friendship.

"Okay, next! How about you, Roger—how're you doing?" And as these words were said, I felt an inner shock, having been so connected to this small, brilliant man whose philosophical understanding, deep experience in meditation and seeming imperturbability around Justin had always mystified me. I felt something would finally clarify, yet I was frightened to silence, especially with his wife Sarah also present. It didn't take a long time, but, starting with Eva's comment about how Roger had not been around for two years, followed by hostilities with every one of Justin's friends who lived in Seattle and Julian's assertion that Sarah must be a masochist to be married to this 'zookeeper of a husband,' to my angst about how he 'didn't fucking care,' to Mark's gut feeling that he must be contacting some demonic entity in meditation if this is the result, and finally to Jonathan saying that Roger, the first to become "Justin's sick little disciple" stole the individuality of Justin's enlightenment and put it into some impersonal classical box before Roland, your collaborator, took over!" Thus did Roger go the way of Roland, with Justin raising his right hand as if it were a sword to symbolically split open Roger's head.



But on the downswing Justin fell to the floor, Eva coming to hold him, his eyes rimmed with the fire of breaking blood vessels, finally able to say, “Roger, you are either a spiritual Mafioso hit man, Judas—*the* Judas himself—or a pathetically stupid and heartless creature with no personhood whatsoever. Now get out. You and your empty, evil wife. Get out.” They left. Their faces never changed.

The next afternoon the course ended, with Justin—in his charcoal suit, white shirt and the rose tie with small gray ships—still too tender to be playful. “I hope you all saw the tape of Matthew getting free from the Vanya Woelf demon. Did you all feel that? And how are things now, Matthew?”

“Well, I do feel much freer. And also closer, far closer to Caitlin. It was incredible what was being sucked out of me!”

“That’s the nature of evil. And when you’ve been bitten by a tarantula, you don’t hold it in your hand and say, ‘Oh, you poor thing, I don’t believe you’ll bite me again,’ because then it bites again and you throw it against a wall and go, ‘You fucking evil thing!’ So, we have to protect ourselves.”

“Justin, I’m wondering about why you said what you said on New Years, about harmony and no more big confrontations...”

“Matthew, I said what God told me to say. And likely it will now be true. I surely was led to believe it was true then. But it turned out to be quite a trap, eh? I mean we caught Vanya and Roger and Sarah. They thought they were safe. It’s just that I’m so innocent that God uses me to catch evil.” He extended his arms, bringing them together till his hands clapped: “I’m just a trap.” He let that sink in. “One thing is that when you see someone who presents a very tidy, neat, non-flux experience to you, then that person is either evil or enlightened. You’ve got to see someone having at least some variation on your own problem. Otherwise, they don’t have a

problem and that's not a human being. Someone who's an evil being can't do anything else. We shouldn't feel sorry for them, for they have no feelings and any show of feelings is just a brilliant play.

“And another thing about Vanya or Roland or any of these people—If Nature wants to change things, there is always in myself the forgiveness to allow any of these seven major evil beings, these seven classical archetypes of evil, to return here and stand before me without fearing that I in any way have held onto some judgment about them. Justin Snow”—he patted his chest—“is the most open person who ever lived, not that I'm saying I'm better than these other great beings, but that that is my nature—to be open. So if Lydia or Celeste or Roland or Rhonda Cox or Dierdra or Vanya or Terrence—or anyone who thinks they are evil or who has been called evil—wishes to return, fine. If they have one thread of innocence in them, I'll ride that thread to infinity.” Once again I marveled—as I tried to get it all down, word for word, in my green accounting ledger—at the naturalness of his demeanor, the gracefulness of his hand movements and how he rode each word as if he were running down some grassy hill.

“Remember one thing, that if these beings are evil we have done Creation a marvelous service, and if any are not wholly evil, then we did what had to be done to take them all the way down, beyond any mask, to discover God's answer about their souls. I would like to reach the place where we can invite them all to a seminar and just talk to them, ask them what choices they made. We'd learn a great deal about evil. But none of you are ready for that. The power these beings still hold would sweep you away. Rarely do prisons house evil beings. Rapists and murderers have a lot of negativity, but are almost always souls coming up into human consciousness with animalistic tendencies that need to be purified—but these are

not evil beings. Evil beings hang around the purest of people to upset great spiritual plans. True evil goes where the most light is.” He paused, then said, “That’s it, guys. A good course, eh? Pretty revealing? Okay, Mr. Mark O’Doyle, one question and then we’re complete.”

“Just one comment, that I feel that this course has been God’s final pronouncement on the nature of evil, and that now we are equipped with all the delicate knowledge necessary to make a difference in the world.”

“Yes, and we *will* make a difference!” Justin asserted, saying goodnight with, “So thank you all.” Then he added, “Oh, just one more thing. I’ll finish Transformations now. And anyone for Techniques can see Bill or Eva. And...there are some rooms—the whole first floor—open in Annapurna. I was hoping maybe the Millstreamers would consider leaving their homey comforts. You guys—Bill and Julian, Matthew and Caitlin and Mark—think about it and let me know.”

Staying up late at Millstream, deciding around the fire built by Matthew that we would move, we recalled the joys of this house and pondered the future, including the promise of the coming Year of Family and the Year of Miracles after that.

“Americans owning the main floor of Annapurna, now that’s already a miracle!” I said, as we made a circle and clasped our hands, realizing that we had made it.

Julian chimed in with, “And we’re together.”

## CHAPTER 17: WEEDING

Pink azaleas centered the circular kitchen table of our front-room apartment. Mid-morning February sun flooded through the three windows of this, the most cheerful room in the house. Julian brushed the white tablecloth embroidered with red roses while she sang softly and brought me the rest of the asparagus omelet. When she sang, she was happy, and it was wonderful to see her happy.

Over breakfast we talked about entering the Catholic Church, which had become paramount to Julian. Matthew and Caitlin would be our sponsors, and we had arranged private meetings with Fr. Monte so we would be confirmed on Easter. Then we spoke of *Antony and Cleopatra*; reading it out loud with Justin at Heronwater was like being in the psyche of Greek gods.

“And what about Eva?” I asked. Justin had revealed that someone in her life—a grade-school teacher—had been evil and sapped her self-confidence. “Who in your past might have been evil?”

“I think it could have been that witch-of-a-fourth-grade teacher. And for you?”

“I can’t think of anyone, except my parents, which is ridiculous.”

“I doubt it’s your mom or dad, from what you’ve told me. But, tell me something, and be honest. I was wondering if you thought I could ever get enlightened.

“Of course. You just have to keep desiring it. This whole thing around Justin’s so impossible that God’s got to jump in or no one will make it. First one of us, then many, he said. I still think we’d do well to pray for Eva. Once she get

enlightened, it'll be easier for the rest of us. Besides, who else could it be?"

The phone rang: Justin wanted me to bring him some letters. Soon I was at Sunnyside, pondering how bland my pre-Context life had been, how much deeper a person I now was, and how anything could happen once I entered his door. I took a deep breath. In the hall, I heard laughter. Matthew and Caitlin, finishing a final meeting with Justin about their April 14<sup>th</sup> wedding, beamed to see me, saying Justin had agreed to do one of the readings and had said, "I feel a part of me is marrying each of you." I wished he would say something like that to Julian and me. We had mentioned our planned August marriage and received nothing negative from Justin, but nothing special either.

He was just back from New York, still ailing from whatever had infected him on the Russia trip. From the local parish Caitlin had obtained a Host and offered it to Justin—"The Body of Christ," she'd said—and he had gotten well almost immediately, was going to daily Mass now, and had told me on the steps of St. Andrews, "Some day I'll live entirely off the Host."

I knocked on the silk-backed door, having taken my shoes off, as always, and walked across the light-colored marble, avoiding the small silk rug where he did his yoga postures, and stood to one side of the furiously typing man who did not look up.

"There, I've written Fr. O'Shea. He's angry at Christ—you've heard some of his homilies. Matthew and I have decided to meet with him. Here, read this."

Finishing, I could only say, "It's a blockbuster—the initial assault on the Catholic Church's unconsciousness."

"Right you are—not on the Church itself, which is Christ, but on the personal impurity of the priesthood. Fr.

O'Shea offered this morning's Mass. I prayed at the foot of the Virgin Mary the whole time. Then walked out. This is the third time."

"I brought you the letters you asked for."

"Thank you, my fine friend. You're always so prompt."

"I got the Christmas Course all copied and sent sets to Seattle, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Salt Lake, Las Vegas and special individuals."

"Excellent! Can you imagine anyone having missed that course? That was the one to be at! We must get a newsletter out about the possibility of evil in people's past, about the upcoming Frisco course, and of course the healings. God's working overtime. A lot's coming up. Did I tell you about the pilgrimage—Assisi, Rome, Medjugorje? I want to take my closest friends. You must come. Have you seen Eva today?"

Enthralled with the possibility of making a pilgrimage with him, I barely managed to answer, "Why, yes; she brought me some tapes I could copy over."

"How'd she look?"

"Stunning. She was wearing..."

"I meant, did you feel good about her when you saw her?" He went on to say that he was troubled about her after the past two nights of 'her abominable behavior.'

"Things are happening much more intensely after the Christmas Course and at times it's as if I don't know what I'm doing. I always feel God working through me, but lately it's been so off the scale that I just let go completely.... But God seems to do it right every time. That's pure trust for you. The healing for Anna was a paragon of trust. You should know something about trust after the hell you were in not that long ago. And look at you now. Well, gotta finish this newsletter.

I'll give it to you tonight. At Annapurna—give everyone a call, will you? Is everything alright?" After my nod and smile, he said, "Well then, put your head down." The blessing that followed took down a wall or two and brushed some cobwebs from my mind.

The day before, Justin had held a surprise seminar, had said that personal growth meant good functioning of the body, and asked who had what malady or injury. Then he selected Anna, Brandon's wife and a talented physiotherapist who had endured a skiing accident five years before that tore muscles from nerves. Her expert opinion was that healing was impossible because nerve tissue would actually have to be reconstructed.

Rising from his director's chair, taking off his suit coat, turning to the camera, Justin announced, "I have been told by Our Lord that He will grant me the power to heal. Not the power to simply take away affliction, which is there for a reason—so this is far more complex, for I have to compute Anna's evolution, her desire and purity and the need God has for her to progress." Then, after an invocation that took two minutes to pronounce, Justin for nearly two hours touched her back and made a hundred passes with his hands, wrenching, contorting, nearly passing out. When Justin sat down, Anna said she could move her body in ways she never thought possible. I sent Healing Seminar tapes out all over the country. Applications soon doubled for the San Francisco Seminar.

That night at Annapurna, in Helene's suite, Justin broke and distributed bread on the tongue of each person who came up to kneel before him. "This is the second time I, through my purity, have blessed bread in Christ's name and given it to you. I am not a priest, but one pure and passionate enough to conduct the essence of Christ into the bread. While I felt little, Matthew softly announced, "It was the most powerful communion I have

ever experienced.” Then came a report from Anna about the results of her healing—that she and Brandon were planning a skiing trip. I offered how remarkable my day had been after the blessing he had given me, and Eva commented on her blessing in such a way that made me feel she was almost enlightened.

But Justin, despite her praise of the healing, felt she was separate from her words. Eva sat on the couch opposite her husband, who said, “You were totally changed by the blessing, but something in the purity of it either made you realize on some subtle level that you are impure in a place you don’t want to acknowledge, or your impurity unconsciously skewed the experience to take you out of yourself.”

“No, Justin, I really do feel connected to myself, to Christ, and...” She went on for a few minutes before Justin asked, “How are you doing with Angelica? Have you gotten her to write her father and tell him that she thinks he’s evil?” Receiving a ‘yes’, he powered on with the most current issue, one that kept coming up over the past four days: “And have you cut off the sentimentality of your heart so that she knows she can’t throw you even the slightest curve?”

When Eva again said ‘yes’ and reaffirmed that she was feeling the closeness of Christ, Justin said, “Then it’s the wrong Christ!”

This was a ghastly thing to say, and I was not at all computing this event.

Justin let off the pressure by speaking of when St. Francis instructed one of his Friars Minor who felt damned. This brother had had more than one vision of the Devil taking the form of Christ and saying that he was damned. “Francis next told him that the next time the Devil called, to say, ‘Open your mouth and I will empty my bowels into it.’” Justin was now no longer turned toward Eva but to the twenty of us upstairs in Annapurna.



“By the way, you guys, St. Francis has made me one of his brothers. And did you know I’m going to Assisi in two months?” I felt easier that the talk was turning to this delightful possibility. But within minutes he returned to Eva who, in defending her experience of herself, had her husband saying that she was ‘deliberately defying’ him. Eva’s defense went on, despite his telling her to keep her tongue still and go deeper, until he rose, slapped her three times, wrestled her to the floor and pinned her down. As his wife whimpered, her husband told us, still holding her furious hands, “The institution of marriage is nothing if it allows the demonic to have the upper hand. Eva is an extraordinary person, as each of you knows, and my love for her is deeper than for any human being. I am slapping only her demon. She’s not hurt, only that place in her that is almost the personification of stubbornness. A man must never yield to the weakness of his wife. This is his duty to her. How are you, Evaaaaa?” He let her up.

“I’m fine. I won’t...be treated like this...in front of all our friends. This is a private matter and...” He was on her again, slapping her, and she was violently trying to return the blows, a muffled tigress screaming, “You, you, you have no right...!” And, as he tightened his hold, her irate voice— “I’m your wife and I love you...”—was lost in his shirt.

“Eva, give up this horrible rage if you want to remain my wife!”

“What, do our wedding vows mean so little to you?” She was wild with disbelief and fury. Then she bit him and he dropped her instantly. He held his wrist, his head turned from her. The silence lasted.

Until I said, “Eva, I...the...you really need to take a look at what I see to be a resistance unlike anyone else’s.”

Justin verbally pounced on me: “What I’m amazed at, Bill, is how afraid you are of her, how afraid you all are!” He

looked around the room at our dumbfounded faces, and went on about the hold of her demon on us all, ending with, “If not being her husband is the only way I can free her of this terrible affliction, then so be it!”

“You...you can’t just leave me like this! Have you no...!”

“Quiet, you bitch! Tomorrow listen to the tape of this evening and realize that I am acting only in your best interests. But you will not hold anything up, not even our marriage, to stand between me and God.”

She was at him, raining frustrated blows. Matthew and Mark pulled her off.

Nadine spoke loudly, her voice cutting, “No one could ever get away with this! This shows the special status you’ve held over Justin and all of us...”

Afterwards, I found Justin, who as he walked out had told us to pray for Eva. He was downstairs, looking into the library suite where Matthew and Caitlin lived. He was fondling the doorknob as if he had never seen one before, as if he were in Annapurna for the first time. He had said hello to me, his voice soft as a budding leaf. He seemed almost translucent. I followed him out onto the steps. I had to speak to him. He was in an aspect of himself I had never seen.

“Justin?” My friend turned, smiled as openly and naturally as I had ever noticed. “I just wanted to say you taught me more about manhood tonight than I’ve ever learned.”

“Really, Bill?” His voice was made of moonlight on the grass, and I told him how amazingly innocent he was. Then he opened his arms, as if inviting embrace, and we walked, I speaking my love, saying he was a total lamb of sweetness. On the first corner, under a streetlamp, he asked me to follow Eva home, then pick him up and drive him the rest of the way to Sunnyside. Remembering that he often walked at night, I took

the keys from him and drove his new silver-blue Mercedes coup for the first time.

I found Eva about a mile from Heronwater. I offered her a ride, which she thanked me for but rigidly refused, then changed her mind. I told her that Julian and I would be saying a rosary for her, which brought her to tears, after which she said that she had realized that everything Justin had said was right. She thanked me for my sweetness, stepped out of the car and, as she turned to close the door she looked at me—a look of appreciation, giving, depth and, yes, friendship.

I found Justin just before the Bay Street Bridge. He was walking briskly, as usual, but turning his head right, then left, every several seconds as though being pursued. I wondered if it were someone's demon—Celeste's, Terrence's, Roland's. I told him I'd found Eva, that she would talk to him and thank him tomorrow. At the small metal hand gate of Sunnyside, I let him out. At his door he turned toward me. The moon was bright. I could see the sadness in his eyes. It seemed to beckon me. I walked to the door. The quaint porch had been gone a month and the yard still held bits of tarpaper and wood chips. I looked into Justin's face. There were no tears, but it was as if he had been crying. I asked him if he had his key.

"It's strange to feel such loneliness, going to bed in my own house, alone," he said in tangential response. His voice was quiet as the night. And he was the most fragile being of this night. His arm went quietly to my shoulder. "You are my best friend in the world." Then I took his key, turned it in the lock and he went in.

It was 3 AM when I returned. "Is that you, dear?" Julian whispered. I told her what Justin had said to me. "Really?" Her small hand tightened firmly around mine, then grew limp with sleep. I thought about Roland, but I was too elated to be scared, knowing that, though Justin's former 'best friend' had been evil,

this was a new era. I would tell Julian every detail over breakfast. Now, I took the rosary Matthew and Caitlin had given me for my birthday and I stayed up to pray for Eva.

Matthew and Caitlin's wedding had been a grand three-family affair: the O'Doyles, the Halseys and The Context, with Justin at the service speaking of Good and Evil, which seemed a bit forceful. During a private Mass the following day at Annapurna, he had addressed the two skeptical families. At the end of the day, Caitlin's father was asking to have his picture taken with his daughter's divine friend. Justin even confronted the rather extraordinary priest who had performed the ceremony, whom the bride had known in the Dominican Republic, in hopes the young Jesuit would consent to joining our Victoria group, which would mean that we could become a religious lay community. That would have allowed The Context to become a new order in the Church, much the way St. Francis of Assisi had established his Friars Minor. But when the Jesuit priest decided to return to his work with handicapped children, Justin hinted that he himself might become a priest. By then the Halseys had returned from their camping-by-waterfalls Hawaii honeymoon in time to hear what Justin called the biggest discovery of his life.

"Eva came over about nine last night. She said hello and I thought she looked very well. I asked what she was doing that was different. She said she'd been fasting and praying the past week. I suggested a rosary and went upstairs to get my beads. She followed and we ended up in bed. She was glowing, lying there with her back to me, glowing and supple, her body in the shape of an 'S'. I was wondering what had brought about this change. Then I saw that her back was black, black with sin. And then I realized that I had married and just made love with the Devil."

We were at Sunnyside, where all this had originated. The variety of dramas that had exploded in this house was incomprehensible. We had all seen a lot and been through more than we could ever tell, but not one person among us was prepared for this.

“I called Nadine,” the former World Teacher continued, “to ask if she had any insights on what was going on lately with Eva. She said how ostentatiously Eva had been spending money, and how that went against her own understanding of my heart. I knew that to be true. Then she suggested it might have something to do with Christ. And instantly I knew *that* was true, and remembered in New York how Eva had posited, Christ being a Jew, What if Christianity was just another Jewish plot to enslave human consciousness? That’s when I wondered if Eva were consciously resisting Our Lord.” Then Justin went through the twenty criteria of evil, until his friends reluctantly realized that she fit them all.

“That being knows we’re talking about her.” He was whispering now, as if fearful of being overheard: “That being is omniscient. And you must all pray for protection. That being will take the weakest among us and claim them for herself. Be *very* careful!” He looked at us in a way to say that on this point he could not be more serious.

None of us knew what to say. We had just returned from another San Francisco seminar and had grown even closer to Justin. In Chinatown, Julian and I had found a lapis wedding ring for me, which Justin had put on his finger and blessed. She had received a healing, the second Justin had done, and all through the process, she had felt the presence of the Virgin Mary.

I remembered, as we returned all together on the ferry, his words to us five remaining Americans, “You are the most fortunate of human beings. Not only do you know my heart, but

you five have a spiritual nature which raises you up in God's eyes. The tides are shifting, and only those with true spiritual natures will be able to follow me. You five are going to lead many out of ignorance."

Matthew and Caitlin had gotten permission to lead Justin and twelve of his friends in a catechism class so as to be able to enter the Church. Julian and I were now Catholic, having entered the Church during the Easter midnight candlelight service. Julian's baptism had been so strong as to nearly overcome her with power and joy—she had never experienced anything like it. Yet in our pews—with Justin, whom we had invited, seated next to her, along with our sponsors, Matthew and Caitlin—both Julian and I felt terrified, as if some dark presence were near. Justin was rubbing Julian's back, a rare thing for him to touch anyone. Afterwards, Justin told her on the sunny cathedral steps: "I know you had an extraordinary experience, but you're holding onto it. Life is always moving. Trust life, Julian."

That night in bed, still filled with the most sacred experience of her life, every cell of her being silenced in power, she had wondered why Justin had confronted her. The thought had come that Justin was jealous. But she had quickly shut off such a demonic notion.

The next morning, we had picked Justin up for Mass. Afterward the service, he had asked us to take him for a ride. It had been a glorious day and April flowers were peaking. Past Beacon Hill Park toward the sea, he had us park, leading us down a steep path to the sea. He had asked us to stand each at his side at the water's edge, the reflections almost blinding. After saying a silent prayer, he bent, cupped his right hand, rose, and made the sign of the Cross on my forehead, then on Julian's. We stood in breezy brilliance, wondering why he had re-baptized us. Yet we never spoke of the event.

Our first night back in Victoria, Mark had dreamt of Eva and the next afternoon told Justin, who said a prayer and spoke to Mark of priesthood. This was their third conversation about such a possibility for Mark, who was frankly ambivalent. After helping him feel the flame of sexual abstinence, “a bliss greater than relationship,” Justin phoned Eva, saying that Christ was infinitely compassionate—even if the Devil were to repent, mercy would be shown. He had her pray the rosary a dozen times before she came to Sunnyside. There, he told us later, he gave her the most powerful Transformation he was capable of. It worked. This was the infinite mercy of Christ.

Mark, returning to Annapurna, having experienced the fire of celibacy, shared it with me. As we stood in the double doorway of our suite, I could see Mark in the role of priest and readily understood his calling. That led Julian to ask me if I would ever leave her for the Church. Amazed she would think such a thing, I held both her shoulders as I told her firmly, “Julian, I love you. And while the priesthood represents a marvelous ideal, I feel God gave us our relationship, and only if *God* told me would I entertain doing so.”

The next evening Mark informed me that Justin said I should be a priest, Mark having told Justin and Eva of my comprehension of celibacy, with Eva pronouncing the possibility out loud. Eager to serve Christ, the flame of excitement hit me, but the thought of being without Julian froze my judgment. “This is God asking me,” I reasoned, remembering what I had said, but said nothing to her. The next day we were to meet at Sunnyside.

“What meeting?” Julian asked

“Justin has said that...I am to be a priest.”

She stared at me. Stunned, asking why I had not told her, then walked out. When she didn't return, after two hours

Mark and I went looking for her. When she did return, we were late for our meeting with Justin.

In the double bind of two loves, on the way to Sunnyside I silently prayed in the backseat that she would understand and that our relationship could rise to a whole new level. Then I tried to explain, but she could not take in another word. Soon, Mark and I were in the consultation room, with Julian told to wait in the front room. Almost immediately Justin was telling me, "By the Blessed Virgin, you are to be a priest," his hand on my head. Just then Eva walked through the room and I couldn't help but note her radiant, playful smile and the flare of her eyes seemingly belying the difficult situation she was still in. But that was part of her great gift, I guessed, always holding onto hope.

Justin then had Eva call in Julian who, not believing Eva could be evil, had been weeping in her lap. Julian listened stoically as Justin spoke to her: "You will live with Eva and me and I will take care of you." He asked Julian to step out again.

When asked how I felt about all this, I knew instantly: "I am ready to be a priest, if that's what God is asking of me. And this may make no sense to you, but of all those in Victoria, I feel I am the most like you. Sometimes I look at you and see myself, or look at myself in the mirror and see you. The priesthood is too confining for such impulses. I feel that, yes, I am to be a priest, but a priest as you are a priest, an enlightened priest of the world."

"Yes, well," mused Justin, "I can only tell you that you will never know what you are to do unless you become a priest. What you have suggested is a possibility, but the kind of priesthood you wish will be far more difficult and demanding."

That was okay with me, I realized, just as Julian was called back in.



But as Justin started to inform Julian of what was happening, he found himself saying to her, “No, you two were made for each other.” Then he smiled at each of us and I felt my chest was suddenly a sky of relief. Julian held my hand for the first time all day. “I guess the Virgin Mary just wanted to test how flexible you were,” he said, and that was when he blessed our marriage.

But in some recess of her heart that she could not verbalize, even to herself, Julian never trusted Justin Snow again. Yet, soon afterwards, learning that her friend Vicki had conjectured that, if Justin turned Catholic, he would have to become a priest and would have to rid himself of Eva, Julian condemned such thinking as dangerous.

What was equally dangerous were the potential evil beings in our past. Caitlin and Julian both felt they were specific teachers they had had in school, whereas I mysteriously came to feel that it was my adventureless mother who lived vicariously through me, who had never talked about her feelings, had never held me, and I judged this the reason why my dad had been a workaholic. Besides, looking a photo of my parents, Justin had proclaimed my father to be ‘a good, kind, just man,’ whereas my mother, he said, ‘has a self-definition that is almost transcendental on the level of her body.’ So it was that I became clear that it was she who was a cunning schemer plotting throughout my life to keep me forever from experiencing my own power. I shook in Mark’s car to realize that this woman I had so loved was responsible for my cowardice and sensed lack of manhood.

I tried to tell Justin this when he called the next morning, but he was telling me that, during my time at Sunnyside yesterday, he had realized that Eva was so in his mind that he could not imagine her not being there. “That’s when I broke free. Bill, I will never, *never*”—he stopped to catch a breath for

the final ‘never!’—change my position on this!” I was left with a slammed receiver in my ear. Then thirty seconds later he called back, saying, “I’m sorry for seeming to have hung up on you, but that being’s energy”—his voice grew distant as he shouted, “*You are the devil and I will never recant!*—that being’s energy was attacking me and I had to take abrupt action. Can you and Brandon come over right away? We need to plan how we’re going to extricate Snowman Press and Sunnyside and the furniture and cars from that—*You are the Devil and I will never recant!*—being’s control. I let her sign everything. Get here pronto!”

That night, Julian and Caitlin made Justin dinner, customary of late as they were now caring for him as ‘that being’ had done. I dined on the far side of the gold-trimmed black lacquered table that Justin was going to throw out because ‘the Devil’ had bought it, but soon had changed his mind, throwing a tablecloth over it. I mentioned, during this my first meal with him alone, my discovery about my mother. “Good, Bill, you must break that hold she has on you.”

I had stayed to do yard work, and Julian, sweeping the back porch, said to Justin after his meal, “This is the only place I feel safe.”

It must have been 2 AM when I woke to a faint ringing sound. Figuring out that it was the phone, I picked up to hear a whisper, “Bill, she’s after me. She’s at the window!” It was Justin. “Quick, everyone!” Then a click. In ten minutes three cars were speeding across town to find Justin lying across his rose chair in the consultation room. Julian got him some Perrier while Caitlin tried to remove his magic coat.

“No, no.” He was breathless. “I need it. She...at the door, then window. Couldn’t get in. I...called. At the balcony, everything locked. Her power surrounding the house...suffocating, stealing everything...all meaning, all time,

all feeling.” Later, after he could shout a prayer, he told us, “That being’s power is infinite. Her energy is the size of a pea, yet weighs more than any planet. She...it...is a monster! Her attention is deathly. She *is* the Devil. And I will *never* deny this! And if she isn’t the Devil, then she is the *pre-Devil*, the Evil that existed before the Devil. She’s primordial chaos, total darkness.” And, after Julian tried to meditate but couldn’t and even Mark could find no question but weaved from one prayer to another, Justin exclaimed, “She’s not a she. She’s an it. It is the destruction of all truth.” He suddenly shifted and in an almost jazzy voice predicted, “I almost guarantee she’ll play docile, that she will seem fair to the utmost when Brandon and Bill go to reclaim what is mine tomorrow. She will grow in radiance. You watch! This thing can assume any mask. *Any* mask.”

Mid-afternoon, Brandon and I drove to Heronwater. I did not know Brandon well—he had never been confronted deeply or allowed into the inner circle and had been understandably angry and resentful—yet he had surrendered to Christ his life-long dream of wealth. Now we were going into direct battle. We planned to say as little as possible. ‘That being’ would only toy with our words. At the front door we were polite. Brandon spoke while I took inventory. Eva was gracious, even offering items Brandon had not thought of to return to Justin. Then I saw it: the water-smooth rocks at the edge of the manicured lawn—they were frozen as if my eyes took them in, but not my heart. I watched a towhee in the pines against stark blue sky: a beauty seen but unappreciable.

We drove back to Sunnyside to turn in the inventory and report our individual experiences. The perceptions that Brandon and I reported were, Justin said, “Identical.” Justin added that he had never heard of any experience so perfectly rendered.

When Julian and I drove to Sunnyside the next day, Justin was talking to his mother on the phone. 'That being' had called up Vera and told her that her husband had said that she was 'evil'.

"Yes," Justin told us after the call ended, "my mother phoned 'that being' back to say I was probably tired and wouldn't she try to reason with me...and so forth. So when my mother called back, I said that, if she could get 'that being' to change a thousandth of a micron, I'd take her back, and that maybe I *was* tired. So now I'm about to really confuse 'my wife.' When my mother calls back.... There's the phone! Bill, get on the other line in the loft above the kitchen. Matthew and I will be down here. I'll count to three, and we'll both pick up at the same time. Hurry!"

On the upstairs phone I heard Vera saying, "I've talked to Eva, dear, and told her you've been extremely run down from all your traveling, and that you would gladly sit down and talk with her. Now, son, you must get some rest. You've been tremendously over-taxed with writing and seminars and trying to be a father to Angelica and a wife to Eva and a friend to all those who depend on you..."

"Oh, Mum. I just don't know what to do." Justin's voice sounded downcast, as if he were downhearted and devitalized. I couldn't believe it. "Yeah, Mum, I think the pressure just got to me."

Vera told her son he was in a depression and should admit it. I almost laughed when she suggested he read something light, "A murder mystery, maybe, just nothing heavy. Just turn on Rachmaninov and put up your feet with a good book. Now just be kind to yourself. And when Eva calls, invite her over. Put on some nice music and just sit quietly together." And to his 'yes, Mum,' she said, "Okay, dear, I'll call Eva and

tell her you'll see her to work things out. And I'll stay in touch. Bye now."

The next think I heard after the two clicks was Justin shouting my name, as if he were in pain. But Matthew was laughing at Justin, who was moving his arms as if they were independent machines he could not control. "Bill, did you like my psychosis routine? Wise as serpents, harmless as doves," the former World Teacher cooed.

The phone rang. "That's you know what! Watch this!" He raced for the princess phone in his loft, while we listened from below: "Yes, yes. Well, Eva, I told my mother that I'd been pretty tired from traveling and writing, and that I'd been depressed about money and the trouble between us. What? Yes, we could have a glass of wine and just sit and listen to Rachmaninoff and just, you know, be together, you know, just be. Yes. Tonight? Why don't you come right over? Yes, come now. Wear something...tender. Yes. And, Eva, dear, I still think you're the Devil. Bye." He had said the last sentence just as sweetly as the rest of his performance. Once he'd hung up, laughing crazily, he marveled, "Her mind must've twisted into a thousand pretzels."

On our way out, I inquired about Angelica. "You mean, will I take her in as my daughter? Don't be sentimental. She's aligned with her mother. She's chosen her fate." He went in to type the newsletter, but dashed out to catch me at the gate. "Bill, set up a conference call to every person who's ever attended a seminar. I want to make the big announcement that 'my wife' is Satan."

The 'Evil Being Seminar' did not live up to my expectations. On Justin's command I had put the word out to all who had been called evil that 'the Devil' had been involved with every pronouncement of the past, meaning that there was now new hope for all such souls. Of those who had been

termed 'evil,' only Roland and Terrence came. They both got special prayers and both—even Roland who had worked three jobs just to stay busy, had no friends, and thought he was heading for Hell—received some experience of innocence and of hope.

“The Devil’ had gone, back to Vancouver, we heard. But, being infinite in power, ‘that being’ could influence us from anywhere. Angelica was with her father. Vera had stayed a week at Heronwater to help her son, finally realizing her daughter-in-law to be totally unbalanced. Once ‘that being’ left, Justin had us all come to Heronwater to talk to his mother about Good and Evil. Though her professional training as a psychologist prevented conclusions without hard evidence, so much true affection came toward Vera that she wept tears of appreciation for what we had all endured from ‘that being.’

But then came the Pilgrimage Seminar, the first seminar I’d ever looked forward to. Matthew and Caitlin, Mark, Helene, Anna and Julian and I were all going to travel with Justin to some of Europe’s sacred spots. Julian had never been abroad and we were feeling excellent, remembering our enthralling walks on the beach below her former home on Vashon Island as we mused about traveling through Europe together. We were almost packed, having made our travel arrangements, my fiancé having taken out \$4000 of her only investment. The seminar began by revealing what would be happening on the upcoming Pilgrimage, with Justin doing hand openings to evaluate the nature of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes, Guadalupe, Fatima, and currently at Medjugorje. The hand opened fully for the four past appearances, but opened not at all for the current apparition in Yugoslavia. “There just a mystery there we’re not supposed to know about. I’m sure Medjugorje’s authentic. So we’ll just go and find out.”

That afternoon, Justin having sent me on an errand, I returned to find Duffy at the mike, with Matthew looking at him from Justin's chair. I had no idea why, but Matthew looked virtually enlightened. Then Duffy took Matthew's place and Justin called me to the mike. I felt confronted. Then I sat in Justin's chair, not knowing quite what this was all about, but as I sat, my body became homogenized in strength. From my eyes came such a steady gaze that I felt almost afraid of its power, as if it might be too much for people. So I didn't look at anyone. Justin asked, "Have you ever met this guy before, ever seen Bill Howell so strong, manly, non-neurotic, powerful? Okay, break for dinner and be back at 7:30."

That evening, before I again began my furious art of note-taking, I sat beside Julian in the front row. I felt myself in the bond of true union—comfortable, whole, deeply sweet. She met my eyes to acknowledge this moment.

Justin had others of us sit in his chair. In half an hour, Julian took that amazing seat. Whatever happened to her was clearly the most powerful of any of us who had sat in Justin's place. Suddenly her energy was directed; she looked at the audience as if she were a priestess. I had to admit I was frightened by the person I saw there, as if I didn't know this woman whose very gaze was confidence, her eyes holding a quiet power that could blow open a safe.

Justin stepped to the mike: "Okay, Julian, confront *me!*" I thought he was kidding at first, and remembered that order coming to me ages ago in the first New York Seminar, when I was haunted by fear. Now I sat amazed as Julian leaned slightly back in the chair, as if it were hers and hers only, turned her head slowly with practiced ease, as if this were a challenge she had long been prepared to meet. She said nothing for several seconds, then spoke the most poised words of her life: "How are you, Justin?" The moment held such deft tact that whistles

rained on the stage and some onlookers called, “Oooooo.” Justin announced a break, bringing the responses to a halt.

Julian, surrounded by several of Justin’s Seattle friends, came to the rear of the theatre to stand with Matthew and Caitlin and myself, saying, “It was *the* most incredible experience of my life; I felt so powerful and so much love coming from me that I got scared, as if I’d been powerful once before but maybe had used my power in not such a positive way. Anyway, it was *incredible!* To feel confident and whole and so strong, Bill. My God! As if I knew myself that way!” We all confirmed that she had been amazing on stage.

When Justin came up the stairs, he was noticeably quiet. He did not sit in his chair but told us, “I thought we ought to try something different. We haven’t had any mini-confrontations for a while and I thought we’d get each person up for thirty seconds of me making sounds that will represent a non-compensatory response. So, Mark, come on up and I’m going to batter you with the sounds that God would render if He were going to treat you straight on, with zero compensation, meaning nothing but that which will hit whatever evil is within you. And what could he gain from it? Yes, Julian.”

“The final dislodging of the demonic.”

“Right, and to see how strong you are, especially after having sat in my chair. Are you ready, Mark? Brandon, you keep time: thirty seconds. I’m going to be absolutely ruthless, so don’t come up here unless you’re prepared for that. And remember,” he said softly to Mark, “that you do know who I am, remember all you’ve gone through, and that you trust me. How much do you trust me, Mark?”

“Completely.”

“Okay, and so you know that anything I would do or say is in the interests of Christ, your happiness, your salvation,



right? No negativity in me. How do you know there's no negativity in me, Mark?"

"Because I know you."

"You know what negativity is, don't you, and you've never felt that from me."

"No, I never have."

"Okay, Mark. I'm leaving you now to go into the form of myself that can perform this process." He took off his lapel mike and magic coat, handing them to Julian. He did some warm-up exercises that drew laughter, then began.

A foot from Mark's face, he shouted, "How are you, Mark, how are you doing? How are you doing? How's it going, Mark? HOW'S IT GOING, MARK!" Justin looked fiercely into jolted eyes: "How are you doing? HOW ARE YOU DOING? How are you doing? *Are you going to make it, Mark?*" That was it. Mark had done well in the face of power, and Justin had not held back.

"Do we have a volunteer? Okay, Bill. Just let's first hear Mark's experience."

"Incredible clarity. I feel you just blasted negativity and deadness. I was standing in front of the fire...of the burning bush. And the terror that used to be there left me. Only the challenge was left—and I know where that terror came from."

"Yes, Mark, we all do. I was married to it! Now every experience will be purer, cleaner, more powerful. You watch how individuating it's going to be."

Justin confronted me, then Nadine, Brandon, Anna, Adam, Matthew, Caitlin, and Craig. After her son, Julian then came up to the mike. For the last fifteen of her thirty seconds, Justin just looked at her square in the eye, inches away. When he sat in his chair, he seemed suddenly exhausted.

He sat for several minutes, then said, "Holly, come up and I'll try to do you, just look at you, see if I can say anything."

But I have something important to say to you guys, something *very* important.” He confronted Holly, sat down, was quiet a long time, making sure everyone in the room was set before he spoke, almost out of breath.

“I’m going around the room and, Bill, I want you to say, ‘Justin, by the grace of God, will you open your right hand so as to indicate how well God feels each of the following people are doing’—just say the name and we’ll go around the room and see. Okay, you understand?” The room grew leaden.

The tension in my body rocketed, as I said, “Okay,” pronounced the invocation and began by saying Mark’s name. The hand opened all the way, and Justin said, “Okay, very good, sensational, Mark.” And he went around the room, the hand opening for each person whose name I said, followed by Justin making small comments.

Until he got to Julian. The hand remained a fist.

“You should do the invocation again, Bill. Maybe something just happened.”

But the hand did not budge. My chest was an empty cellar. Justin’s head was down. “Let’s just see yourself, Bill,” he whispered; “Maybe the thing’s on the blink.”

Terrified in some nameless part of myself, I repeated the invocation, said my name and watched the hand spring open, fingers wide. Yet I was full of fear, for buying the open hand for me meant buying the closed hand for Julian. It was all too much. I couldn’t see her face. I returned to my green ledger and from a rear row took it all faithfully down.

Justin’s head was in his hands. Finally he asked, “Matthew, what’s been your experience of Julian. She suddenly got too good, and now there’s something very wrong going on. It’s just so very shocking. There’s something very wrong, very very wrong; I don’t know what it is, but it’s something very

wrong. I would not like you to be influenced by that, but what's been your experience?"

"I don't have any experience that would indicate anything to be wrong, Justin."

"Fine, fine. I wouldn't imagine anyone could. What about you, Caitlin?"

Caitlin's 'nothing' brought a nod from Justin, who asked, "Right, Bill?"

"Well, just that she said her experience being in the chair was so very powerful and, as she spoke with Caitlin and myself about it, she was linking it to a deep sense of her past and felt very afraid of that power. It's all I can think of that would indicate such a sudden change in anything I experienced."

Caitlin, on the camera opposite her husband, took the hand mike: "I would say today that I felt the carryover of the kind of power I saw when she sat in the chair last night—that there was something very clear...and confident today that was...different." After repeating again how 'extremely and very absolutely serious' it was, and that he as an innocent person had nothing to do with this situation, he admitted, "I should confess that when she came up I saw that there was something very very very very distorted in her that had never been seen or dealt with or touched—and that she was identified with that. Somewhere Julian is very unreal, not a human being at this time. She's desperately and totally petrified, and I pray to God and Jesus and the Virgin Mary and the Angels and Apostles that out of this suddenly shocking situation something good can come. Anyone else have anything to add?"

He looked at Julian, pinned against the wall in the front row, adding, "It's like there's too much beauty, too much light and elegance, too much brittle brilliance—it's not flesh and blood, not heavy enough, not thick or opaque enough, just shimmering energy, which means there's something very very

distorted and grotesque and evil inside Julian, and she's just a desperate creature completely enslaved. And she knows this." He was quiet only a second, before going on: "I just had this thought, which is the furthest thing from my mind, and it just plunged me down into the mysterious depths of creation, but I know this woman is very unwell—extremely, infinitely unwell. Unless there are people who can help me out, there's nothing I can do for her."

He was silent for a few seconds. "Justin, are you losing your sanity? You can't do this to us, you ask. Believe me, on my knees...before the Virgin Mary." He knelt in front of the painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe that Vanya had given to him, looking at her but saying to us, "Believe me, the Virgin Mary has commanded me to say this, I would never.... I don't want this"—his hands were folded, his face a grimace—"but it's the truth and the Blessed Virgin says I must reveal it in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen." Then he rose, asking if anyone could say anything. No one moved.

"It means that the children's show"—a little seminar for the children with confrontation and maybe a story—"will have to be put off until tomorrow night. Now, can I get some help on this? There won't be any conference call to all the centers, either. Does anyone have anything to say or are we going to be stuck here all night?"

I looked up from note-taking to see the back of Julian's head bobbing in tears.

Then Justin changed his mind, "What's going to happen is that I will make the conference call—downstairs—and will speak to the children myself, but only myself. We won't record it and you can carry on with Julian. Okay, there it is. You have to assume the almighty burden of this situation. Either God has hallucinated in order to create some kind of martyrdom or she's out of the context of evolution completely. I am sorry. That's

one of the dangers of being in the consciousness that I am. So, while I'm gone, Bill, I think you'll have to bring your chair up here and lead this conf...this discussion. And I would like someone else—Caitlin—to come up and be here, too.”

I rose, looking at my chair as if it weighed 300 pounds. Caitlin removed her earphones, no happier about it than I. Up on stage, Brandon asked me what Justin said. “That this was serious,” I replied, trying to focus, and he corrected me: “That this is *Christ* serious,” as he looked intently at me and then turned to Julian.

“I swear to you I don't know,” Julian gasped.

A rocket whistled upward somewhere outside on the block, fireworks for some celebration, exploding as Julian said, “I cannot relate to what Justin said,” her voice trailing off to a whisper as she added, “I've never felt this way before.”

Soon Jonathan was on her, “How did you get close to Justin? Did you use Bill?”

My head was bent and I couldn't lift it, until a voice said, “You need to release all the people in this room from the spell that you have woven over everyone...”

“Oh, God,” she gasped, for it was Craig, her eldest son.

“...to place you in the position that you have been in. This is *true* and *you know* it...”

“Noooo, noooooooooo!” Julian moaned, crumbling.

“...and *you* have to face it *right now!*” as his mother threw up her hands.

Then came Brandon, Caitlin, and even me, trying to sound strong, wanting some thread of love to be a lifeline for her. But she was coming apart.

“Oh, Bill, I don't know what's happening!”

She wouldn't focus, not on the terror she said she felt sitting in the chair and afterwards, even though she called it ‘the terror I've had all my life!’ She wouldn't talk about her power,

except to say she didn't feel she had any. She, whose vocabulary was almost all about feeling, asserted she couldn't find any feeling. Mark speared her with a moment when he and she and I had been in our kitchen and she had acted very coyly, but she wouldn't admit to that and was promptly confronted for dishonesty. Then he brought up her 'ugly' response to the possibility of my being a priest, when her 'heart had turned to stone.' Craig's wife Carla got into the fray, but it was Jonathan I wanted to punch out. And yet a pattern of refusal, obfuscation, deflection, and weakness was playing out in such a way that I felt I had to make headway.

"You're so intuitive, Julian, so what's your intuition say now about all this? You're manifesting so much weakness now, is that your power? Now what's your intuition?" Receiving no response, I pushed from another direction. "Okay, I'll try again." I stood eighteen inches from her colorless face: "You're always asking me to be so appropriate in my feelings about our relationship. So why have you yet to utter one word about our relationship? You answer *that* in the microphone!"

In the clearest words she had spoken so far, Julian said, "If I speak about our relationship...I know that I have been honest about our relationship. I *know* that. I *know* that!" she said firmly, quietly. When I asked if that was all that she had to say, if she had been honest, she half wept, "The only thing true in my life is my love for you..."

But all I saw were clinging words that covered up something darker that took her into oblivion. And that meant what she had said must not be true. I walked back to my chair, sat, put my head on Caitlin's shoulder, and wept. It was over. I wept, part of me glad to feel the hurt, simply to feel in such outlandish circumstances.

As Matthew asked if she saw me crying, and Julian said that it was a desecration for her to speak about her love for me,

“because I know I’m being held right now,” Jonathan Boyce was again at her: “Were you trying to possess Justin as you tried to possess Bill?”

“Oh,” she cried, “I haven’t even wanted...I’ve been terrified...every time I’ve been in Justin’s presence!”

“What!” several voices cried out in unison, aghast at such a comment, which Julian was too frightened to know was the most truthful she had spoken. When pressed by Mark, she said she didn’t know why she had said that, then looked pleadingly at her son.

“Don’t, don’t do that!” Craig lowered his head, shielding his eyes.

After more questions about her honesty in our relationship, and the priesthood incident, Matthew asked her, “What do you think the implications of this are—you know, about your engagement to Bill, about the Pilgrimage, about Justin, about all of us? And how about your son?”

“I’d say,” posed Brandon, “that this was Judgment Day.”

Soon Craig was telling his mother to come clean, and pressures were building so strongly from everyone in the room, even from both of the women for whom this was their first seminar, that Julian, trying to shout her love for her son, knowing that no one understood or believed her, doubled in rage, screaming, “Dear God!” as every bone in her petite body collapsed on the cold floor of desperation. That was I when I ran to her, pulled her up by the collar, stood her—white-faced, mouth gaping—against the wall and cried a trinity of ‘No’s’ as I covered the supple mouth I had kissed so many times, which was now a well of pain, pointing my finger a dozen times, five dozen times, an inch from her right eye, my eyes on hers, just pointing, trying to take her out of collapse, out of denial and hopelessness, out of reaction and rage, out of weakness and into

a neutral point, to even a glimmer of some integrity of purpose where she could be quiet enough to begin, just to begin.

But Justin was now behind me, putting on his lapel mike. I turned to find him saying softly, as if nothing had happened, “Okay, move the chairs.” While Julian was still gripped in sobs, he told us, “I had a good talk with the children and then a fine conference call.” Then he spoke to Douglas and Lillian Meers about some logistical matters regarding the children. Eventually he got around to Julian, saying that it was just ‘a mockery’, that there was ‘no emotion at all.’

With Julian bending over in dry heaves, he went on, “And there’s no emotion in being emotional about there being no emotion. There’s none. Stop it. You won’t divulge anything, will you? It’s a very dangerous thing to come close to me if you haven’t got your motivation absolutely straight. It’s very evil, your silence. I’m going and I think it’s up to you people whether you want to leave this thing and go to the High Anglican Church to see what this charismatic business and the speaking in tongues there tonight is all about. You’ve uncovered what you need to uncover for yourselves here. Mark, I think you and Bill should go, and Caitlin and Matthew. You should go now to the High Anglican Church. This is going to wind down in five minutes anyway.”

And so we left. I was numb, relieved but shaken beyond speech, until in the car we all spoke together and I was comforted, ripped apart, but comforted.

Back at Sunnyside, Justin said Julian had to die to any hope of relationship with me, return to Seattle, go back to her old friends and make sure they understood the context of her life, and give up the upcoming sacred trip. With everything cleared up, the air in the room lightened as Justin was joking with the Meers and Holly and others, adding, “Julian’s sole hope is that she completely does what she has to do—this is the



penance God has asked of her. She just needs to start her life all over again, backwards, going back and back. Until she does that, I have no more to say. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. It's been an incredible seminar."

After the charismatic event at the Anglican Church, we all gathered again. Justin listened, agreeing with our doubts about the authenticity of those speaking in tongues and the spell that Caitlin felt, which he took away with a prayer.

With Julian absent, he spoke words to the effect that she was evil, not outright—no definitive statement could be made—but he used phrases like 'infinite distortion, getting power from the evil side of creation, can't even see her soul.'

"There's just a very huge force associated with this being—her or coming through her—a very great cosmic power, associated with 'the Evil One' himself that was my wife. We haven't seen the last of her," then said the room and all of us in it had been contaminated with the radiation of Julian's evil.

The situation needing humor, Justin mused, "Everyone should live on the Host: a hundred and twenty-five a day—'Body of Christ', 'Body of Christ...'" he laughed loudly and, as our laughter subsided, he spoke to Caitlin: "How is it? Do you trust me? Then become like me. That's what you have to do: become like I am. Understand?"

"Yes," she nodded, her eyes running with tears of confusion.

"Are you going to obey me, Caitlin? Are you? Yes or no?" She nodded and he pressed on: "Why?"

"Because I want to be like you."

"Trust me, Caitlin," he whispered, charming her, his eyes batting slightly, his pliant mouth turned up at the corners: "I'm looking after you. It'll be alright."

I got it all down in my green ledger, my hand in sync with the flow of his words. It didn't even hurt by the time we all filed down the stairs of the Sunnyside Theater.

Back at Annapurna, I found Julian asleep in bed. I asked the Halseys what to do. Matthew said she should leave—tonight. We all stood around the bed. Julian woke. She looked aged. “You have to leave,” I told her, talking to the Halseys in their suite while she got her things together while. In their eyes I found strength.

When I returned, Julian had gone. Something told me I should not sleep in the bed. I got a single mattress from the basement and slept in my sleeping bag in the tiny Snowman Press office.

I woke the next morning, feeling good and free, as if my life were starting over, sunlight pouring through lace curtains as the phone rang. It was Julian's daughter, for whom I cared a great deal. I tried to calm her outrage at how broken her mother was, saying I loved her but that she had used that love, saying that I was praying for her, and that if she wanted to see Justin for a consultation or rent the video of her confrontation, she was more than welcome. The slam of the receiver went through me.

Then a knock came on the door. Jonathan's mother, a graying woman in her sixties, wanted a tape of the Healing Seminar, an event that, to me, seemed so long ago. This woman, whom I had never felt I wanted to be close to, had come to most of the seminars, yet remained happily sentimental, though she was improving. I got her the tape and walked out into the late morning sunlight. She asked me how I was. Such love was in her voice that I suddenly realized my relationship with Julian had had bottled me up. The sun on the grass and the bushes full of flowers seemed the epitome of abundance. I felt I had just met this person, and we talked on the steps for two hours, which seemed no more than minutes.

## CHAPTER 18: PILGRIMAGE

We were basking in the sunshine of the Eternal City, feeling antiquity in the air, each hidden-away church a portal to another world, a world that raised all the suffering of man up to the truth of transformation. We definitely weren't in Rome for the Coliseum or Trevi Fountain.

Much had been left behind. Julian's furniture and belongings piled in the living room would be removed by the time I returned. Heady with the promise of this sojourn, breathing in the aroma of 'Roma', I felt how free I now was to experience the Vatican and Sta. Maria Maggiore, where on the third of four days in Rome, Justin said, after we shared our experiences of this holy basilica, "Mary is confirming that everything I've done is just the bare minimum to get you to where you are now." He was shouting his whispers: "No one could have such an experience as you without being confronted and brutalized into supple, yielding, surrendered instruments of God." Between two of the great marble pillars, he prayed for all his friends who were controlled by the Evil One, ending with, "And I cannot mention them for there are some who yet cannot be named."

I wondered whom he meant.

Since the first corner church I had entered, where I had knelt at a statue of Mary and become engulfed in a blissfully spacious power that had made it hard to rise, every day had been a tower of meaning. Justin had tried to meet with Cardinal Ratzinger, head of what used to be called 'the Inquisition,' and made it past colorful Swiss guards lifting their battle axes, but the future pope was not in.

"The time's not yet right," Justin explained; "something else must happen first, but if we do meet, I want you present so

the Cardinal can see the caliber of faith, dedication and spiritual progress those around me have attained.”

The real news, however, was Justin’s love affair with the current stigmatist, Padre Gino Buressi. We all taken the hour-long bus ride to watch the greatest living holy man of the Catholic Church speak his homily, in Italian, which he energetically directed almost entirely to Justin. Exalted in love, even more than with Maharishi, Justin had us twice travel south to San Vittorino to see the priest, who had worked many miracles of healing. Justin told us that this man was closest to Our Lord, and Justin had to be closest to this man. Talking to Fr. Daniel, one of the saint’s aides, Justin was allowed a rare opportunity for a photograph with our group and Padre Gino. Afterwards, Justin mentioned to Fr. Daniel his own special gift of the Spirit and said that he saw the trees bending toward Padre Gino as he walked by them in prayer. But our saint could not stay on, which would necessitate confronting every young priest-to-be in the seminary. Back in our hotel, he spoke to us in his room for two hours about how Padre Gino was higher than Maharishi, and of his own desire to be pure enough to receive the Wounds of Christ, a tradition that had started with St. Francis of Assisi, the first stigmatist.

Before we traveled to the home of St. Francis, my favorite saint whose name I had taken when I had entered the Church less than two months before, we were walking back to our small hotel across the Tiber, the moonlight reflecting off the river. As we walked on cobbles, I was inquiring with Justin about the possibility of the freedom of Russia. My sense of his destiny was strong, especially given the need of the world. So I simply asked, “Do you see yourself governing the world in the spirit of The Context someday?”

“The world must be reformed,” he remarked, “and The Context is the only instrument that can do justice to the

requirements of purity. If not myself, then a council, a council of seven.” Immediately I understood that the seven members of such a council would have to be the seven of his friends that were through him to be enlightened.

A four-hour bus ride the next morning brought us to the “fortress of happiness,” as Justin called the walled city of Assisi. With Justin tired, I read through the events of our blossoming trip, which I had noted in my green journal: Justin touching the Holy Father’s fingertips stretched from the Pope-mobile in St. Peter’s Square, then, when the vast plaza had emptied, climbing the steps of the canopied dais built for the pope and pretending to speak to tens of thousands; Justin’s first confession in St. Peter’s Cathedral after which he felt guilty that his only sin had been once pretending it was his brother who had sharpened a crayon in the pencil sharpener; our first major confrontation, Caitlin getting Justin’s hand to open only a quarter of the way, the highest score of the seven of us pilgrims as to what degree we each had taken the Blessed Virgin as our mother—“That’s how pure Mary is!” Justin had said outside of the Basilica of St. Francis; Anna coming under fire and praying myself to sleep asking for her breakthrough.

Once we were in the magic of this ancient hilltop town, I felt as if all my life I had been waiting for the joy I sensed here. Matthew and I had met our first morning in Assisi at the town’s southern gate, looking out at the valley of Umbria waving in wheat and feeling we could have been Friars Minor in the Italian sunlight of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, then zigzagging through side streets till, above the city, we were gazing at a secluded castle tower by a grassy stream far below and, lost to time, felt we had been here before and had been brothers. Though the paintings by Giotto on the vaulted ceilings of the Basilica of St. Francis, where we met the others, held a blue deeper than any sky, Justin

said the vibration was so terribly dulled by merely curious tourists that St. Francis had ‘fled this place’ long ago.

“The Church needs to be rebuilt once again,” he pronounced solemnly.

After Mass in one of the lower chapels, Justin mentioned that, while priests had the power to invoke the Holy Spirit into the bread and wine, the priest who had offered our Mass in his almost flirtatious yet uninspired manner was defiling Christ. Caitlin, taught since birth to respect the priesthood, got confronted all the way back to our hotel, where Justin announced he would become a priest in Fr. Gino’s order, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, a decision which would instantly change everything in Victoria...and someday soon in Rome. The moment Justin made his announcement, I knew that I too wanted to become a priest in the Oblates. “Well,” he said quietly to me, “you’re my Br. Rufino.” I told none of the others of this sweet message, for Rufino had been St. Francis’ favorite disciple, and I wanted to cause no jealousy.

But I was getting sick and reluctantly went to bed early, at midnight, so as to get up early at 5 AM to drive Justin back to San Vittorino in hopes of seeing Padre Gino. He did see the holy man, but only at a distance. Even then Justin fell to his knees. Afterwards, he again spoke with Fr. Daniel, trying to expand his Minnesota farm-boy boundaries, the priest finally saying, “You’re a difficult person, and I feel around you that I’m always being pushed.” Justin, hearing how this priest knelt every morning on a hardwood floor for thirty painful minutes, asked, “Why not live every moment of your life in that intensity?” which brought to the young priest’s face a beautiful smile. But as we walked to the car I had rented, Fr. Daniel followed us to say, “I had a thought. Nothing really. It was silly.” But when Justin pushed him, the priest said, “The thought was that we get so many coming to Padre and saying they’ve

seen Mary or have had some special revelation, and that Jesus said there'd be many false prophets. And I had the thought that you were a false prophet."

We were soon racing to the airport to catch a flight for Yugoslavia, Justin's face after that comment betraying no change. Barely making our flight, we soon landed in a country full of white stone—hedgerows and houses made of stone, roads bordered by stone. Stopping in front of the church where the apparitions to four children had first taken place and still occurred daily at 6 PM, we passed some thin trees and a few park benches in front of Medjugorje's plain church to enter a Mass in progress. A British priest, not of deep character, was celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I went up for the Eucharist. Justin held back. He passed a note down the row of pilgrims: "There is no intensity here. The Virgin weeps." I returned to my pew to hear a shout from the rear.

"It's a lie! It's not true! It's not true. All this is not true!"

I felt instantly altered. A bolt of hollowness shot down through me, as if I had died. Now I had to choose. I followed Matthew and Caitlin, heads bowed, out of the pew to the back of the church, while the service went on. We said a rosary outside on the steps, fearing any moment that an angry mob would pursue us or that Communist police would lock us away. Soon the eight of us were walking to the outskirts of town and the farther we got from the church, the more Justin became himself. Some local police passed in a car, Justin commenting, "Those Communist cops have more liveliness than any of the pilgrims here! The agency of the Evil One has been responsible for these apparitions."

We then returned and walked around the church seven times, as if it were Jericho whose walls would crumble. Into the only open window high on the shady side of the church, Justin

shouted, “Satan!” He said it was the window into the room where the apparitions had first taken place. But Justin had to pee, and others of us as well. In a dilapidated outhouse in an adjacent field, we heard him shouting, “I have seen the true apparition here in Medjugorje!” We all came running. He had us look down on the great pile of feces till we gagged.

“That’s the essence of the power responsible for whatever’s going on here: Shit!”

Later we got a look at the three children who were still beholding the 6 PM apparitions, and I noticed that the young boy looked like he had just gotten out of school recess rather than had just seen the Mother of God. Justin predicted, “That kid’s an imposter, a pimp, and one day he’ll confess his folly and be broken.” For Justin, three more days, even three more hours, were unbearable.

So, following Matthew’s suggestion, we suddenly were catching a 6 AM flight to Lisbon, then a day-long taxi ride up Portugal’s Atlantic coast to Fatima ‘for the real thing.’ We arrived just after dark, Justin dashing from the car, while the rest of us got hotel rooms, as the next day, July 13<sup>th</sup>, was the anniversary of the Virgin’s appearance to three shepherd children on the thirteenth day of six consecutive months in 1917—and here the crowds would be large. I went out late into the warm night air of Portugal, a countryside that exuded the sadness of an earthy woman waiting for her seafaring husband’ ship to return. Hearing music, I followed a path through trees to find a candlelight ceremony just finishing. The feeling was so sweet that I walked and walked, the cathedral etched in moonlight above the immense plaza. I walked and walked.

Everyone was in Justin’s room, quiet in the sweetness of Mary, when I returned, Justin saying, “Always stay close to me. Evolution’s always going on around me.” He continued on



about how sacred a place this was, incomparable in every way to Medjugorje, a name he would not even mention.

The next day, walking to the place where the Angel of God first appeared to the shepherd children, visiting the houses of the children, each perfumed with Mary, we processed on to the cathedral, then that night entered the sea of 20,000 in the plaza for the Mass, which ended in a candlelight procession of a statue of Our Lady. I had picked out just hours earlier the finest of the four-foot replicas of Our Lady of Fatima, drawn to her immediately, a statue we all bought for Justin. She would be housed in Sunnyside, which was to become a shrine. “This statue will become renowned for its miracles,” he said.

But the real event I noted in the journal I faithfully kept was ‘the second miracle’—Helene’s breakthrough. The ‘first miracle had blessed the barren Belgrade airport where Justin had confronted Anna in a deserted hallway and, as lovely as was the finest physio-therapist on Vancouver Island, she was equally hardened, too mathematically precise, fearful and untrusting—until Justin invoked the Virgin Mary and Anna had been changed to the point that none of us had ever seen her so supple and available. Helene, called ‘a true oracle’ back in December, had since then been confronted on that very fact; she had even wondered if she were evil, the verdict vacillating for months until Justin realized that she was, indeed, a good person. On this trip, he had pressed her about her physical attraction to himself, confronting her subtle sexual advances to each of the male pilgrims, as well as her jealousy. Over lunch in our hotel, having found she was in a dilemma between becoming a truly devout person and being subtly pulled by the old Annapurna group, Justin had Helene speak out her sins before a statue of Mary in the empty hotel chapel. He said a prayer, then left her. When Helene rejoined us, she had been radiantly converted. To

which Justin said, “Fatima is a place of grace and the Blessed Virgin is everything.

“There is no limit to my devotion to her. She is asking everything of me. And I am going to be true to her. Always! She is *far* more demanding than I have been.” Shaken by the implications of this last statement, leaving his room I looked back at him, who suddenly held out his right arm ending in a fist, saying, “Nothing will keep me from serving my obligation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Obedience to Mary!” Having turned, I held out my mirrored fist, saying firmly, “Obedience to Mary!” But in my heart I was hoping that the Year of the Family would not be a confrontational one. Now, as with Justin, Mary was my mother. But his Mary did not feel very motherly to me.

Then, emblematic of how things shifted around Justin, the next day the decision was made to visit Arosa, the Swiss alpine town of his enlightenment. How I had hoped one day to return to that spot where my journey with him had been secured! But, while energized with anticipation, I was still sick from a three-day deep fatigue-compounded cold. Driving a rented van out of Zurich in the early afternoon, I could not take in enough of the steeply fertile hillsides lush beyond memory. The beauty of the Swiss countryside was almost painful, far more nurturing than I remembered, and the closer we got as we hair-pinned up to Arosa, the more I felt a steady wonderment of what the next bend would hold. It was not until dusk that we arrived at the Hotel Pratschli. I longed to see Justin’s old room, remembering exactly where it was. But the hotel was closed. Even so, Justin raced to the locked door, looked around the corner to the patio where he had sat before he took his last walk in ignorance, then fell to his knees, crying, “I’m home. This is where I got made.” I had never seen him in the childlike freedom of such happiness. “There’ll be a cathedral here,” he

predicted, “where meditation is taught, and one in Victoria where The Context is taught.” Then we were walking up the hill, and I was pointing out where Justin and I had turned downhill, hard to see in the near dark. By the time we had rounded the 18<sup>th</sup>-century chalet, it was night. I wanted to walk to the actual spot of Justin’s true spiritual birth, but it would have to wait until morning.

An intimate wine and cheese dinner followed by a quilted sleep ended in morning fog. I was not feeling the specialty of having been here a decade before and wished the sun would reveal the surrounding peaks, the many wildflowers growing on the trail where Justin and I had walked. We all assembled, walked up the hill, took a right-hand turn a bit downhill a half-mile to the old chalet, where two men were fixing a fence. Then the path curved sharply right on its way back toward the hotel, where there was a rock quarry at the bend of the trail. This is where Justin had gone down on his knees in the motions of infinity. The very small quarry I remembered so well had eroded or been covered over. But I knew exactly the bend in the path—these were some of the most important details of my life—and we marked the spot where I remembered him going to his knees and crying out, “God, don’t ever take this away from me!” Matthew dug a hole there with his pocket knife and Justin took off his coral necklace which he had gotten here in Arosa, giving one bead to each of us, placing the rest in the hole along with a holy card of the Blessed Virgin and some rose petals.

“The Swiss won’t know anything happened, but this area will prosper with a sweet peace. Come here, you guys. Closer! Gather closer around and feel what enlightenment is.”

As we surrounded him in a tight circle, I closed my eyes as did the other pilgrims, but felt nothing happened, though everyone else seemed to be participating in the immense joy and

gratitude that Justin was expressing. I just continued my copious notes in tiny writing, trying to get down every detail, even though it had meant missing some of the action of the trip. Maybe a book could come of it. Anyway, it was how I felt I could give the most. Then, from the van, Matthew and I carried the crate containing the statue of the Blessed Virgin, which we hauled and placed on the site of enlightenment. During the rosary that followed, Justin hit me in the chest when I failed to say part of the prayer in the exact wording as Padre Gino had said it.

On the drive back to Zurich, Justin asked me why it had taken me six years to come to Victoria to see him

I said honestly, “Well, I didn’t know that your enlightenment would last,” to which Justin retorted that I hadn’t understood enlightenment, and that it must be something else. So I pushed on to say, “I guess I didn’t really believe I could get enlightened myself.”

“There, there’s the rub! Boy, are you being shaken up inside!” Then he was shouting, “Yes, yes! You’re really churning in there. Get it out. Get it out, Bill! You’re going to take a great step toward manhood here. Whooooiee! Yessir. Get it ooooouuut! Yes, this is the real reason we came to Arosa!”

The flight home was tense. We had been part of a tour group coming over, and here we were again, among energies and verbiage that sounded more like returning from Disneyland or a golfing vacation.

In Toronto, Justin met with his mother, who was soon going to move to Vancouver to be close to her son. “It was the best meeting I’ve ever had with her,” he told us. “On some deep level, she understands everything.”

He brushed by me as I carried his bags to an airport bus and gave me a look of intense sadness just before I boarded. I

read in those eyes the seriousness of my situation, that had gone downhill as steeply as our descent from Arosa. I had no idea what to do, having been on pilgrimage and closer to Justin than ever. I was his Br. Rufino, yet now felt like a non-entity.

The plane to Victoria didn't leave until the next afternoon, so we took a hotel, and Justin, instead of staying with his mother, surprisingly returned. The Halsey's gave him their room; they took Mark's room and Mark stayed with me, all of us meeting that night to exuberantly discuss Arosa and the flight home. Trying to be in the motions of exuberance, I was accosted by Justin: "I said the most powerful prayer this afternoon for your salvation," and when I made no reply because I had felt no results, he concluded, "Maybe that's your sin: thanklessness."

I didn't really feel the truth of that assertion, and suddenly he was pounding me on the head three times with a Bible, trying to get me to change. I knew such forceful physical contact from an enlightened being was supposed to be a blessing.

The next day the Halseys and I walked three miles to the nearest church for an unbearably dull Mass, staying afterwards to kneel before Mary, say a rosary and hopefully enliven the premises. I was feeling stronger. When Matthew asked me what I would do once Justin entered the priesthood, I replied, "I know my greatest desire is to be a priest, to follow Justin, if God graces me with that honor, and I feel strong in that." Having stated clearly what was true for me, I could feel honest strength enter my body.

On our flight home, Justin announced, "You are the shepherd children of Fatima. You must be strong. Everyone is going to have to rise to where you are. Their demons will try to take the edge off the task. Own your experience. Know that Mary is everything! Each of you has three more deaths to go

through.” He said this standing in the aisle, bending over my aisle seat, whispering, “Each of my friends not married will become a priest or nun, and married couples will become lay affiliates. We will have a true Catholic community. We will become an Order. Though we are small in number, our efforts will change the Church. If I move to Boston, where the Oblates of the Virgin Mary have a house, then you must come with me. Always stay near, no matter what!”

Greeted by many yearning faces and bouquets, mainly roses, in Vancouver, Justin gave the highlights, saying that the next evening would be a four-hour discussion of the Pilgrimage and its implications.

Sleeping in the Snow Man Press office, having hung up the crucifix I had purchased in Assisi, the moonlight making crosses on my blue down sleeping bag, I woke early and made a list of people to call. I began with Craig, telling him all the Seattle friends should be sure to come up for the meeting. I filled the tape orders, working until Mark stuck his head in and we talked about writing immediately to the Oblates.

Sunnyside Theatre was prepared with two cameras and mikes. I arranged the stage with seven chairs behind Justin’s director’s chair and sat on one end, green notebook in hand. When Justin entered the filled theatre, he mostly reviewed our sojourn, the others of us adding perceptions. When I offered my experience of Assisi, he said, “Deeper,” and when I later spoke of the events after the rosary outside the church in the unembellished town of Medjugorje, he snapped, “You’re missing the transitions, cutting off important moments. Life isn’t situations; it’s a flow!” I could sense that I was mainly offering pearls of information. Around Justin, information meant little; pure feeling was coinage of our realm.

Reeling inside, I could feel myself trying to be coherent. I hadn’t had a positive contact with Justin since Fatima—or had

it been Yugoslavia? I could see myself trying to sound like a pilgrim, to offer items from my exhaustive notes. Whereas Matthew and Caitlin and the others flowed, I was clearly separate, once again on the outside looking in. I barely heard Justin say, "All the Pilgrims should meet downstairs."

There in the consultation room, where I had first seen Justin as World Teacher, he was smiling at the group before him, congratulating those who spoke well and sharing his sense of the gloriously austere days to come, of the rebuilding the Church, of his priesthood, of the letters he would write. I tried all the harder to be a part of what was being shared, to smile at the right time, to nod when Matthew said something profound, to close my eyes for the occasional prayers.

The "And how are you doing, Bill?" finally came, suddenly as always. Justin looked at me, then down, his voice open but soft. My eyes suddenly reddened, wound with fear and the cues of hopelessness in his voice, his head still down.

"I..." I felt the need to somehow wrap my entire life up and hand it to him.

"Yes? What's wrong, Bill?" He was half-sweet, yet his were throw-away lines.

"I...I don't know what to do. I feel I have this huge ego that keeps shouting I, I, I...I...." I was trembling.

"You were onto something there, Bill."

But not knowing where to go from there, I fell silent.

"Well, why don't you take a walk around the block, Bill." It was not a question.

I suddenly saw his request had been a repeat of my Chicago ejection when I was found to be gushing blackness into the room, a repeat of my experience four years ago in this very room when passivity sent my demon throughout Victoria, just like....

When I opened the French door into the hall, I knew something. And when I closed it behind me, I knew what I knew: that I was back in New York on the stage from which I had run, back in the dim Waldorf Astoria ballroom with someone telling me that I looked like death, back in the Columbus bus station, back in my Salina bed and just hoping to make it till morning. I knew that, fundamentally, nothing had changed.

Outside, the night warm, the streetlamp blotting out stars, my first steps on the grass assured me that I had not gotten free of the assailing darkness more intimate than breath. ‘Noooooooooooo!’ I screamed inside my brain, fists rubbing the sides of my head. Twice around the block made no difference. I judged myself exactly and as absolutely as I had seen Justin judge those souls at the mike on the Christmas Course, and then Julian two months later.

Back in the consultation room, I sat behind the semi-circle, still attentive to Justin. He was talking happily, telling his pilgrims how they had to guard their experience: “‘The Devil’ is looking to win weak souls,” he warned.

“Well, Bill?” he asked, distance in his neutral voice.

Nothing came out of my mouth, and he said, “I see. Well, I think you should leave. You should go to St. Louis. Join a seminary there if you can and become a priest. That will perhaps form the context for your salvation. We will pray for you here.”

Relieved it wasn’t going to be a violent exit, the term ‘priest’ holding a ray of hope, I saw nothing to do but to get up and obey. I took three unbelievable steps to the French door. My hand on the brass knob, I turned it half way to the right and collapsed in tears of disbelief.

“The universe is unfathomable sometimes,” I heard Justin say softly.



Tears had not helped and I knew I had nothing left. Using the doorknob for support, I pulled myself up and walked down the dim hall. It was done. I couldn't turn around. Justin had told me what to do. I shut the soundproof front door. The world lay before me. And the world without Justin... was evil.

I packed that night, arranged papers, phoned Brandon to explain to him the books of Snowman Press.

The next morning Lillian Meers came over. She, who had felt like a sister, had often helped out at the Press. I explained what had happened.

"It must be something very simple you need to do."

"Perhaps. Don't feel sorry for me. I've made my choice," I said as strongly as I could, not knowing quite what that choice was, as she sat in the black vinyl chair, looking at me, Justin's favorite. She put her hands over her face and wept.

"Please find yourself and come back soon," she sobbed.

A sweet thing to say, I thought, and I made sure she knew where everything was. I got my sleeping bag and suitcase.

In the living room Craig and Carla were just waking, having driven up from Seattle to hear about the Pilgrimage. His mother had always let them stay when they came to Victoria. I walked by, turning before the double doors. I could feel their eyes.

"Guess you heard."

"Yes," said Craig softly.

"Goodbye."

"We have hope for you. Just as we have hope for Julian," Craig said.

"Yes, well, goodbye." I opened the doors into the hall, realizing I was now associated with Julian. She had gone out with a bang, and I was making my exit with a whimper. Eva had pulled down 'that being.' Now I was evidently the second.

I hoped no one would see me. There was no one in the hall. There was no one outside on the front steps. I lugged my stuff toward the waiting cab. Leaning against one of the pillars, reading one of Padre Gino's pamphlets, Douglas Meers turned to me. I didn't know if I should say anything. His friendly hand went out. "Bill, I just want you to know that I there is no one I will be more glad to see return than yourself."

"Thank you," I said.

But I hadn't taken the hand, not wanting to pollute it. And so I turned my back on Douglas' sincerity and love. Now the hand reaching out for me, waiting on silent haunches to capture whatever light I still held, was made of darkness. There had been a part of myself I had hidden—despite all my Levels of Confrontation, Walks with Justin, Transformations, despite being on the mountain, whatever the hell that had meant, and my closeness to Justin. That part of myself I had never understood and had no idea how to talk about. For something too terrifying for words, what was I to do? And what power could keep such a hideous fact from the most perceptive man who ever lived, the person who had on numerous times known my vibration and my very thoughts. It could only be the power of Evil. All this passed through my epic head in a few moments as I walked down the five brick steps that four years ago had led me to the threshold of Annapurna.

Then I was in the cab heading for a bus heading for a ferry heading for a plane heading for St. Louis. Heading nowhere. No, it was worse than that.

PART IV:

UNGRASPING THE LIGHT

THAT

CASTS SHADOWS

*But now the stark dignity of entrance—  
Still, the profound change has come upon them:  
Rooted they grip down and begin to awaken.*

—William Carlos Williams—

## CHAPTER 19: DESERT

It was midnight. Julian, forced from the terrible sleep she had been thrust into, put on the first clothes her fingers touched. Unable to deal with what hung in what had been her closet and found herself opening her car door. She sat, holding the steering wheel a long time. Slowly the realization came: 'I have nowhere to go.'

Her mind, thrashing like the windshield wipers in the rising rain, could not find the hotel where many ousted by Justin over the years had retreated during their various ordeals. She could not find anything—not her pain, not her heart, not her life. Her fiancé, ripped from her, her friends gone into the agony of emptiness, her home, her security, her son, her self-worth were all thrown into this moonless night. She stopped at the first hotel. She could not go on, could not exercise the aesthetic discernment she had long been known for. Now she was not known.

In the room of peeling floral wallpaper, the sink brown and aqua with stains, she did not undress. She would have never stayed in such a place, would have never even entered. She could no longer move and sleep claimed her.

Daylight was a surprise. She drove to Annapurna to retrieve what she could, but could not catch her breath. No one would talk to her. Even Caitlin ignored her flatly. Julian had no energy for taking each hanger off the closet rod, collecting jewelry she had worn for me, brushing neatly arranged toiletries into a shopping bag.

She drove toward Seattle, not leaving her car during the ferry ride, trying to ignore the passing islands of pine and sloops bobbing in morning reflections. It was all too painful. But

when she left Canada, an inexplicable thrill shot through her petite and highly sensitive nervous system.

The long drive she was in no condition to make and two near accidents left her wondering where to go, as she drove to the Broadway district where her eldest son and his wife had an apartment. There were no other choices. She pressed the buzzer.

“Craig, I wondered if I could...if you could perhaps put me...give me a place...just for a day...or so. The sofa would do.” She had given them the sofa the year before.

Carefully chosen words told her, “I think that would not be appropriate right now.” Craig stood in the doorway, pumping his hands.

Stunned, realizing the verdict on her must have escalated, she saw the door closing. She stared awhile. She turned, looking left then right down the street. Which way she went did not matter.

After taking a downtown hotel near St. James Cathedral and dragging her two bags through numerous puddles, she sat on a rented bed and found the only solid thing in her life: the arched ceiling of the cathedral in Victoria, the Bishop calling her name, the silver font—she had nearly fallen in—and the power of the purest and most freeing force, as if both ascending and descending like two infinite skies re-forming her in the shattering realm where love is the only power. Then, during her confirmation, the Bishop had touched her forehead with crism oil and the whole experience had come upon her again, magnified.

The three nights she stayed, attending daily Mass, were a blank. In a confessional, she made some attempt at saying she was evil. The man on the other side of the screen could only try to soothe. One Black hotel maid told her, “Things goin’ to be

okay, Missy.” Julian wept in the thick arms of the only person who would hold her.

She called her second son in Los Angeles, who didn't waste a minute saying, “You're good, Mom. Even if you're in trouble, you're better off now you're out. I'm so relieved you're out!” The simple joy of hearing the word ‘Mom’ filled her long enough to allow a backward glance at Justin's words, “You're no mother.” They had failed to destroy at least that part of her.

The next day she called her daughter, who—worried, supportive, hysterical, furious—then called Justin: “What the hell's wrong with you? My mother's not evil!” He lied, saying he had never said that. Julian, who had once had the spunk her daughter showed, called an old friend on Vashon Island, a woman who loved whales and archeological digs and had had a sideline interest in the former World Teacher. Her friend said Julian could ‘stay indefinitely,’ adding, “I never bought what Snow was doing.” In a room overlooking Puget Sound, Julian felt safe. She wept most days.

She her long-time best friend, only to hear Vicki speak devastating words: “I feel something coming at me, so it would be better' if we didn't see each other.” Each rebuff was dust passing through all the filters of her body to settle on that infinitely unseen place which she could only assume was evil. Which made attending Mass an agony, especially since Justin's Seattle friends also went to noon Mass at St. James and would not look at her or, if they did, she felt their judgment and cruelty.

She did come upon a copy of the video of her confrontation. She could get through only five minutes. Her Vashon friend, however, was outraged: “How can you think yourself evil when that man so clearly manipulated you? And

your friends—they sold you down the river, into slavery!” She fell to Julian’s side and embraced her.

Such insights allowed the floods of feelings, denied or stowed away in some inner hold, to flow out enough—in sobs, in outbursts, in rage, in long bouts of trembling and waves of tears—that she did not sink. It was a beginning, the most fragile of steps—which in a moment could crumble.

Then, with Craig refusing to help, Julian and her daughter and her latest boyfriend drove a rented truck to pick up the furniture and paintings piled in her one-time living room. She felt safe in this threesome, yet ill. Thankfully, Annapurna was virtually empty. Julian kept carrying smaller items out of the door that used to be her front door. The one-time schoolhouse—which now looked unreal, shabby, phony—had taught her more than she ever wanted to learn. And then she saw Adam, leaning over the upstairs railing. Quasi-kind, he at least wished her well. But Julian was sick with grief and could say nothing, as her daughter, incensed, tossed out a few choice words before they drove out of the parking lot, out of Victoria and stood in line for the ferry to the mainland.

That is when she recalled the first night in the seedy hotel and how a strong intuition had somehow penetrated her gloom—that she should go to the monastery not far from the blue house on the Roaring Fork River, where she had lived before coming to the Pacific Northwest. While only vaguely familiar with it, having visited once during the five years she had lived near her parents in the Rockies, yet she decided to act on this notion. Her younger sister met her plane, picked Julian up at 6 AM every morning, drove her forty miles to the monastery and then back to Glenwood Springs, took her out to eat and even got her to laugh on occasion. Julian often slept fifteen hours a day.

After her first Mass, while looking at some books in the foyer, over her shoulder came the voice of a tall thin priest with wide eyes, scraggly beard and unkempt steel gray hair. "I've been waiting for you."

She jumped. Shocked, even terrified, not knowing her friend had called the monastery to alert the monks that a blond woman of forty was coming and that she was in some sort of trouble, Julian nevertheless let the priest lead her outside to a pine bench under some aspens shading the bright mountain sun. There she wept for two hours, until the kindly man almost playfully said, "Come now, no more tears. What is your treasure?"

"I have none."

"Of course you do; everyone does. What's *your* treasure?"

"My children," she finally stammered, which broke some inner dam. After more weeping, he helped her remember their births, had her imagine and hold each one at different ages, then invite Christ into a specific part of her body. The tall monk in ivory robes said that Christ would be there whenever she needed him. Then he stood, asked, "And where is God now?" and left her in the filtering shade.

The next time at the monastery, Julian got to meet with another even taller monk, the perfect antithesis to Justin Snow. In the reconciliation room, the soft-spoken Father took the time to go through Justin's letter with her. He pointed out that she was not evil, but rather that her 'divine friend' had a monstrous ego and had at least as much to learn about 'the spiritual journey' as she had. Yet Julian fought for Justin's integrity and enlightenment, which had been such obvious pillars in the vast and treacherous world of The Context. But in reply came honest, self-affirming words: "This man is not telling you the truth. Look to the fruits of his actions, as Christ exhorted us to



do. This man is not behaving as Christ would have wanted.” Thus came the first clearing of her mind. And then came the sentence that changed her life: “My dear,” said the gentle giant of a man, “you have been in a cult.”

At each session with this priest who had once been an abbot and who was so generous with his time and his heart, she told him, “I want Bill back in my life.” Each time he had her wish her former fiancé well, and to pray for me, knowing that I was in God’s keeping. He suggested that she phone me in St. Louis.

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Despite a paranoia that my hidden hell would draw every kind of demon and crash the midnight plane I had almost not boarded, I had nonetheless risked ten dozen lives to do what Justin had told me to do, for darkness was my companion. I prayed, as absurd as that was, to just endure the four-hour flight and land safely at the airport which my late father had revamped. At the arrival curb I hugged the woman who had given me birth, all tenderness gone in me who was full of visions of her slow demise now that I was back in her company.

After the breakfast she made me, she said goodbye and walked to St. Mary’s hospital, where since my father’s death she had volunteered, saying she got much more than she gave. Feeling aghast in a loneliness made unfathomably worse by the pressing void, I knew in my ashen bones I had to have a project. Finding the green ledger of Pilgrimage notes and thinking I could at least give my last act to Justin, I began to transcribe on my mom’s IBM Selectric. Thinking of Justin, my ostracism, Eva, and my own weakness, I wondered if I could stay alive long enough to finish.

I could count on nothing. My mind seemed at any given minute to run in a dozen dozen directions. I typed, threw away pages, typed, glad it would be a long dedication.

Mother brought home a newspaper. I could hardly focus on the ads, on the sense that I had to go out and convince someone of my intelligence, commitment, personable energy—all lies. But I looked for work anyway, despite feeling that in each ad a small piece of the world was hating me. In the coming days I would try for positions as a parking-lot attendant, an accountant for the parking lot, manager of the produce section of a grocery store in a less-than-desirable part of the city—jobs that I amazingly almost got, despite my feeling I could hardly function.

Mother suggested we read out loud *Practicing the Presence of God*, by Brother Lawrence, a monk who for four years thought he was damned, but then one day, seeing a dead December tree and knowing it would bloom in April, realized that, like the tree, he would, in fact, also one day blossom. Like me, he loved to wash the dishes, and from that moment he was in bliss. Mother and I sang hymns and prayed. Though I felt myself a hopeless hypocrite, yet she spoke to me with unusual strength about having faith *especially* in hard times. Seeing this frail woman of 76 who had lost twenty pounds to grief while caring for my dying father, I excused myself, lay on my bed and, remembering how I'd thought this simple and loving soul to be evil, wept.

Overcoming even for a few minutes my inability to feel adequately, I suddenly felt life return and with it the possibility that I could re-enter The Context, which was my deepest desire. But such graces soon fell through the crevice in my soul—the seed I had months ago dreamed about which had a crack in it all the way to the core—and I found myself only in deeper demise. Mother fixed dinner; we watched the news, a Wall Street report, a Masterpiece Theatre episode about Winston Churchill, which, because I found even the news to be confronting, had me running through the kitchen and out the back door to breathe in

the darkening air. I would never be heroic. Soon Mother went to bed and I, my scalp razor thin, leaden and on fire, I typed until exhaustion. At 4 AM I lay down.

In half an hour I was awake, alone, but the presence I had fought in Columbus and later in this very room, was back and more threatening than ever... just at the foot of the bed, ready to engulf me in the limit of meaninglessness! And so it went for two months, permitting me an hour of sleep a night, even though I put above my pillow and at the foot of my bed the holy cards of Jesus and Mary and the saints I had brought back from the Pilgrimage. But the cards did nothing to assuage the ancient burden hovering close and at times closing in. All I could do was beg God for help. How was I to go on in the face of this infinite pressure that told me I would never again be at ease?

Once, when after an hour I awoke with hardly a cubic inch of space inside my head and even that filling up with implications, I got up to splash water on my face and on the way passed out, hitting a wall, cutting my lip, then screamed and ran for the back door, for air, toppling a dining-room chair, pulling off the lace tablecloth in my scrambling, my dear mother coming into the kitchen to turn on the light I could not find. Seeing my face, she slumped to the floor, me catching her, terrified I was killing her before my eyes as she uttered a scream and unconsciousness came on. I cried her name, slapped her pale cheeks to rouse her, her wide eyes not remembering what had caused her to faint. "I stubbed my toe against the wall, trying to get a glass of milk in the dark," I told her. I didn't try for sleep again that night. The littlest decision—to type or get a drink of water—had me starting, then stopping, as if even the smallest choice brought to the surface the state of my soul...empty and going nowhere.

But I had to tell Mother of my cut lip and yet, the next day when she returned from volunteering at the hospital, I couldn't face her, ran out, couldn't move beyond the stoop, ran in, had a drink of water in the same spot she had slumped dead for those few moments the night before. Suddenly I was in the study, throwing my head on her lap, screaming over and over, "I'm so sorry!" and weeping until she brought my head up.

"I can't go on; I can't live. Each minute's a death and I feel the universe pressing me into oblivion." I confessed about the bouts of darkness and the night before, that I had passed out and nearly killed her." But she told me that she had heard me up, had come in and just fainted—that I had saved her. And then I tried to help her see that she didn't understand, that I was...evil.

"Honey, we all have evil in us."

"No, I let Justin down. I've gone against him. I'm his arch-enemy. I have no ability to resist.... Mom, I'm evil."

"But, Bill, you loved Justin so. That's the problem—you were too loyal to him, and now you have to give that loyalty to God."

I couldn't hear this profound guidance and ranted on.

Her response was to take my face in her boney hands and have me look at her. To my downcast, hopeless eyes, she said, "Now, don't you do that, Bill. You are not evil. When your father and I brought you into this world, we wanted a child, a son, and we said he would be 'our love child.' You have always been a joy to me. You taught me more about life than anyone I have ever known. You got me to meditate—and your father, too—how, I'll never know. You gave me love. More love than I knew what to do with. You were a fine student, a fine son, and I tell you that you are not evil, that you are good, that you're God's man. You are God's man!" She was nearly shaking me.

“But I’m so weak...” I drove, my face in her lap.

It was the most intense I had ever heard her: “St. Paul said, ‘When I am weakest, then I am strong.’ You say, ‘Our Father, Who art in Heaven...’ and that means you are His child. I know it takes a powerful intention to expel a demon, that you have to fight every moment of every day, but you can do it with God’s help. Our Lord said, ‘For man it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.’” I felt she was something right out of the Bible, right out of Justin’s ilk—‘every moment of every day’—and my mind bifurcated every few seconds. Yet I had told her. I had not died. Her words had somehow given me hope.

I went to Mass daily, trying to live the other half of myself that hoped somehow to be a priest, even though I slept but minutes every night, so great was my fear.

One night I felt so strangulated that, knowing I would be attacked when I tried to sleep and again when I woke, I called the Archdiocese to see if a priest could do an exorcism, convinced I was possessed. No one wanted to deal with such a request. I did manage to speak to the Monsignor of my parish about the priesthood, even saying that I was sure I had been called, and got what felt like the usual response, ‘Pray about it my son.’

The woman, my mother’s best friend, who lived above us, told me that a doorman’s job at the high-rise on the corner had opened up. So I became a doorman. I stood in the lobby and smiled—“One smile can change someone’s whole day,” Mother said—and felt the shadow press and surround and grow the more each day wore on. Even though some of the tenants seemed to like me, I marveled at how gullible they were. But my thoughts were worst at Mass. When we sang, ‘Heaven and earth are full of Your glory,’ my mind would think ‘full of Your shit,’ and the more I tried to eradicate that stupid word, the more

my mind would fill up with ‘shit, shit, shit.’ Then one day before the Eucharist, my mind began stair-casing down, each step a new yet wordless admission of the Evil etched into me, until—with a thought so sinister and heretical, one that went deeper than the bounds of language, I realized I had thought the worst thought possible. But...nothing happened! After the Mass, I laughed, musing how it could only get better from here. I returned home, told Mother everything I could put into words, and she rejoiced with me in the sunny kitchen. But the moment she left to read in the study, I slowly started sensing that my interpretation was just opposite of the way things really were. With that doubt, my universe closed in more tangibly than my body could handle and I ran screaming to the study. Though not Catholic, my mother suggested I talk to a priest and, when I told her I couldn’t go to Mass anymore, she said, “That’s when you *have* to go.” So I picked the priest I liked best and started to go to confession, each time feeling better, freer after the crism oil on my forehead. Outside the limestone church, I would say to myself, “I don’t know how long this will last, but I am glad and pray I can please you, God.” By the time I had pedaled home and put my bicycle in the garage, I was back in blackness. There were notable instances of light, but still the old terror would soon close round me. Yet I kept going to confessions, kept having my sins forgiven.

One day I saw that Julian had sent me a letter. I could not, would not, associate with ‘that being.’ I didn’t read it. I tore it up.

Mother and I continued to pray evenings and it was months before I didn’t go berserk inside when on Thursday nights she attended a prayer group and I was left alone, the worst of fates. Two weeks after I had torn up ‘that person’s letter, on my return from Mass, Mother said, “Julian called.”

“What did you tell her?” I asked eagerly. Each beige ’73 BMW I had seen had driven my heart to longing and revulsion.

“Only that you were not here. She said she would call again.”

Though I had told my mother that Julian was evil, when a call came that night, I answered—stunned, unable to slam down the receiver—and heard the familiar, now tentative, voice which I hadn’t tasted for two months.

“I just wanted to tell you, Bill, that I’m at St. Benedict’s Monastery and that I’ve learned something very important. I know Justin’s brilliant and gifted and that he taught us amazing things, but I think that he has at least as much to learn as you and I.”

To these ridiculous words—‘as much as you and I’—I asked coldly, “What about his enlightenment?”

“What about what Christ said, ‘Look to the fruits of his actions...?’”

“Do you know what you’re saying!” I retorted.

“Bill, I miss you and just want the best for you.

Someday I pray we can get back together, if just to be friends. I have always thought we had something incredibly special, that our love was destined for greatness....”

Into her trembling voice, I said, “I don’t hear love. What about your anger?”

She suddenly changed into a wilted flower. “Do you think I can ever get free from the demon so inbred in me?” she asked me who knew nothing of her right to anger and felt at least just as caught.

“Well, it’s tough for all of us, but if you’re sincere, you won’t talk love and breed anger.”

“I know, it’s just that...I feel we have a special destiny together, a love unique in the world....”

Such loftiness was unbelievable. Unable to hope I could love that way, if at all, I dodged, “Well, let us be like St. Claire and St. Francis and love on a spiritual plane.”

“Oh, Bill...” She launched again into an angry plea about Justin having huge lessons to learn, saying finally, “I love you!”

Certain now of her intention, I told her, “I think you are evil,” and I hung up.

I rose from the desk in the study, where I had started to sleep because of its many windows, and felt a familiar stirring in my gut, as if, in confronting evil, power had returned to me. I had stood up to the demonic and was graced with feeling energy. I was still in The Context! The next day, having finished the Pilgrimage typing project, I sent it off to Justin, even though I was afraid he would feel how demonic I had been when I typed it. I wrote a note, as well, saying that Julian was talking to some well-known priest and poisoning him and likely the entire Church.

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Shaken once more to her core at my words, Julian put the phone down, remembered her treasure, her overwhelming experience of baptism, the guidance she had received at the monastery, and gathered enough courage to call Vicki, who, while reserved, did listen this time. Then, summoning even more inner strength, she called Craig, who told his mother, “It’s one thing...if what you’re saying is true, but...if you’re wrong, do you realize what the consequences will be in your life?” Feeling his mother groping in very questionable directions, he hung up and called Victoria to warn Justin.

Undaunted, Julian decided to call the Archdiocese in Victoria to inform them of the abuse of Catholicism that Snow was creating, but her story was squelched in channels before it got to the Bishop. Reduced to rawness, the slightest questioned



decision, mistake or uncertainty rubbed against every fear her body had ever held.

When Julian returned to Seattle from her time at the monastery, she moved into a lakefront apartment on July 4<sup>th</sup>, to be near water. She felt uplifted, yet, it being the first time she had lived by herself, she was flung to a new low, amazed that such peaks and valleys could co-exist. On this varied terrain she began building a new life that both terrified and excited her. But still so weak, all she could do for weeks was take walks by Lake Washington, feel the breezes in her hair, soak in her tub and read about the lives of the saints.

Occasionally she saw Vicki, who, private yet curious, would say, “I don’t think we should talk again,” and then would call back to argue for hours. It was perhaps rage that saved Julian, who finally got furious on the phone, screaming, “The guy’s a fucking asshole!” Seeing her own anger as a tool for healing was another small snapping experience, the first having been the words she most remembered from her days at the monastery: “My dear, you have been in a cult.”

Yet she was unable to function. Still hoping I would return, she prayed herself to sleep almost nightly, remembering her treasure and her baptism, and asking, “Please Lord, let him return to me, or at least allow me the detachment to accept Your will.”

Her daughter helped get her a job as receptionist for a ski-wear company. It was on Howell Street, which meant that every day Julian would be reminded of her anger and her love. Her mind was confounded when someone phoned for one of the dozens of Chinese garment workers whose names she never could pronounce. Every failure seemed to stir all her failures. She felt especially guilty about having been instrumental in Craig’s entry into Justin’s world of the demonic. Yet every day, Vicki, less evasive now, talked her through her job. Suffering,

depressed, enraged, fragile, wondering if she would ever be able to function normally, Julian decided she had to quit. Vicki talked her out of it, saying that making it past the two-week hump would mean victory. On her fourteenth day of employment, Julian's back went blessedly out.

During her recovery, Dan Levine, one of the many Jews to have been humiliated by Justin's 'holocaust,' called. Never deeply in the Victoria realm, yet bombarded nevertheless, he had been 'out' for two months, had written a ten-page rebuttal of his three-year involvement and had sent it to Justin. Dan, actively trying to assist others to get free of The Contest, called Julian every day from Chicago to see how she was doing. With this steadfast support, she finally let me go, ready to live her life alone, if that's what the Lord wanted of her.

Then, in mid-July, Caitlin got out.

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At the Vancouver airport in late June, Caitlin held onto the dark shirt of the man she had been married to for less than a season, asking him not to fly away.

"Caitlin, what's wrong? You know I have to film this outdoor documentary up-island. Justin will take care of you in Chicago and New York, and Mark will be there. Justin needs you, especially now, and you'll grow even closer to him. I wish I could go and be with you, but I can't."

Yet his bride was still clinging, and cried when he kissed her goodbye.

Caitlin had for several months devoted herself to taking care of Justin, which had meant spending less and less time with Matthew, until the former World Teacher said that her relationship with her husband 'should be number one.' Yet at Sunnyside, just before she drove Matthew to the airport, Justin told her that he and she "shared something so intimate—a little bit of heaven. You don't know the piece you hold—being so

close to me—and I need that.” She hadn’t shared this with Matthew. She adored the intimacy with Justin, often wanting to say that she had to go be with Matthew, yet she did not, reasoning that being with her husband was important, but being with Justin held cosmic significance.

On the flight to Chicago, Caitlin sat next to Justin and, as she made him a salad, he asked in depth about her past relationships and even her sexual intimacies, saying he had noticed a fear in her. In the Windy City they went to stay with a regular seminar-goer named Paul, who had spent a week lemoning his carpets and walls, scrubbing the bathroom and buying new bed linens. But once stepping across the threshold and into Paul’s entryway, Justin told Caitlin, “My God, I can’t stay here—you and Mark stay here.” So Justin went to the Barclay Hotel, and Caitlin had to tell Paul that his home wasn’t going to work out. After the powerful seminar, in which Dan Levine got confronted as “the kingpin in the line of the Jewish conspiracy,” Caitlin, praying Hail Marys as instructed to do while she cooked, served Justin dinner on his personal dishes brought from Victoria. She had made his bed with his silk sheets and cashmere shawl.

Once she had finished, Justin, in his pajamas and robe, asked softly as he sat cross-legged on his bed, “Come here, just talk to me.” He spoke of how it was important to keep her relationship to Matthew primary.

Suddenly he saw something overpowering. Head in hands, he fell and thrust his body rigidly back half a dozen times, while Caitlin, struck with fear, wondered, ‘Oh Lord, is Matthew evil?’

The strange contortions ceasing, Justin’s “Did you experience what I experienced?”—his voice filled with hope and awe—was followed by a long silence, his head down, until he finally whispered, as if fighting with himself, “No, I can’t

say it. It's too...." He raised his head and, eyes squeezed closed, uttered a painful, "I don't think you can handle it," as he shook his head.

Caitlin didn't ask what he meant.

"Okay, I'll tell you." He bent slowly towards her as he spoke, "I was totally overwhelmed with this feeling...and now I know...that you're the only woman I could love. 'The Devil' played her role perfectly, but you're the only woman I could really love." Then he sat up, closed his eyes, waited and spoke very slowly, "This is tragic: I'm sworn to celibacy and you're married to Matthew." Suddenly childlike, he leaned toward her, eagerly asking, "What'd *you* feel—any reciprocal...."

Caitlin could say only, "No, well, I mean, I really don't have...um...any of those feelings...because I *am* married to Matthew and *am* held in that way...sacramentally."

"Well, what did you feel?" Justin asked a bit more soberly.

"Well," she managed to say through obvious reluctance, "I thought you were seeing that Matthew was evil or something."

Suddenly Justin's mood shifted and with a bizarre hint of playfulness came the question: "Do you think he is?" almost as if he would have been happy if Caitlin were to say 'yes.'

"Well, no...I don't think so," fumbled this devout Catholic newlywed, knowing that around Justin no one still in ignorance could never be sure.

"What are we going to do?" This question Justin posed straightforwardly.

'We?' thought Caitlin; 'I don't want any part of this. I love Matthew!' Yet she was feeling like a schoolgirl whom the captain of the football team had a crush on. She loved it—a massive ego boost—but had never been so uncomfortable.

Sadly, she realized her relationship with Justin could never be the same now.

The former World Teacher deliberated at least an hour, suggesting at one point, “Well, maybe you’ll have to go away,” and then asked about her family and “How far is it to where you live in Nebraska? Could we go there? You and Mark and I could meet your parents.”

Nothing in her life had prepared her for this role. Suddenly Justin was in every way different to her, acting as if she were Eva.

At that moment Mark knocked on the door, Caitlin both relieved and feeling like she and Justin were two kids being caught.

Mark’s face revealed that he felt the room to be strangely charged. After minutes, Justin asked him to leave.

A minute later came another flash and Justin, eyes closed, said in rapturous relief, “It’s okay—it’s all held within the Blessed Virgin, nothing concupiscent. It’s all pure, safe.”

Infinitely relieved, Caitlin gladly returned to Paul’s house. But the next morning she felt pulled to thoughts she had never had before, as if Justin were a sexual reactor blinding in his nuclear power. She who had never been drawn to him, frightened and yet enlivened, cooked and wondered, “Who is Justin Snow—so vast, yet caring especially for *me!*” She served him lunch and let people know when to enter for consultations. He had asked her to change into something that would not at all reveal her legs.

But that night he was saying, again in his pajamas, that consultation times could be moved around—“so that we could have time together.”

Then his face went serious. “Can you handle this? I’m pure and strong, but come here and sit down. Maybe I should

never have said anything. Maybe you should go back to Victoria and you and Matthew should leave....”

Suddenly his forehead furrowed, his green eyes glared as he was pointing sternly at her: “Don’t make this base and concupiscent. Don’t drag it down. That’s not where I am with this. Sleep on it.”

But the next day, as if one moment had nothing to do with its predecessor, Justin was blurting out madly something about ‘the ultimate seduction’—that Caitlin was in collaboration with all the other evil beings. His face in the full grooves of anger, hers having gone white, hands shaking as she sat just two feet from his flailing arms and eyes channeling a horrible sentence. She sat there, absorbing the full throttle of his violence.

He, a wild man mocking her, got up, pushed her out of the chair, picked her up and threw her on his bed: “Isn’t this what you want?” Into her capitulated face he screamed, “Let’s go to bed!” as he feigned loving actions, hand in her hair, then up her full skirt, saying, “I’d fuck you if I thought it would save your soul!”

It went on, his attempt at getting her to confess sexual deviance, which he called her only hope.

Whatever impulse Caitlin felt to run, to call the police—such options could never enter her mind as long as Matthew’s allegiance was still to Justin, who was telling her that her husband and others with whom she had been in relationship were all prey to her sick and perverse seductions. When she flashed on having been sexually molested by two neighborhood boys, Caitlin felt she had been a seductive devil even at age four.

“How did you ever think you could bear a child?” he said, driving this spear home again and again, knowing how much Caitlin wanted to be a mother—“There’s no way God

would ever allow this!” he screamed, then sent her away to say 100 rosaries as penance, a task that would take three days without sleep.

She left, called Paul to bring her things and got a hotel. But, having spent her money and overdrawing her credit cards by buying plane tickets and items for Justin, she had to ask Paul to put the room on his charge card, trying not to cry as she helplessly wrote Paul a check. She found a church, believing all Justin’s accusations had been true.

Justin called her, to ask if she were an evil being—and what she would tell Matthew back in Victoria—then demanded she come to his room, or “I won’t speak to you for ten years.” To Caitlin, it meant only not seeing Matthew for ten years. She went, purposefully wearing jeans and a turtleneck. The whole time in his room, she never looked at him. In fact, she never looked at him again, despite his threats, despite his sudden turns of softness, the harsh questionings going on till 3 AM when, having been unable to speak, she was ordered to leave, the former World Teacher saying that he was certain she was evil, or at least a collaborator.

She prayed the whole next day, sobbing in confession as she said she had seduced her best friend, the priest giving her the penance of receiving communion with thanksgiving for her marriage, which she did, even though she thought herself evil, her marriage over. She didn’t remember getting on a plane or arriving in Victoria. She took a cab to Annapurna, intending to sleep, wait for Matthew and see no one.

But there, her phone rang, Brandon, now Director of Snow Man Press, saying, “Why don’t you come over to Sunnyside. The situation needs clarifying.” She went, as if some force were pulling her, having not even the presence of mind to say, ‘Wait.’ To see Matthew was the only reason she was in Victoria, the only reason she was in her body.

Helene, Brandon, her brother Mark and Justin, who had also returned, awaited her. Caitlin had already decided to say nothing during the hours of questioning, thinking, 'I know my head is already chopped off.'

Having given the 'party line' when Justin had told her to tell her brother what she had done in Chicago, she was leaving Annapurna, carrying out some of her belongings. Mark emerged from his room to intercept her. From her arms he took the painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which had for nine years been hers, her brother assuming that she would have no need for anything religious. A glance at her shattered face sent him crying into his room.

She took a motel room and tried to sleep before she left Victoria. But Matthew had returned, heard the story and had immediately knocked on her door to ask, "Why did you marry me? Does this ring not matter? Maybe this isn't a marriage. But till there's an annulment, you're still my wife and I want to know where you're going." Then he embraced her.

Stunned, Caitlin allowed her arms to reach around his back. Her husband instantly pulled them down, saying, "This is not for you; it's for me, for all the dreams we had, and the joys we would have had, sharing our lives together." He left her weeping on the bed.

Feeling obligated to do what Matthew said, she went to the big meeting that night at Annapurna, though she knew it would be a full-blown witch hunt. So complexly had she been conditioned, so intricately had the silk threads of consent and Justinical insight been woven on the loom of her personality, she said nothing the entire evening. Yet, even so, some part of her knew it was a farce. Back at her motel—hopeless, black, feeling that she was the Devil, she cried and may have slept, questioning why she should go on living. When she woke, she had defecated in her underwear. As if this were the final



symbolic disgrace, with nothing else to lose, she dialed Seattle information, thinking, 'Julian's gone through this.'

Hand trembling on the receiver, she wavered even as she said, "This is Caitlin. What do you do when you think you're the Devil?"

Back from her first visit to the Colorado monastery, still weak, Julian wanted to laugh at the little-girl voice in her friend, wanted to tell her everything she had learned, yet was terrified that Caitlin might dive off some pier and no one would ever know. Instead, Julian managed, "I know exactly how you feel. And I know you don't feel there's any light or hope. But there will be. And maybe you'll realize there's a different possibility, that you aren't evil. You will find this out." On her small couch in her new apartment, Julian invited Caitlin to Seattle, offering her a place to stay.

Noncommittal, Caitlin gave little information, fearing Julian would call the police. The irrational fear that Julian was evil and that to call her had constituted collaboration with evil, had Caitlin not even willing to say Julian's name.

Knowing only that she had to leave Victoria, this experienced nurse had no way of diagnosing the disease she felt she carried except for the description that Justin had pronounced. She returned once again to Annapurna, to her suite, both glad and emptied by Matthew's absence, as she searched the rooms for the small items that still held importance. Unable to retrieve many of her treasures, she found herself searching through the Annapurna dumpster for wedding photos she could not find.

Feeling this to be the final symbol of her life gone rotten, base and worthless, empty-handed and in a daze, she somehow drove to Seattle. She managed to find a cheap hotel, where she collapsed, barely realizing she hadn't eaten for three days.

It wasn't long before she wandered about the grounds of St. James Cathedral and noticed the Chancellery office. "I'd like to find out about annulments," she said weakly, a secretary rising from her desk layered with papers to escort Caitlin upstairs to the office of the head of the Tribunal. Fr. Ansel Norris received her. Caitlin had no idea that, as soon as she had hung up the day before, her mother in Nebraska had received a call from Julian. Julian got Caitlin's phone number, as well as the number of the priest that Matthew or Caitlin would likely contact about annulments. So it was that Julian visited the Tribunal, thereby preparing Fr. Norris for Caitlin's visit.

"Is there any such thing as an evil being?" Caitlin meekly asked the priest.

The Tribunal head, dressed in traditional black, replied, "No, not according to the Church." Then he inquired of this devastated person fidgeting as she sat in his office, "And where is your husband? In Victoria? I'll call him."

"No!" Caitlin blurted, fearing for Matthew's well-being.

The priest, alert to how much Caitlin could and could not receive, found her a convent where she could stay south of the city. There she prayed and read and wept in the retreat chapel, feeling little hope. She never once looked into a mirror. Fr. Norris called every day. Finally she did phone her parents to say that she and Matthew had split, that she was unable to live up to her commitment. Dumbfounded, they retorted that Justin had filled her head with foolishness.

"No, it's not Justin!" their daughter replied in defense. Nor did she stop defending him when Fr. Norris, seeing that Caitlin was feeling better after confession the next day, had offered his first personal remarks, beginning with: "I think Justin is feeding you a lot of bad theology."

Matthew called Caitlin several times, saying, "The litmus test is for you to come back to Victoria and talk to Justin,

“ which led to yet another call in which her husband’s words were fists into her teeth: “I spoke with your parents: Why are you trying to worry them sick, playing on their emotions!”

Among the convent retreatants was a Montana nun who, noticing the woman with uncombed hair was not eating, got Caitlin to break her fast. In the chapel, the nun listened to this pretty woman not yet thirty say, “I broke up with my husband who’s listening to another person tell him things that aren’t true.” Fr. Norris had helped get her this far. But the nun with the weathered face got no farther. She was talking to someone convinced that no one who’d not been confronted could possibly understand.

In the third week of her stay, Caitlin ventured up the road and found the monastery of the Visitation Sisters. A red-haired nun answered the door, led to the chapel this woman who said she was separated from her husband. Three days later, after seeing Caitlin weep in the chapel, Sr. Fiona said almost like a schoolgirl, “I got permission to talk with you.” Telling her whole story, Caitlin listened to the nun say flatly, “That man is playing with your mind,” validating all the secret feelings Caitlin could never before this moment have allowed herself to see. “I thought you were a battered wife,” the nun said, sensing that Caitlin’s face was swollen from psychic attack, and rocked her. “All the Sisters are praying for you daily at Mass and each of our holy offices.”

Fr. Norris, feeling Caitlin should not be left to inactivity, encouraged her to get a job, and so she looked, went on interviews, but knew no one was going to hire someone with ghost-like eyes. She did find an apartment near the Visitation monastery, but moving into a place alone was one of the hardest days of her life. The empty walls threw her back into desolation. Having been trained as a nurse and spending summers in the Dominican Republic to help the poor, Caitlin

did consent to care-take an elderly woman whom Fr. Ansel knew. Each victory brought up the painful defeats of old hurts, yet each defeat seemed mysteriously to draw on its heels an even more surprising vein of assistance. Every day she was in Sr. Fiona's arms.

One early afternoon at her apartment, wishing she could read but knowing her attention span was virtually bird-like, Caitlin put down her book, having seen a familiar face walk across the yard. Leaping off the couch, opening the door, she burst into the arms of her brother David, who had flown from Nebraska. No words were said, only an hour's weeping. She saw her tears had not been calculated, but human and innocent.

"I can feel! I can feel!" she screamed joyfully to David, who had no idea how someone as concerned throughout her life for others could possibly believe herself incapable of feeling. David stayed a week, attending Mass with his sister and the Visitation nuns, and tried to comprehend with an attorney's logic, but finally said, "If I can't make sense of it and you can't make sense of it, maybe it doesn't make sense." With these words, a small, simple light began to flame in the empty room of Caitlin's mind. David encouraged his sister to call Julian. He left glad to know that his sister was no longer suicidal.

Fr. Norris also suggested that Caitlin break her promise, made under duress to her husband, and contact Julian.

Caitlin finally phoned. Except for thinking Julian was perhaps evil, the call went easier than expected, as Julian introduced the possibilities she had come to during her first time at the monastery nestled in the Rockies. After three conversations, Caitlin decided to see Julian in her lakeside apartment.

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Julian's quaint, hot one-bedroom with its petite balcony and French doors—she had always wanted French doors—

became all the more uncomfortable as every imaginable fear flashed through her mind with the buzzer's announcement. Slowly coming to grips with her own doubts about herself, she was far from certainty, and Caitlin's voice over the intercom threw her back onto the pavement of her own fears and hopelessness.

"Yes?" Julian said into the speaker, reminding her of standing at her son's door that first day in Seattle.

"It's me, Caitlin," came the frailest of voices.

The time from Julian pushing the button to hearing footsteps on the blue hall carpet was interminable. In those moments, she remembered meeting with Fr. Norris at the Tribunal the day before Caitlin had inquired about annulment and evil beings—how, after the priest told her he would work with her to free both the Halseys, he had added, "You have been through so much, and you have a choice now: You can be bitter and hard and callous or you can take your sorrow and make a difference in the world. You need to risk again." She wanted to say, "You have no idea!" Having zero notion of how 'to make a difference,' she was now at the next stage of risk, again overriding the phone call that morning from Eva.

"Julian, you've got to consider your soul. It's so very, very, very important—there's nothing else more important than..." Eva's earnest voice with that quaint hint of Canadian accent kept on repeating 'the soul, the soul, the soul.'

"It's over, Eva. It's so over with Justin and The Context."

"You should know, then, that he is readying people to come to where you are and put a stop to all your interference."

With these two voices in her ears, Julian peaked around the doorway into the dim hall. Up the stairs she could hear Caitlin's footsteps. The top of her head was visible. Before the top step, her eyes met Caitlin's. Caitlin walked slowly forward.

As did Julian. Suddenly they were holding hands that could not be kept from embracing.

So happy were both of these spiritually battered women for real human contact—for someone else who could understand what it was to have been psychically brutalized, even pillaged, to have lost friends and a husband, to have no place to turn—that words between them didn't begin until they sat on the white couch in a hope that had been blackened for seemingly an infinity of time. Caitlin apologized for having shunned Julian and the two wept like sisters too overwhelmed to sense the wonderment that filled the small apartment living room. When Julian heard the details, she asked, "Caitlin, do you realize what happened, that you were seduced and then brutally raped? This man we thought was God's spokesman and the divine model of what it is to be fully human is just a sexual and spiritual pervert."

Names began arising for feelings that Caitlin had also had. She realized that she had felt these strange emotions all along, yet had been too trusting, too manipulated, too broken and brainwashed to ever acknowledge. After tea, they went out into the sunlight and wiggled their toes in the park grass, followed by their first walk together on the shore of Lake Washington.

Everything broke open as Julian heard the details that Caitlin had not as yet shared with anyone. In a blind rage about 'that bastard' touching her friend's leg and pulling up her skirt, Julian truly snapped. The tangled web of three years' experience began to take on real hues. Color returned to the inner fabric of her life. As fragile as she knew herself to be, there was no turning back. She called Vicki.

Then came sweaty nights, waking in tears: Caitlin was purifying. She rose one August morn to see herself in the classic situation as victim terrified into believing herself to be

the assailant—someone who after a long time realizes what has been done to her.

She saw herself and broke. She phoned Julian, who had experienced exactly the same thing. Then began a lot of crying.

Julian had her tell her story to Vicki, who was outraged and began to really get clear, which helped Caitlin in return. Soon the three women went to dinner, ate enchiladas on a restaurant patio rich in evening sun, with Mt. Rainier golden to the south. There Julian wept, arm-in-arm with Caitlin, remembering the first visit her betrothed made to Vashon, that night when the shamrocks closed and they had talked until the triune leaves had opened and she had fallen in love.

But, back in their respective apartments, their growing ease and sense of togetherness waned, and the walls closed in. Julian called daily. Dan Levine called every other day from Chicago. But Caitlin also got a call from Eva, in the opposite vein. Still clinging to Justin's having treated her so unjustly merely to get her to fundamentally change:, Eva told her, "You'll be doomed forever if you entertain this notion of Justin being diabolical."

Caitlin called her ally and, over eggplant parmesean and a glass of Chianti, Julian said that she pitied the lovely, wretched woman who still thought Justin was her ticket to salvation. Caitlin nodded in agreement and the two were saying out loud, 'Eva can't hurt us. She's *not* the Devil!'

They looked at each other, daring to smile.

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Mark had noticed the omens.

As Caitlin was taking the place once held by Eva, he and Matthew were serving as Roland once had, and Justin was now telling them, "You are the people I want to hang out with, to finally let my hair down." Mark, exiled for a month two years earlier and again on the ropes of evil the previous summer, was

amazed to find himself in the inner circle of the enigmatic human paradigm of the age.

Yet he was peripherally concerned about his sister. He had seen her cling to her husband before he had left up-island, had felt the charged energy of Justin's room and thought it strange that Justin wanted to travel to Nebraska to meet the O'Doyle family. Mark's ears had really perked when the next day Justin had asked him, "Do you think your sister is strong enough and pure enough to be close to me?" While his mind said that she was not up to this, Mark assumed, because Justin was going to be a priest, that this would be a spiritual closeness, which he would have wished for himself.

The Nebraska trip hadn't happened, but when Mark had flown home to visit his parents, he received there a call from his sister, tearfully admitting that she had seduced Justin and needed money for a hotel room. Now Mark felt the universe shaking. He was torn: It was his sister! Yet very possibly she was an evil being.

He had to be business-like, even though he wanted to say so much. In shock, aware of a great anger at Justin for going too far, Mark intellectually disowned any such emotion, deciding to call Justin to say that his sister had phoned. Justin told him that the rest of the tour had been cancelled, that he was returning to Victoria, a sign Mark took to mean there was no hope. Besides, Justin seemed cold.

At the airport, Mark rubbed his forehead below a receding hairline. Could his body reflect his state of mind, hair would have been coming off in fistfuls. Mark flew to Victoria, fearful, likely the brother of.... He didn't want to think that way. Brandon immediately called to tell him to go to Sunnyside. On the way across town, Mark felt himself going quietly insane. When he saw Caitlin in the consultation room,



he saw no demon, only his sister. Yet she was numb. Justin's brutal accusations were validated in her utter lack of effort.

Matthew returned that night, exhausted, knowing nothing. Mark picked him up at the airport and, while not convinced of his sister's evil seduction, his own life depended on being a good soldier: He had been given a bayonet and asked to stick it into Matthew's heart--'a kind cut,' as Brandon put it.

Arriving at Annapurna, they found an informal dinner going on upstairs, lively voices and forks on china wafting down the staircase. The room fell into dead silence once the two Americans entered. Justin coldly accused them of walking in angry at him, which dovetailed into Mark getting confronted about not 'giving the experience' to his brother-in-law, with implications that he was pulling down "the good but weakened Matthew Halsey." Mark was told to sever himself from all loyalty to Caitlin.

The next night he was forced to confront her directly, an evening that ended in ambiguity, the continuing theme being that Mark was undermining Matthew, which brought confessions from Mark about how he had "cruelly and maliciously" prevented his brother-in-law from having the power to separate himself from Caitlin. Mark didn't care that his confessions were totally false. Paranoid, devastated, desperate to do what he had to do, he vacillated between two utterly unacceptable poles.

Sunnyside, since the Pilgrimage, had been re-named 'St. Francis of Assisi,' and Mark and Matthew, after acting as sponsor for Jonathan Boyce's baptism, were called by the former World Teacher, who wanted to help them through their difficulty. Hoping for relief, soon Mark felt dispossessed: He wasn't in his own country, he was to tell his parents about his sister's evil, and he was to sacrifice her, as the angel had asked

Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, only Mark's hand was not being stayed. Finally, Mark got the courage to say, "I feel I cannot come honestly to grips with Caitlin's being evil unless I hear from higher spiritual authority to set the record straight." Eyebrows rose in those hearing such a veiled rebuttal, but Justin did say that he would write a letter to Padre Gino, which he did, and that he and Caitlin would fly to Rome see the holy priest. The letter was never sent. The trip did not happen.

When Justin flew to give a week-long New York course, there he convinced a bishop to baptize and confirm him into the Church. In his absence, Caitlin left Victoria for Seattle, which still left Mark as the brother of an evil being. He broke down, often. While his weepings were indications of the pure feeling he had been trained to honor, he realized that, if his sister was evil, he should feel nothing.

Justin's return brought more confrontations. He called Mark "an evil being" who was undermining Matthew's strength, and he had Mark confess his 'mortal sin.' Despite knowing that a *mortal* sin had to be done consciously, the newest inner-circle member again did what he had to do: he confessed, wondering if this is how Justin was 'letting his hair down.' A month-long summer course began the next day, and Mark could only imagine his head on the chopping block for the entire month of August. In a sense he sweat blood just to walk in the door each day and upstairs into the theater. Not till the third day did the big confrontation have Mark—while Justin held a crucifix in front of Mark's face until 'the underminer' knelt—choking on his guilt.

Ironically, these were the days when Mark was trying to write his application to an Oregon seminary. When he asked Justin for help, the former World Teacher lashed, "What do you think a seminary is? Sort it out for yourself," as incident that he brought up that night before everyone, thereby humiliating the

would-be-priest. Nothing was private around Justin. The next day, at a picnic at Spectacle Lake, Justin invented a game in which everyone sat in a circle and, when he threw a ball, the receiver had to speak 'in true acoustics.' The third person to catch the ball was Mark, who spoke and was confronted, Justin saying, "I feel you will never be in seminary with me."

Mark thought, 'Yes, and I don't want to!'

Realizing that he couldn't play Justin's games anymore, he returned to his suite in Annapurna, packed and stayed in a motel, admitting that the whole thing was over. He had failed and simply couldn't walk back into that seminar room. His soul finally had screamed for survival.

Then he thought: 'If I leave The Context, my life will be haunted forever.'

Sitting in his car, push-pulled a thousand times, he returned, a move both resigned and courageous. But no one had even missed him. That night, during the prayers being said before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Mark felt real grace enter, such that he knew in his heart that he was a good person. Wanting to live from that place of grace, the next night Mark looked at Justin with the knowledge of his own goodness.

Justin stopped whatever level of Christ Transformation he was giving to Nadine, shouting out, "Mark, what are you doing, as if everything's suddenly healed over?"

A two-hour crucifixion of Mark O'Doyle, the evil being, followed.

"But we must prove it," said Justin. With the gun of damnation aimed at his head, as if someone said, 'Don't think of demons or you're evil.' Mark gained only louder and crueler mockings, until Justin dreamed up the final proof: 'To track the acoustics of innocence versus the acoustics of evil.' He had Mark phone Lydia in Arizona, knowing how Mark was terrified

of the first of the evil beings who had often haunted his dreams. Soon Justin was using everything Mark had told him in private “to humiliate the demonic,” and, after every thread of decency and self-respect had been ripped away, Justin began a rosary to purify the room.

Mark decided to just walk out. No one came after him. In the summer air he felt incredible relief to sense he would not be coming back, would not ever stand at the microphone again. Back in a motel that night, despite prayers and feeling lighter, he wrote his thoughts down for clarity, for he was tortured by failing to find nothing redeeming in himself. In the morning, he found what he had written down to be a total jumble. Feeling no energy, mistrusting every thought, Mark found no right to live. ‘How can I regain Justin’s approval,’ he wondered. Yet the spiritual connection had been severed.

The next day Mark, a great frequenter of bookstores, noticed a poster of a Buddhist Rinpoche, an octogenarian with clear eyes. In those eyes Mark recognize the absence of judgment. At Camosun College, in the same room in which Roland and Dierdra had been sent into the netherworld, Mark felt a blessing in the sage’s presence, a searing compassion in which he felt he had a life and was not evil. This was his first turning point, for from that moment he made up his mind to consult with teachers he could trust.

It had long been Mark’s penchant to be in the company of spiritually developed souls. He decided to fly to Rome to see Padre Gino. First, Mark drove south to Seattle, wondering if he should see his sister. He had her address but could not find the location, driving around for an hour, till he pondered, ‘If she *is* evil, I shouldn’t see her.’ His entire waking experience a war. On the way out of the city and down the coast, he realized that, had he found her apartment, he would have just ended up staring at the door.

In Berkeley, he learned from a former Justinite that the Hindu sage whom Justin had met several months back in New York had called the former World Teacher “a madman who had had an experience that fried his brains, so that now he is evil.” Whirling from that assertion, Mark took the opportunity of visiting a self-realized Los Angeles man who had long been close to Maharishi, and had met Justin three years ago in Iowa City.

For Mark, these insights represented another turning point. Yet, internally, each lift seemed to be followed by a bigger depression.

He didn't see the realized TM man for two days, until the day of a big airliner crash in L.A. that killed 200, an incident that Mark wondered if his being evil had caused.

“Well, how's Justin?” the man, having driven to the motel where Mark was staying, asked. “I got a letter from him, saying he wanted to be a priest. Probably good for him.”

Mark laid out his crisis, his need to know about Caitlin. Was she, was he, evil?

Skeptical, almost showing disbelief, which Mark felt was strange from someone who always took everything in stride, the suited businessman quickly said, “I don't believe that could be a possibility.” Mark offered a prayer: “Almighty Father, will you now reveal the truth about my sister Caitlin and myself to the heart and mind of both of us present.” Instantly, Mark's silence deepened, his screaming fear calmed, and he knew he had his answer. Just then the man said, “You're a good person and your sister is a good person. Her key-note has almost been hit and you should go to her, be with her, love her. She needs your help. I saw a being of light next to you and your aura is blue and gold proofs that you are good and not evil.” Mark sobbed. Relief welled up inside him.

Yet he realized that The Context had not been disproved. With his mind still possessed, deeply conditioned, Mark asked in anguish, “How could Justin have so much knowledge, and write such brilliant books? He’s true, profound and deep, yet he’s done these horribly destructive things?”

At this point the man grew reluctant, saying, “Someone can think they’re cosmic when they’re not. I knew a spiritual teacher, a Rosicrucian, who on his deathbed realized he wasn’t enlightened. He was on the ‘Buddhic plane.’ And that’s where Justin is.”

“What’s the Buddhic plane?” Mark asked.

“The next plane up from ordinary human consciousness—in which the mind can know a vast amount of knowledge...but the ego is still there. It’s ego delusion. Now I’m not making a judgment about Justin. There’s good in him.” Mark understood that these words were not for public pronouncement.

“Well, that doesn’t really explain much. Your Rosicrucian friend didn’t harm people.”

After saying, “You can’t confront evil’ and ‘I don’t want to give you a club,” the man straightened his tie and shared an anecdote of someone around Maharishi who had a horribly evil vibration. Once in the lecture hall, Mark’s friend had mentioned ‘the gentleman possessed by a negative entity’ to Maharishi, who then sat with eyes closed. Within half a minute, the man was writhing on the floor and, when he got up, he was utterly changed and had no idea what had happened. “He was normal,” the storyteller concluded.

“Do you mean that this is what you felt from Justin when you first met him in Iowa City?”

“Yes.”

“Was it more powerful from Justin?”

“Yes, tremendously more powerful.”

“What took place there?”

“When I met Justin four years ago and he tried confrontation, I called on ‘the Power.’ Justin stopped what he was doing and walked away. I saw a spirit leave him.”

“But after that, Justin began asserting that those involved with the TM Movement were demonic and that the TM Movement itself was evil.”

“That’s called projection. He was just externalizing what was inside.”

But Mark, present a year ago at a meeting in Seattle between the two men, asked, “How could you have such a beautiful interaction in Seattle. I was there and it seemed to me like an interchange of real love?”

“Yes,” replied the spiritual teacher, “that was Justin Snow at his spiritual best.”

“But after Iowa City he went on to do all these horrible things...”

The teacher looked off into the distance, saying, “It could be that he was being used”—Mark understood him to mean ‘possessed from time to time’—“but his letters gave me the impression that he’d stopped confrontation and his objectionable practices.”

“What can be done for Justin? Is there anything I or anyone can do?”

“No.” The man rose. “He must see it for himself.”

“Could Padre Gino help him? Perform an exorcism and free him?”

“He could free him, but Justin wouldn’t be free. The spirit holding him could leave, but nothing would prevent it from coming back. Justin has...a hole in his aura, an entry point for evil spirits.” And when Mark wondered if this had been caused by Justin taking LSD intensely for six months back

in the late '60s, the reply came, "Could be, but it's a highly individual thing, depending on a person's sensitivity."

As his guest was clearly moving toward the door, Mark said, "I want to see Justin again, confront him with what he has done."

"That would be to ignore his power. If you try to defeat him, you will only lose."

As the man was clearly in the motion of leaving, Mark tried to express his heartfelt thanks.

"Do you feel the Power in the room? You should see your face," the businessman said with a slight smile and then left.

Mark looked into a mirror. He saw joy there. In a restaurant, the waitresses, whom he had in all the restaurants down the coast thought were repulsed by him, acted kindly and treated him with sincerity. In all of Justin's Levels of Confrontation and Transformations, Mark realized that there had been no true and innocent joy.

The insights from two spiritual authorities he respected added up to clarity for Mark and a firm basis on which to stand. Before leaving Los Angeles, no longer feeling the need to fly to Italy to meet with Padre Gino, Mark called his sister. It was the day after Caitlin had told her story to Vicki.

"Caitlin, I know you're not evil," Mark testified at the outset of a conversation that went on for four hours. "I'm not evil either. And Justin's not enlightened!"

"I know!" she said, "I know, I know! I've been talking to Julian"

After a long silence, they laughed. It had been months since either of them had laughed. And when they hung up, the fog outside her window still stood for Matthew no longer being in her life, but no longer was it a comment on her inner weather. Sunlight was shafting through her.



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When Matthew had arrived back in Victoria after shooting some exquisite footage up-island in Hakai Pass, Mark had met him at the airport and done his duty—to tell his brother-in-law that his wife was evil.

The sandy-haired businessman turned film-maker searched his mind for a space where hope still shown. After living in the middle of the wilderness where the salmon were running, he was exhausted, yet suddenly had to face a new wilderness, far wider and wilder. His life had been led by noble causes, the longing to serve the living God, a passion for integrity. Now he was faced with a wasteland, a poisonous terrain in which all those closest to him, except for Justin, were more than questionable—they were in league with satanic forces. He could not make sense of any of it. Yet he knew that life was deeper than he had or could imagine.

Justin, neutral with Matthew and demanding that he cut off all attachment to the woman he had just three months ago married, played Matthew and Mark back and forth until Matthew just sank into the horror of it all and Mark was being rent apart and in direst straits.

The stakes were beyond height and seriousness. “People have been called evil beings before, but this is the Christ context in which truth is not relative. Before, we would know truth, but it was a functional truth for evolution. Now, this is an absolute truth,” Justin said, slamming his hand down on the dining table in Annapurna, then going on to compare Caitlin to Lydia and Eva.

While his all-clear verdict—“You’re beautiful, Matthew; you’re innocent and have been used,” with Mark in trouble and his wife an evil being, Matthew was not rejoicing, though breath was coming easier. Through his mind ran the list of couples in The Context: Lydia and Jason, Eva and Roland—both

marriages years ago called demonic. And then there was Julian and her fiancé both gone, and Mary and Klaus before them, not to mention Roland axed in part because of his relationship with Madelaine, who was also out. The soon-to-be lone American decided he would just try to survive, whatever he had to say or do.

That night had ended with Anna, Helene and Holly—all three at one time having been called ‘evil’—showing Matthew some warmth, while Justin spoke of the glorious days of World Teacher Seminar and had Brandon bring in four huge albums of photos, the room breaking up in laughter at Justin’s throwing water in Helene’s face, at Nadine contorted in fear, and on and on, all captured in artful photography. There were blank spaces where the pictures of evil beings had been removed.

Yet Matthew’s pain—too great for tears, and his heart so aching that he could not sleep or even lie flat—had him walking through his apartment, picking up each wedding present, feeling the total destruction of his life and future, the sacred commitment demolished. After a muddy walk through the night, tripping on roots, he slumped in tears but no release.

He had to meet with Caitlin, had to see her, had to see what was happening for himself. At her motel, his ‘wife’ told him, “I’m evil and don’t have a human soul.” A week later, he returned, walking in on Caitlin kneeling in a rosary. He suddenly felt physically aroused. He loved this familiar feeling of intimacy, yet simultaneously knew it to be inappropriate. ‘She’s exerting some sort of sexual power,’ he thought, and turned steely. Yet he still had no details from Justin about what happened in Chicago, and certainly wasn’t going to get them from Caitlin.

But all his hope ran out the next evening during the hours of humiliation, ending with Justin’s voice raised to dramatic height, just as Caitlin was at the door of departure:

“Do you see the light coming into this room? She’s creating this demonic brilliance!” Matthew had not seen the light, but everyone else had gasped.

He had asked the poignant question—was she evil from that night in Millstream when energetically they had met—and, just as Justin had said that evil never allows resolution, Matthew merely received Caitlin’s capitulated assent.

Then she was gone.

Five days after Justin had flown to New York, a call came from Fr. Norris in Seattle, saying that Caitlin had turned up in his office to inquire about an annulment, that she was not well, and he wanted to see if Matthew was all right. Thinking the Head of the Tribunal open and non-judgmental, yet deeply concerned Caitlin would blow open the whole situation of The Context and Justin Snow and his desire to be a priest and start a new Order in the Church, Matthew had to get the truth out. For three hours he offered Fr. Norris the whole story—from Justin’s enlightenment to Caitlin’s being evil. The priest drew no conclusions, which Matthew felt to be a positive sign.

Next Matthew called Caitlin’s parents, their worst fears confirmed. Neither their plan to get the couple out of Victoria nor their conclusion that the problem lay with Justin were notions that Matthew could entertain.

Yet, when Caitlin phoned, Matthew, with Justin away and Fr. Norris having given him a very vague but paramount sense of hope, said he would come to Seattle—not to speak of annulment, but of reconciliation. That afternoon, however, talking to Adam in the parking lot of Annapurna, in the fragrance of sunlight, Adam just looked at Matthew and shook his head.

When Justin returned from New York a Catholic, inquiring about the phone call with Caitlin, Matthew tried walking an impossibly fine line between absolute acceptance of

his wife's evil and his hope for change. When Justin asked for Adam's perceptions, Matthew felt his whole world going into blackness. Fired by his having convinced a New York bishop that, being an extraordinary man who therefore need not go through confirmation classes, Justin was all the more powerful in laying out the absoluteness of the Christ context, with Matthew, doing what he must to survive, saying to himself, 'This isn't reality, but I have to be this way.'

"Okay, my wife is evil," he said.

After that, his voice was steel the next time Caitlin called. During the Summer Course, Matthew could do nothing to assuage the sacrifice of Mark O'Doyle. But watching his brother-in-law be thrown to the lions was Matthew's first snapping, though the break occurred well below his conscious mind. Somehow, he, 'the weak guy,' came through and, hiding behind a video camera, endured the course.

A letter from Fr. Norris wisely ducked Matthew's question and Matthew showed it to Justin, as the priest had expected would happen. Justin praised the letter, and did hand openings: 'Is Mark a human being?' (Yes, barely); 'Is Fr Norris a man of integrity?' (Yes); 'Are Caitlin's parents evil?' (No); 'Are her parents influenced by her?' (No, they're fine); 'Am I evil?' (No); 'Is my wife evil?' (Yes!) As a parting gesture, Justin—having told Matthew, "You've come a long way with this and it has deepened your soul"—gave him his raincoat, the one Matthew in Medjugorje had offered to wear so any assailants, be they believers or Communists, would take him to be the World Teacher, thereby sparing Justin any violence.

With Justin off to take silence at Piers Island, Matthew raced home, packed and got a ride to the ferry. He felt intoxicated and excited for some reason about what would happen, yet without explanation as to how good he felt. The boat ride was gorgeous.

Jonathan and Lilly Boyce, having moved back to Seattle, picked him up at the airport and he stayed the night in their apartment. It was Matthew's birthday. Caitlin called and was told that Matthew didn't want to see her.

The next morning early, he went to Fr. Norris's office, where the priest told him that the Church, since the Resurrection of Christ, did not hold that there could be an incarnation of evil and, regarding the 'revelation of Justin Snow,' nothing new could be revealed, since Christ had revealed everything. Faced with a choice between what Justin had said and what the Church held, in characteristic adherence to principle, Matthew chose to honor his faith, a decision which engendered a second 'snapping experience.' Fr. Norris had him read the entire Gospel of John in preparation for their next meeting.

Back in Fr. Norris's office the next day, he encountered his brother-in-law.

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The call had gone out. Fr. Norris had phoned Caitlin, who immediately dialed Julian, who drove right over. Together they would wait, in case Matthew would want to see his wife. Caitlin called the Visitation Sisters, who started their engines of prayer, as Julian advised Caitlin what to wear—something white with a little lace.

Mark had knocked on his sister's apartment door several days before and had felt his prayers answered in their joyful embrace that communicated what words could not. Yet he had been painfully aware that Caitlin was an emotional skeleton hanging on the thread of hope, like a woman sexually abused. As they talked, he felt her fear begin to slip away, yet was shocked to sense how much healing would be required. "We're both 'the walking wounded,' she observed, and she asked if he would stay with her, as being alone was still not without its burdens. They had driven into the city the next day so that her

brother could meet Fr. Norris, and in the offices of the Tribunal the three of them planned how to get Matthew to together with his bride.

Now, as Mark drove again to Fr. Norris' office, on a divine mission to win the soul of Matthew Halsey. Yet he wasn't kidding himself that his own soul was scrubbed clean from the infection that he had inhaled a thousand thousand times in Victoria. Despite his revealing days in Los Angeles, Mark had soon been overwhelmed with wonderments about Justin and Padre Gino, remembering how the holy priest had spoken his entire homily radiantly to this infinitely mysterious enlightened egomaniac. What if he traveled to Fr. Gino only to find Justin confirmed as a true man of God? He even entertained going back to Victoria as a proof of his having overcome The Context.

Recognizing how schizophrenic his experience was, this man who had for years pursue authentic spiritual teachers decided to return to the coastal mountains of California at a place he had visited a year back during his first exile from Victoria, a place where an Indian sage lived. This saint, having been in silence for thirty years, wrote only on a hand-held chalkboard to communicate. Mark felt in the presence of peace. The sage recognized Mark, who felt to simply outline his situation and show a photo of Justin Snow. The written reply was to question why Mark still carried this picture and then scribed the cryptic comment: 'You give him power by thinking of him—If you do not stop thinking about this, you will lose the ability to think.' Stunned, Mark felt he had let go of a hot poker. Still he had asked about confrontations that were very powerful and could be shattering and violent, to which the sage wrote, "A follower of mine had been caught in a cult and I am aware of how distorted and violent this could be. I feel that this is what you are presenting here and the equivalent of Jim Jones."

As he entered the city, Mark was thinking about having just seen Julian for the first time since she had been cast out of his life two months before. Having gotten clear that neither his sister nor he was 'evil,' it was amazing for Mark to see Julian and feel that, while he knew she also was not evil, yet with her there was, along with the joy of seeing her, a shadow of unease,. However, in recognizing that doubt and knowing its origin to lie not with Eva or Lydia or any of the others whom Justin had cast into Hell, but with Justin Snow himself, Mark's heart was fired all the more, like a sword being readied for battle.

As soon as Mark glimpsed his brother-in-law wearing Justin's raincoat, the whole picture unfolded: Matthew was a warrior and would mine even the slightest crack if Mark were the least bit unsure of himself. But the reverse happened: Mark was struck with horror to see for the first time what The Context really was: inhuman intelligence scrutinizing another human being, a laser devoid of feeling, Matthew sitting in Context power, his face cold, chiseled stone.

Fr. Norris had been with Matthew nearly an hour. Having nervously issued Mark in and then hovering around like a mother hen, saying, "Well now, here's Mark. Well now, Mark, we've been talking, and it seems that..."

Seeing this as mere prattle and that the core of the situation was a showdown between himself and his brother-in-law, Mark asked the priest to excuse them and then, after polite words and some wringing of his hands, Fr. Norris had eased himself out of the charged room.

Mark began speaking, allowing his confidence to build as he used very precise words to tell Matthew what he had learned—that Justin was open to evil forces and was not enlightened, and that he and his sister were good human beings. He had never spoken so directly, simply and powerfully.

Impressed with the directness of Mark's assertions and the sources behind such surety, still irrationally hooked into countless looks and messages, manifestations and hand openings, books and confrontations, as well as personal revelations, Matthew could take only a cold and protective stance. Yet, even before Mark finished, Matthew knew he had to see Caitlin, and Mark could see that certain of his assertions had sliced right through Matthew's hard countenance. At times he had almost closed his eyes.

Matthew took off Justin's raincoat and let it fall behind the sofa so Caitlin wouldn't see it. His face still immovable, he said, "I'll know the truth if I see Caitlin and talk to her. Call Caitlin."

This being exactly what he had hoped for, Mark made the call, his heart adrenalized at the same time his mind recognized that, if this meeting backfired, his sister could likely die. Yet he realized it to be the only option. "Hi, Caitlin. You can come over."

"What's happened?" She was desperate for a clue.

"Just come," Mark said without inflection.

Fr. Norris told jokes while the three of them waited.

Matthew was flooded with unbidden memories: his first sight of Caitlin back at Monterrey House, their wedding, being attracted to her in the motel as she prayed her rosary, Mark's dilemma of loving his sister and confessing to her evil nature, Justin driving his energy into Matthew as he handed him his raincoat, Julian obliterated by her son that night she was confronted at Sunnyside, and the note he had received from her:

*I know something in Victoria is very wrong. Your wife is not evil. She's suffering and she's innocent and she really needs you. I ask you to muster all the integrity,*



*which you are known for, and look independently at what is going on. I love you.*

*Your friend, Julian*

*PS. Being out all day, I'm thirsty and remember how we shared Cokes. I wish I was sharing this one with you.*

Along with these words flashed Justin's words, 'Only someone evil could write something so perfect.' Matthew stayed put, saying nothing to Mark or Fr. Norris, just looked out the office window as he waited, giving nothing away.

Fr. Norris jumped noticeably when his secretary called to announce Caitlin's arrival. He and Mark, both in great tension, each took an arm and walked her through the thin stairway to the office door. There her brother let go of her right hand and watched their backs, Caitlin in white cotton and priest in black, recede into the room. He followed to glimpse something pass momentarily between Matthew and Caitlin. Her eyes went down, until she looked around to find Matthew again staring out the window at the far end of the room.

Mark watched his sister seat herself in one of the four chairs forming a tight square. In her face he saw hope and beaming faith, yet realized she was a flower in front of an acetylene torch. Fr. Norris, also aware that he had brought the lamb to slaughter, did not want to leave the room.

Matthew's eyes met Caitlin's for just a second. Yet in that fleeting span—in which he had at one point during the confrontations of the week before seen large parts of his life appear and pass by—he felt another far subtler and more expansive 'snapping.' What had been submerged in his consciousness now instantly flooded him with feeling, with joy and love. Within five seconds of the sight of his bride, Matthew knew.

Yet, so powerful were all the root hairs of The Context, its finer levels still binding his ability to think and speak and

move the muscles in his face, that he wondered, ‘What was that?’ Old flickers edged his eyes into a protective, scrutinizing stare. Scrutiny turned to incision, incision to daggers.

Caitlin had also felt an overflow of love. But when her husband’s gaze turned sharp, she felt herself pushed to a cliff edge. ‘No, don’t fall in there!’ she shouted to herself inwardly, steadying her hands on the chair where she sat with a gentle smile, a vulnerability which short-circuited Matthew’s practiced stance.

Sparks were radiating everywhere, as the progressive feeling in Matthew of getting free waffled in a thousand back-and-forth realities, each denying the others less and less as years of minute conditionings were being undone.

Matthew made the slightest motion to Mark for privacy.

Caitlin—crying, shaking in fear, seeing Matthew in and out of his humanity, felt, ‘He’s playing with me, mocking me!’

Soon the priest, answering Mark’s suggestion that the couple be left alone, said, “Well now, it’s up to Caitlin.” She stood. Fr. Norris took her in his protective arms to transfer energy into her frail body and said, “Well now, you don’t have to do this,” at which point Matthew felt like a tree being axed to realize that the priest had the right to protect her from her own husband. Then the two men reluctantly left.

Matthew and Caitlin sat seven feet apart. They looked at each other. He got up. He walked around the room, not knowing what to say. He went to the window, gazed at the gray day hovering over low buildings, and asked finally, “Well, what would your idea be of our future if we did get back together?” He asked like a lawyer in cross-examination.

Caitlin understood this to be a test, that there was no way except to answer, ‘I want for us to be together and get as far away from Justin as we can and just raise a good Catholic family—together.’

Matthew sat. He saw her and her words coincide in a simple sweetness. He knew he could reach out to her. Yet he was tempted to one more Justinesque remark: "And what will you do if I don't?"

"I don't know," his wife said in such a desolate way, her hand that had been near her throat suddenly falling on to the chair and the other to her lap, that Matthew suddenly blurted out, "My God, I have been weak! I have been used, have hurt you immeasurably!"

He had suddenly seen the whole Justinian trap dissolve! Yet he could not look at her. Walking to the window, he thought, 'This entire thing has been a lie,' for he felt that there was no guile in his wife: 'It's just simple.' Still looking out at the fall trees hanging onto summer, he thought he would ask her forgiveness, yet was afraid she would say that the relationship had been blown apart and there was nothing to put back together. He did not know how to tell her he thought she was not an evil being, without making her think he was laying a trap. Wondering if his words would ever be unlaced with judgment, computation and power, he had no idea what to do.

Without thinking, he stepped to her chair, knelt, took her hands. Her husband looked into her eyes and asked, "Where would you want to live?"

Wondering through tears, 'Me? Us?' she asked softly, "So you don't believe I'm an evil being?"

"No," came Matthew's words, "I know you're not."

More opening in her face revealed her to be unbelievably frightened, not fully believing him, so Matthew looked into her brown eyes and, seeing that no words could possibly touch her devastation, whispered, "Can you ever forgive me?" before bowing his head to her lap, ready for her just refusal.

She stroked his fine blond hair. “Yes. But there’s nothing to forgive,” she said. “It wasn’t you, Matthew.”

Hearing her speak his name, in this compassion, he felt a thousand permissions which let him cry and hold her. For a long time he held onto the waist of her white dress, not wanting to let go or to raise his head and face such fragility and purity.

Outside the two men had been pacing the block for forty minutes, with Mark saying, “Father, let’s go back: something very good has happened or something very horrible.”

A minute later, taking the stairs two at a time, Fr. Norris was, as coolly as he could, sticking his round face through the door. It took him ten seconds to comprehend and to pull his companion by the sleeve into the room, whispering only to Mark, “I feel like I’m standing before *The Pieta* in St. Peters.” Then, before returning to his small office downstairs, he added, patting his stomach, “Well now, I guess you’ve got things fairly straightened out, Lord”

It was September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1:25 PM, exactly one decade after Justin Snow had become cosmic, a fact that had Mark laughing as he drove away from the Diocese offices, trying to figure out what in heaven’s name had happened. The Halseys were in the back seat, like newlyweds.

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The contrite man and his shaken wife took a hotel room downtown, Caitlin afraid Matthew would not stay with her, and afraid he would.

Matthew, not wanting to push her, nevertheless had to talk to someone who had been in The Context. While holding the hand of the woman who had forgiven him yet was still terrified, and feeling it passing strange that the woman who thought she was evil was now fondling her wedding ring, he called the Boyces. They weren’t home, and Caitlin thought,

‘Thank God.’ Matthew drove to their apartment, collected his things and left a note for the Boyces

He and his wife decided to drive to join the evening office with the Sisters of Visitation. The Sisters had prepared signals—if it was Mark and Caitlin, if it was Mark and Matthew, or if it was Caitlin and Matthew. When the couple entered, Sr. Fiona mouthed from the organ bench, “Is this Matthew?”

Caitlin nodded her head *yes* many times. And after the office was sung, the Sisters surrounded them in an avalanche of love, the Halseys feeling like they were the couple who got to board the Ark, having just been saved from the great flood. In this dearness, Matthew in clear recognition told his wife, “There was no real wholesomeness in Victoria.”

With the pillars of The Context knocked out—Justin’s enlightenment demolished by the fruits of Mark’s investigative adventures; Caitlin’s and Eva’s and Lydia’s and Roland’s and Terrence’s and Celeste’s and Dierdra’s and Julian’s ‘evil’ eradicated by Fr. Norris’s clear presentation of the Church’s solid viewpoint on evil; and the forgiveness of Caitlin returning compassion and love in the face of cruelty and judgment—Matthew took his bride to a Chinese restaurant and had a great evening over sushi, their first shared happiness, which was gem-like and blessedly in counterpoint to the spiritual lust and power that they had mistaken for happiness in Victoria. Matthew’s fortune cookie read, ‘Noble behavior will win you friends;’ while Caitlin pulled out, ‘Be yourself and love will come quickly.’

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The Boyces called Justin about Matthew’s note, the newly blessed Catholic instructing them and all those near him in Victoria to offer rosaries till dawn, for “Evil is on the loose tonight.”

When Matthew and Caitlin returned to their hotel around midnight, the night clerk beckoned, asking, “Did a Mr. Boyce find you? He came twice, saying it was very important. I got the impression he thinks you’re in some kind of danger. He wants you to call.”

In the elevator, the laughter in Matthew was itself a device of freedom, and when they entered the room, glad to be with her again, he pulled his wife onto the king-size bed.

Caitlin, to her husband’s surprise, cried, still fearing her seductiveness: “Do you really want to kiss me, or am I merely seducing you?”

Seeing the reality of her question, he knew he must be pushing too much. He allowed himself to feel how delicate his wife must be, having been raped by her spiritual lover. Matthew suddenly realized that their physical closeness could take months and, indeed, may possibly never be the same. He held her, saying, “It’s okay, it’s fine, we’ll just go real slow,” knowing that all he could do was trust that their marriage had been sacramentalized, which to them meant that Christ, ‘the holy third’ of their union, would bring their vows to completion. They slept.

Matthew made confession with Fr. Norris, then went to noon Mass at St. James, knowing the Boyces would be there. Seeing them exit the cathedral, coming out into the sunlight on the spreading steps, he watched Jonathan take aim with, “Oh, hi, Matthew, how’re you doing today?”

Matthew had told Caitlin, who couldn’t be seen at Mass, his intention and hope ‘to free the Boyces,’ to which she had said, “It’s dangerous.” But he had to do it, and now he sensed what he was up against. “Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves,’ he figured.

“Where were you last night?”

“Hello, Jonathan. Last night? In my hotel room.”

“I went looking for you, I was so worried,”

“Oh,” Matthew said in a neutral voice, “Sorry you were so concerned. I needed time alone without any...undue influence...from anyone. I’ve been talking to Fr. Norris, who is giving me certain Gospels to read, and I saw him again today.”

“Would you like to call Justin?” Jonathan asked. “We can call him right now.”

“No,” offered Matthew casually, yawning and stretching: “I don’t want to talk to him. What happens when I die? Justin won’t be there. I’ve got to see this through on my own,” a comment that made Jonathan obviously uneasy as he and Lilly retreated down the tree-lined street.

The carpenter finally stopped, turned and said, “What right do you have to interfere with what Justin is trying to bring to the world?”

Then Matthew knew. What it was he could not articulate, so big was that moment. But he saw clearly the greatness of the ruse of the enlightened man who had hung onto his ego. Matthew said merely, “I’m not trying to do anything...except be true to myself. I will stay and pray and discern.”

“Matthew, we can’t feel you,” Jonathan pleaded, Lilly adding sincerely and with characteristic sweetness, “Don’t turn your back on us who love you.”

Matthew said goodbye, knowing they knew he was no longer with them. Full of compassion, yet sickened, he could only look at himself and say out loud, “My God, was I like this?”

In the meantime, Caitlin had phoned Julian, who impatiently asked why it had taken so long for her to call.

“He’s here and he’s *out!* He’s here and he’s *out!*” was all that Caitlin could say.

Matthew, Caitlin and Mark saw Julian the next day. For Matthew, this was another step. Thoughts about her being evil popped into his mind every several seconds, it seemed. They all ate dinner in a West Seattle seafood place overlooking Puget Sound. In a back booth of the otherwise empty restaurant, when Julian sat next to Matthew and they looked at each other, they both wept. He held Julian a long time.

Soon Vanya Woelfe, electrified to hear of Matthew's clarity and freedom, was driving down to Seattle. Her sister had recently died, drowned in a car accident, and, having called Justin and received only cold accusation in the face of her devastation, the horsewoman was moved to finally meet with Caitlin and Julian, which before had represented too great a risk. She stayed with Vicki and it took only a day for the irrepressible Vanya to get clear about falsity of The Context and the negativity of her former general.

Soon Matthew said he had to return to Victoria for his belongings, to which Caitlin said, "I won't let you go alone," and Mark said, "I'll go with him," and Vanya said, "I'll go!" and Julian said, "Let's all go!"

But before they headed north for the border and a last ferry ride, Matthew spent nearly \$1000 in three days of phone calls around the country, trying to free his friends from The Context.

The first person he called was me.

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Julian had written me a second time, a letter much of me did not want to read but which I read anyway. She had sent me her prayers. I deposited her letter in the kitchen trash. But I could not resist the companionship it represented and rescued her pink stationery. It was sweet in its own way. But evil, I was certain, lay behind those sweepings of her purple pen.



Julian's birthday was approaching and I feared her relationship with me would be overpowering in its force on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Going to bed that evil night, I clutched my rosary, said my St. Brigid prayers and half-way through, as usual, fell heavily drowsed as if sleep was unhardened concrete masking my face. I awoke an hour later. Despite my having surrounded my bed, now on the pull-out in the windowed study with its ample windows, I sensed a presence darken my being from the foot of my bed. I lay praying, trying to face this gaseous power, not wanting to tense up. Yet I felt my chest go hard. I suddenly feared I was literally heartless.

The next day was agony beyond scope, to know that I would not feel again. I had already lost thirty of my 135 pounds. I walked and spoke as others did, but without the vitality that others had. A child I would pass on the sidewalk had more power in his or her little finger than I had in my entire body. Julian had struck!

I told Mother the following day and she said, "Bill, you feel too much," a comment I wrote off. The doorman post had proved too confining and I had a new job: I was a tour guide for St. Louis, driving a canopied train of several cars through downtown traffic, giving an hour-long commentary I was surprised I could learn, plus adding insights that forced me to be personal. Yet some days I thought would never end. The cavalcade of facts stored in my brain proved anew that I was damned: I couldn't feel, meaning I would never love, meaning eternal sorrow, which would never let me rest, meaning no reality, meaning openness to the demonic, meaning.... Every day in a unique way these dominoes stacked inside would be jarred and tilt and start their line dance downward to the dungeon in which all light had been sucked out.

I had 'good' days, by comparison. But never could I put two 'good' days together. There were even reversals, two or

three, which cleared my head and made my life possible once more. But in five minutes later I was sinking again. And to sink after rising always meant a worse state than before.

One night in September—I was sleeping three or four hours by then—the phone rang. Afraid it might be Julian, I was surprised to hear another voice: Matthew Halsey.

Glad to hear from him, I couldn't believe what he began telling me: "I wanted you to know that Caitlin's been found to be almost as evil as 'the Devil' and I thought that you might be of help since you have gone through the experience of being in love with an evil being."

Silent, nearly in tears to hear about Caitlin, I nevertheless thought, 'I can help, can be valuable again...to Matthew, at least. But what could I do?' I was about to ask this question when another voice came on the phone. It took me a moment to realize that Matthew had handed the phone to Justin.

"Hello, William Howell. Shamatzihai! How be thee?"

"Oh, hi, Justin. Well...I...don't know. I feel that I've done myself such great harm that it's...irreparable."

"That's honest enough. Can't you give *me* anything? You used to be such a great giver," to which I said I was happy he called.

He asked why and I said, "It's just good to hear your voice—gives me hope."

"Tell me, out of a hundred, how do you rate yourself in commitment to God?"

After thinking 'zero,' I guessed, "Maybe a fifty."

"Do you want to be a hundred percent?"

"Yes," I whispered, hoping for the inconceivable.

"Are you *going* to be a hundred percent?"

Finally I spoke the words, "I don't know."

"Well, may Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, bless you."

“Thank you, Justin. I feel hap...very happy to have spoken with you.” And then I heard the click. But I hadn’t died when he spoke to me, and he hadn’t confronted me. Maybe there was hope. Yes, that was good enough. Happiness-wise, it would do for now.

Not an hour later, the phone rang again: Sondra! It was wonderful to hear the voice of a friend. Saying she had been thinking of me and heard I was in St. Louis, she sounded good, and we talked a long time. I listened to her explain how she had become a Fundamentalist living in a Philadelphia community of some 500 Jews turned Christian. To hear her speak, it seemed as if God spoke to her and walked by her side. She talked on and, in the final round of goodbyes, she asked what was wrong. I wept. This brought her shouts: “You are not evil! Out, demon! I command you in the name of Jesus to be gone!” She said she had been given such a grace to command spirits, and that I must know quite a bit and be quite a threat to ‘Old Satan’ for him to have ridden me so far down. I must have cried deeply for fifteen minutes, my wails bringing my mother to the study, crying, “Bill, Bill, what’s the matter?”

I tried to convey that the tears were profound, but she kept carrying on, “How can one person contain such grief?” Yet I hadn’t felt so myself in weeks. Even the next day, after little sleep, was a fairly good one.

That evening the phone rang again. “Hello, Bill, this is Matthew. How are you doing?” To which I replied that I was doing much better.

“You are?” he asked, surprised, and I told him that I had spoken with Justin and then that Sondra had called, and that I felt I was back on the path toward someday re-entering The Context.

“Oh,” he said, “Well, here’s somebody who would like to talk to you.” Expecting Justin, I was suddenly listening to

Mark O'Doyle speaking powerfully and clearly about the luminaries who had weighed in on Justin's state and character. He ended, "And I will never, *never*, ever again allow *anyone* to stand in judgment of my soul!" Then I heard Matthew's voice affirming his agreement, that Justin was wrong and, if I were willing, that he and Mark would like to fly to St. Louis to talk with me.

I was unable to reply. It was as if someone had told me that to be human was fire and now I heard that I should be ice. Ripped in two, wondering if Mark's anger could be pure, yet trusting Matthew, I agreed to the visit. Then Matthew called again the next night to say how it would save him \$1000 if I came to Seattle. "We can talk or say nothing, as you wish. This could be the hardest thing you've ever done, and yet the most important and rewarding." After an hour, I consented, yet stipulated that I didn't want to see Julian or Caitlin, and that I would decide about Mark. I had no idea that on Matthew's end Julian was right by the phone. Weeks before Matthew had come to Seattle, she had known that Matthew's freedom held the key to my own.

Unable to take off from my new job, I had only thirty hours that coincided with Matthew's schedule. To Mother's, "Haven't you had enough to do with Justin? This will only draw you back in!" I told her merely, "Mom, I have to go."

The night before my departure, the Boyces called, very sweet, saying they had heard I was coming to Seattle and that "the greatest evil ever to be let loose in creation is trying to draw you in. The entire planet is being polarized into those on the side of Good and those on the side of the Devil. You can stay at our apartment. We just wanted you to know that you can call us if you want some safety and that we'll pick you up." I managed to both thank them for this alert and to decline their offer, but that I would call if I felt I needed to.

As usual, sleeping but two hours and wavering then at the airport, able to neither board the plane nor return home, I prayed to know the truth about Justin and found myself irrationally moving to the gate. My mind was tasteless pudding, my body like a storm front. I spent most of the flight in the bathroom with diarrhea.

Matthew met me. I had no bags and told him I couldn't spend the night. He drove us to a restaurant of his choice, same one where he, Caitlin and Mark had met Julian to plan my escape. I could eat nothing, so we walked on the beach. I told Matthew my fears about myself. He asked if I thought Julian and I could ever get back together. I said I didn't think I could ever love a woman again, that my destiny was the priesthood—all this said while feeling bound for Hell, yet somehow talking, working a job and appearing like other people.

We went to the offices at the Sisters of Visitation, where I met radiant women whose love was undeniable. "We've been waiting a long time to meet you," said Sr. Fiona. "The whole monastery is praying for you." What most amazed me was that one of the new Sisters had taken her vows the week before and, when the shroud had been placed over her, symbolic of her death, she had uttered three prayers silently before the altar and that one had been for Matthew and Caitlin to be re-united in their marriage. "Such prayers are never refused," confided Sr. Fiona, beaming at Matthew.

We drove to Matthew's apartment. Leery of seeing Caitlin, I learned she was staying with her brother, knowing I didn't want to see her. There only an hour, I listened as three people on the fringes of The Context phoned and Matthew told them about the falseness of Justin Snow. I picked up a book on cults on the coffee table, but couldn't open it, glad to hear Matthew say, "We'd better get you to the airport."

I hadn't known that Julian and Mark and Caitlin had visited a woman named Shirley, an attractive woman in her early fifties, in eastern Washington. Her son had been in a cult, and after that she had devoted her life to helping those in similar situations. Paid nothing, she often accepted collect phone calls and talked through the night. 'The Three Musketeers' had made many calls all over the country to find that an expert in cults lived fairly close. While the women talked together over tea, Mark was drawn to the publications in Shirley's office, paged through her numerous books on cults, disturbed that some included the TM Movement on their lists. He thought it unfair to group TM—and even Justin Snow's Context—in with Jim Jones, David Koresh's Waco Branch Davidians, the Moonies and other known cults. But Lifton's book on brainwashing spoke to Mark's experience, and even that he put down as in the kitchen he heard Shirley tell Caitlin, "Don't get your hopes up about freeing Matthew: It's virtually impossible for someone to get out of a cult in one meeting," and then Julian: "And difficult though it is, it'll be far healthier and wiser for you not to stake your future on your love for William. You both need to look honestly at the possibility that there might be a character flaw in the men you love."

Mark broke in to say, "Shirley, these are clear words, but I don't feel like some ex-cultie. The Context is not a cult. There's got to be another word for it, though I fully acknowledge how destructive my Victoria experience was."

But Julian and Caitlin had seen right away that they had been in a cult, a diabolical cult precisely because it was so close to the truth.

"And once we said out loud, 'I have been in a cult,' it was amazing how humiliating and how necessary these words were to say—and how freeing! The truth *will* set you free, Mark," Julian told him.

It was another snapping experience for him, but it was a week before Mark could say those words himself. Julian told him, “Just say it out loud, Mark. You won’t be really out until you do. Just say, ‘I was in a cult. I was in a fucking cult!’ It’ll be so freeing.” When Mark verbalized that fact and let the meaning into him, he did step consciously into his next level of liberty. Shirley’s years of experience were exhibited in both Mark and me—that getting free from a cult was harder for those who tend to process information intellectually. But the meeting had been a gift, for afterwards all energies went to getting Matthew out.

The day was overcast as we got into Matthew’s car. Yet I suddenly feared that Julian might come running up. Glad to have escaped her, yet wondering if she might be at the airport, I told Matthew again that I did not want to see her. And so we were soon checking in, waiting for the shuttle tram to speed us to our gate. The doors opened and we got in. Peripherally, I saw three people running to hop on just before the doors closed.

Suddenly beside me stood Mark and Caitlin—and Julian. I felt betrayed, exhilarated, stunned, and crushed to see Julian’s once-lovely face so puffy and beaten. She said nothing, looking up at me, then down. Mark said hello. Exiting the tram and escalating up some stairs, Caitlin turned to say almost manically how happy she was to see me. I beheld in her face a thousand forces colliding and knew I cared but couldn’t trust her. In the twenty minutes I had before boarding, we all sat on couches, Julian rubbing my neck, while Caitlin begged me to feel “how glorious life in the real world is. We’re just people. There is forgiveness, Bill. And happiness. Real happiness!”

“Yep,” Matthew grinned, “I’ve turned back into a pumpkin.”

Julian's attention was all on me. "I'll fly to St. Louis and spend a week—we can be together," she said, rubbing my tight head, then moved to sit on my lap.

This prospect was too overwhelming. I exulted to be wanted, yet was screaming inside. 'Too much, too fast,' the words came out; "I'm just not ready for this; you have to give me space." She moved away. Caitlin smiled meekly, as if she, despite her hopes, understood. Soon the plane arrived. I waited till the last possible moment to board, saying goodbye to each of them, then down the ramp turned back to tell Caitlin, the only one within earshot, "And tell Julian a special goodbye." But I didn't know if I was heard. Confused, happy, praying to be given an answer about the truth of Justin Snow, I flew away, soon back in a white plastic bathroom at thirty thousand feet.

Landing in St. Louis, I was a divided highway, my intention in the north-bound lanes, then finding my thoughts involuntarily traveling south fast. While Mark hadn't told me the silent sage's chalked message, it was happening: I felt like I was losing my ability to think, which constituted a new terror, wondering if my mind would ever be straight again. 'This is madness,' I realized, 'to want something so much and not get it.' Madness suddenly became my new bastion of fear.

Matthew called the night of my return, to check on me. I told him how inappropriate Julian had been and that I didn't want to see her again. I had no understanding how rejected she felt—or that, after I hung up and Matthew passed her the message, she would soon have a nervous breakdown, running through the Halsey's apartment, raging at me, raging against Justin, so incensed as to run out into the night, throw herself into shrubs and then onto the parking lot concrete, feeling herself drift miles away, the voices of her friends barely audible. Only Vicki's slaps had brought her back, and she would have gone into a hospital had not her long-time friend realized that



there she would be drugged and get worse. As a result, Mark moved in with Julian, rocked her when he felt she was on the brink of disaster or tell her it was time for her hot bath. Her daughter called almost daily, “Mom, ya gotta have a reason for getting up!” and sent flowers. An old boyfriend, a doctor, called and invited Julian to Lake Tahoe. She went, telling him there about her love for me, how there could never be anyone else in her life, and this gentle physician understood and nurtured her. But she would break down almost daily.

Amid the experiences that lifted me up and those that ever-freshly reiterated that I was a non-human being, I began visiting the Visitation Sisters of St. Louis, having so appreciated their community. I did not know that Sr. Fiona had called them and that the whole monastery was praying for me. I met with a Sr. Mary Anna, and through her I met many of the other sisters. We talked, we prayed, and when I would weep hopelessly she, stunned by such a case, stroked my bent head and told me I had far more faith than I thought. I loved the chrism oil, the same with which the bishop in Victoria had confirmed me into the Church. Yet, the good Sister must have gone to bed thinking she had done me not one ounce of good. Yet every night, two or three times a week, I left the monastery, stretched my arms to the stars, and said something like, “I don’t know why You’re giving me this grace, but please just let me be of service to You.” Gradually, slowly, in the twenty minutes it took me to drive home, my mind began not to twist into such convoluted shapes of hopelessness.

Yet every day I felt assailed by unnamable darkness. When Matthew called to check on my spirits, I appreciated his efforts and faked mediocrity. Yet each call brought new information of those who through his calls were now free. I couldn’t believe Matthew to be the Devil’s instrument, yet

neither could I erase my mental image of a league of demons trying to destroy Justin's ten years of selfless giving.

When Julian phoned again, I didn't want to hurt her, but neither could I be too favorable toward her. When she told me about the breakdown, I sensed she could not be evil. She was calling to tell me about her happy little apartment, that this was the first time she had lived alone, about Mark's help—which I praised, realizing I had never seen such stalwart friendship in The Context—and about her prayers for me. She mentioned her weekend in Lake Tahoe. I could hardly believe the instant wave of jealousy I felt. She told me that she was going to a ten-day intensive retreat at a monastery in Colorado.

When she returned, she phoned again. I could hardly imagine that she had had a breakdown the day she got on the plane for Denver. But those ten days were, as she put it, 'pure bliss.' She felt she had been rescued there in that valley, so much so that in early November she called again to say that she was moving to be near that monastery, a major decision for her. Learning she could live without me, she had decided to move, despite her feeling that only in Seattle, where some of our friends had offered me a job, would she have a hope of our reuniting. Her son Craig and his wife Carla were moving with her, Matthew having engineered that reconciliation. Julian told me that Helene was out, that a number of Seattle folk were free, and that Justin had called Douglas Meers a greater 'Devil' even than Eva." This last detail was clearly absurd: Douglas had been soft, unassuming, humble and at least as open in his friendship to me as had anyone in Victoria. Besides, how could anyone be more evil than 'the Devil'? This question allowed me space, the space to renounce Justin—at least intellectually. Julian felt this to be our first real contact, that there was hope for me, that I might even visit her in Colorado: "The mountains are amazing healers," she said; "Come chop wood for the fire."

I now wanted to be 'out' and called her the night she moved. She sounded happy. I mentioned I would like to visit. When she told me that Matthew and Caitlin, Mark, Vanya, Marv Zinman, one of the two former Celestials, and Vicki would be with her and Craig and Carla for Thanksgiving, I longed to be part of that gathering. Julian would be cooking for the first time in months. Vicki was also thinking of moving to Colorado; Vanya was madly in love with someone she had met in Victoria; and Marv was already a year into 'normal life.'

In late November, no longer on the mailing list as a result of my Seattle visit, I received from the Halseys, who got it from Vanya who got it from Helene, "Reflections on These Moments," a document signed by 'Justinski.' It began:

- \* *The truth of all this is more important than the people in it.*
- \* *Revelation takes place at another level of consciousness; those revelations appear unbelievable, or at least subject to extreme doubt, down here.*
- \* *Go back up there, however, and you will be faced with the objective truth which now seems so extreme: the perception of evil, then, is structured in consciousness...*

and went on for five pages of self-proclaimed innocence and love, ending with:

- \* *Meantime, the laboratory is here and we are all being chemically analyzed and dissected until we are proven true. ...Are you willing, any one of you, to discover whether it was, after all, the crucifying truth?*

A newsletter arrived shortly thereafter in which the former World Teacher proclaimed, "I do not repent, for everything I have done has been backed by the grace of God," concluding, "I will see those of you who are the Devil's surrogates behind the confessional." This last statement seemed vindictive to me,

even cruel. It was another turning experience and led me to more serious consideration of visiting Julian.

I had been meeting weekly with the priest I liked the best, and he thought I should go to Colorado, an opinion back by Sr. Mary Anna saying, “Julian needs you to care for her as much as you need her.” So I realized, still dealing with heartlessness, that even if I were not able to love, I still could care for her.

I decided to make an indefinite visit.

It was a decision I would revise a thousand times, wondering how, unable to feel, I could be with such a deep-feeling woman. Julian would only come to despise me. And, if it didn’t work out between us, what would I do? Where would I go? Could I return to St. Louis and face my meaningless life alone? But one thing was clear—Julian was my only chance for love. A month before, I had taken my mother to a mall and, while she shopped, I had walked past the racks of women’s fashions, overwhelmed with memories of the clothes Julian elegantly wore, her turquoise earrings, the tea-rose scent that pervaded her things, and that I would never again get to shop for her, buy a dress and see her twirl in it as she modeled it for me. Yes, even though part of me still irrationally wondered if Julian were evil, I would fly out and at least care for her, she who was in such need of being cared for.

I think my mother, confused by the entire saga—yet not as subtly confused as I, even with my conscious longing to be free from The Context—was glad to see me airborne on a warm December day, jacket weather, a week before Christmas.

Julian, driving to the airport early, didn’t think I would be on the plane. A million thoughts likely passed through her head—they certainly did through mine—about how to be and what to say. I was at least resolved to take things very slowly.

The plane landed at the small Aspen airport, the first flight I had been on in the past two years that I hadn't wondered if my demon would endanger all aboard and crash the plane. Out my window I looked for Julian, for her lovely head of blond curls in the waiting area. No one was visible. I waited till others disembarked, hoping for some inspiration about her or me or what to say, even at this last minute. Nothing came, and I exited into a bright afternoon, unreasonably warm, especially at 8000 feet. I tried not looking for her, yet was suddenly struck with the ridiculousness of the whole thing—me with no money, no job, unable to love, not absolutely sure that she and/or I wasn't evil, and her so lovely, having broken down and needing care.... What would come of this? She would see me and run—if not today, then eventually—to another pair of arms worthier, wealthier, more able to give, more spiritually sound.

Halfway down the silver stairs some man in a blue jumpsuit had pushed to the fuselage, I saw her. Her arms were folded. Sun from a skylight was bathing her platinum hair. She looked enchanting once more. I didn't wave, vowing not to move too quickly.

Inside, she stood toward the far end of the baggage room. Her face held no traces of having been battered. Her eyes were familiar, even at a distance. When I approached, I smiled, somewhat. She smiled, her arms folded again. She wore a turquoise sweater and light khaki slacks. She glided toward me. Her face was a vision of hope mixed with wait-and-see practicality. She knew where we'd both been.

"Hi, Julian," I said, smiling, then glancing off in the direction of my baggage.

"Hello," she said, looking up at me, then down at the linoleum floor, and back up at me, my eyes on her, careful not to let myself move too quickly....

Suddenly I found myself in her arms.

*I say, praise to the one  
who first wrote down this joy clearly,  
for we cannot remain in love  
with what we cannot name.*

—Robert Bly—

## EPILOGUE

Naming the poison I had ingested was critical to my cure. Yet I could not *think* myself out of The Context. The ties that bind fan out the way a tree spreads far beneath the surface of what we see, what we think and what we feel. What, then, is the root of release?—wanting never to be bound again. I had to see the weakness by which I was tempted into vain promises of security, of affection, of specialness, of power and control. Being open to flattery and self-loathing was the yo-yo I allowed myself to endure. One is on such a string until one tires of its endless motions run by the energies that drive the lower nature of every individual.

Every cult is a dead end. I had to see that ultimate cul de sac, to accept my desire for status to be one of the elect, to admit to the judgments I made of others, and to experience the pain of separateness heightened by thinking myself superior.

Getting free from the fine art of brainwashing requires help, the assistance of people who are clear and compassionate. Julian and I received the good intentions of many in the Catholic sphere, souls that we will always appreciate. Yet that our good fortune took this form is not meant in any way to suggest that Catholicism, the Church or even Christ is the only possibility of rescue.

But what *is* universal is the need for a ‘snapping experience’ to sever in a moment of true insight the hidden ties that enslave a psyche. The mind as it has been programmed has to fail, to yield. It is in that giving up that the psyche sees its folly, not by analysis or guilt but by opening to a deeper reality, a more complete sense of the wholeness of life.

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Julian and I drove to the quaint house where she was house-sitting for some friends. The excitement of being together again could not heal us, could not address the rawness of fear and the material that was pouring up from the unconscious. We could do little but live simply, walk and just be together in the beauty of the Roaring Fork Valley.

Yet, glad to have me physically present, Julian could see my mental state was precarious. Even as I had gotten off the plane, she could tell I was inwardly divided. She prayed at least as much as I did. We would watch a movie and, compared to the lives I saw portrayed, inside I felt mine to be hollow and fraudulent. How easily my attention was turned toward hopelessness. Jogging in the snow, washing dishes, building a fire and taking walks kept me busy, but it took only a small crack—a moment in time—to glimpse my vast and bleak inner landscape, windblown and barren. Whenever I was leaning into the abyss, Julian stood as firm as she could and tried to steady me with hope, affection, encouragement. Yet there were times that she broke down and the fragility, that she hid far better than I, would dissolve her into tears. I would rock her into the wee hours, helping her into a bath or her bed. She somehow held onto the only things she had that was real—her children and her baptismal experience of the Holy Spirit. I wished I had a flake of her faith.

Longing to enjoy the sacred time of Christmas, I prayed desperately for conversion by December 24<sup>th</sup>. We drove almost

daily to the monastery, a 45-minute trip in the snow. It would be a white Christmas. But in the monastery chapel, I felt the vespers psalms—*On his face he wears a smile / But in his heart there is hatred*—described my inner conflict and outer posturing and thereby confirmed my blackness as ‘the wicked man.’ During that service I felt close to spontaneous combustion—as if I could go up in flames right there in the chapel. After the service, Julian and I met with Br. Jordan, an outgoing and devotional monk, for an appointed prayer session. In the reconciliation room, where just months ago she had been told, “My dear, you have been in a cult,” the monk lit a candle and suggested we offer a rosary. I just tried to remember the words. Then Br. Jordan suggested we each speak of our relationship with God. After he and Julian offered their obvious sincerity, I said nothing, feeling I had no relationship with God. But suddenly, as if by inner gravity, I was pulled deeply within myself. In the stillness, my mind eased. I beheld a dim shape—as if the form of a person. While it held no detail, no joy, no message, I named this inner image ‘Christ.’ The inner quietude became an expansive ease. I heard Br. Jordan say a prayer, followed by one from Julian. Sensing the monk rise and that our session was almost over, having offered no prayer, I felt to speak about what had just happened. When I began to speak the name of Christ, I faltered, so horrid had I felt when we began and so graced had been the silence inside. Broken in two, I wept openly, loudly, and for the first time, my tears turned to laughter, Julian had felt the silence after the prayers and known that *someone* was being healed, now couldn’t tell if Br. Jordan, who had in rapture joined me, and I were crying or laughing. All she knew was that the candle flame suddenly shot up like a torch.

I was integrating my ‘snapping’ experience, for I, now consciously opposing Justin Snow, had received a grace, and



was realizing that The Context was not only *not* the only truth but, because it represented itself as the only truth, it therefore had to be, and indeed was, false! Into that breach joy rushed to confirm that the hold on my conscious awareness had been released. Julian drove us home and I rode radiant, released, in a bliss perhaps akin to what Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection knew after his damnation had ended in beholding spring in a bare winter tree.

That night, I looked into layer after layer of the force that had held me and watched my clarity and joy eat away one stratum after another.

I held my beloved in the moonlight illuminating the frosted windows until we happily woke. There in the silence of sunlight on fresh sheets I waited for her body to move. When her eyes fluttered and opened, I asked her—again—to be my wife.

Yet wanting to be ‘out’ and even ‘being out’ is not the end of the saga of having ‘been in.’ The very next morning, in my new state of release, as I picked up an apple in a green bowl centering the kitchen table, I wondered how it could have been that The Context had proved itself seminar after seminar, day after day in a hundred and a thousand ever-fresh ways. The moment I entertained that series of thoughts, my consciousness funneled my mind whose vortex once again threw me into an abyss of horror. There were nights—even after driving home that snowy evening in the freedom of blissful rejoicing—when I approached the void of love. To me, it seemed that the clearer I got intellectually about how horrific an invention The Context had been, the more I suffered.

I had, indeed, snapped free. Yet what was then required was integration—to live in such a way that neither The Context nor any other de-humanizing system of thought could have its way with me. Life was using the opportunity of ingrained fear

to clean out my sub-conscious. Looking back on that Christmas, I am unable to comprehend the distance Julian and I, individually and as a couple, have since then traveled: It has been an infinite reach.

Despite our lack of wherewithal, we somehow were led to a small but marvelously designed house. With the help of Dan Levine and others, this dwelling came to us in a manner miraculous enough to remain an unsolved mystery to this day and yet clearly demonstrate that life was gathering in our favor. We soon were hosting overflow guests from the monastery. The September after I arrived in the healing mountains of Colorado and found the healing of Julian's embrace, we were married at our home overlooking forty miles of Rocky Mountains and the Snowmass Valley we came to love so much. Matthew and Caitlin, Mark, Vanya and Marv Zinman came, and, after Matthew's toast as Best Man, Marv offered another toast on this happy day: "I want to toast Bill and Julian, who stand in a radiance orchestrated by God. Some of us here know intimately what they have been through. Their union on this clear day testifies to the power of life to unite and heal. They have earned the right to be together in a bond few individuals will ever understand. We who were with them and shared their pain now raise our glasses to celebrate their joy."

Since then, I, who thought that caring was the limit of my palsied heart, have fallen in bottomless love with my wife, whose love was greater than my hopelessness, greater even than her own.

It is, finally, only such love—from whatever source through whatever person or persons in whatever circumstances—that can heal the trauma of having been in a cult.

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The cult has been a river for all of us who were

involved, a torrent surging through our lives that could neither be halted nor diverted, with big and little pieces of our world carried on its surface. We were pulled down and, at times, almost out of sight by whatever was still submerged. We talked, we processed it all, every detail of our experiences for at least a thousand hours.

It takes two to five years to get out of a cult. It was not easy to let go of what we gave ourselves to, what we loved and what made meaning—the deepest meaning—of our lives. We had to undergo a complete reorientation. Nor was it easy to forgive such betrayal, such constant manipulation.

Shortly after I first arrived in Victoria until the day I was sent away, I thought Justin and his friends were on the widest and straightest freeway to exactly where I longed to go. After Justin dismissed me—A wise guide told Julian and me, “Do not say that you were thrown out of the cult; it was the Holy Spirit that set you free.”—I felt that I was not just standing still and watching them progress, but that I was going the opposite way. I attribute that schism to the polarizing nature of The Context, which mirrors that tendency in every cult. But that opposition was inside me before I entered the cult. And, frankly, it exists in every human being. We live in a state of separation—from our experience of life and from our true nature. It’s just that, because everyone else swims in the same waters, we don’t think anything about it, and indeed don’t even recognize the dichotomy of our inner and outer state—not until we face the kind of inveterate material that cults inherently bring up.

When I finally was freed from The Context, what lasted in the patterns of thinking and feeling was so deeply held that it simply could not come out in a week or a month or a year. The body held all these traumatizing experiences. It was true for all of us. Healing may well require therapy, but without doubt requires time.

Those never in such allegiance may still wonder, after learning the truth of cult involvement, why one doesn't just leave and freely live. What words can palpably elucidate how the moorings by which a cult is shored are made fast to the neural connections and very cellular walls? The hooks by which cults secure their agendas are hand-knotted in the unconscious around our basic desires for power, fame, esteem and security. Even inspiration can be a trap—an inspiring, charismatic person filled with 'life' and integrity, someone we would like to be like. Just as mere positivity is no great achievement and may well be a cover-up, so the reverse is true: believing that if a teacher or group is hard, rough and painful, it must be good for us, must lead us out of our misery—and the more it hurts, the more valuable. But this is nothing other than negativity and a misconceived neediness to be loved. Such a relationship—like a child seeking the love of a parent, of looking to be 'good' or 'right'—is projected to the outer work and will mean the 'child' stays dependent and trapped.

To really 'get out' and be no longer susceptible to such glittering possibilities is to let go of the need for such false promises, which are agendas for personal happiness that can never and will never work!

I never thought—when in high-school, then college and even graduate school—that my rather uneventful existence would ever touch the rawest boundaries of the imagination. Nor did I ponder that loneliness could come to be my greatest teacher.

It was just two years ago that the abysmal source of terror that had too often wrenched me into psychosis visited once again. One night when Julian and I were reading in our living room, I sensed something begin to approach. It began to gather round the chair I was sitting in. I sensed the outlines of emptiness and then felt that old disaster close in and grow

poignant. I shuddered, knew I couldn't run. There was no escape. I thought that, if I was just quiet, it would grow dimmer, go away. But that was just a thought. Instead, I found myself reaching out, telling my wife, "It's back." Involved in a book, she had no idea what I was talking about. I reached out and took her hands, realized there was nothing I could do but to let it be. I was about to face its potential fury. I crouched before her, my hands in hers, and simply waited in the quiet ripples of an old unplumbed terror. But in my readiness to accept whatever would happen, nothing happened, as if a shimmering of some mirage on the hilly desert road I had long been traveling had vanished. While Julian still understood little of my encounter, it was in that small process that I finally came to understand that my overwhelming fear simply did not exist.

It took me twenty years—perhaps I had grown enough, had seen enough of the faces of fear—to allow that unplumbed darkness to come near enough and pass through me, thereby unburdening myself of that horrible delusion which had no bottom.

It's an amazing insight about fear, that it gives every visceral indication of being more solid than the body and more complex than rocket science and more immediate than breath. Yet, to simply approach and face it with a clear gaze is to see it recede, grow so small as to suddenly vanish into the air, it having been entirely imagined. I remember being on the Crystal River, a beautiful Colorado stream, with Julian and Mark, who was then visiting after another of his many spiritual travels. It was September, warm, and I had entered the clear stream to try to find pieces of marble that the old railway cars, loaded with blocks on their way to build the Washington Monument, had contributed to the river by their weighty overturnings. I had made my way to the center, managing the current by lunging for one protruding rock to another and

another, until I was sitting safely atop a large boulder. Yet I realized that I was cold and unable to return the way I had come. Before me and the rocky shore where Julian and Mark stood wondering what to do was a falls. I feared that going in at that point would mean this frail body would be taken by current and banged against boulders. Mark felled a small aspen tree, a solution that did not gain my shivering trust, while Julian went out to the road to flag someone down. Soon a man—a trained mountain rescue team member, no less!—was throwing me a yellow nylon rope and beckoning me into the falls. The logic of that request escaping me, noticeably weakened, I declined. But the man pointed at me and then at the falls and *ordered* me to jump, saying it was the safest place to enter the water. His authority had me sliding into the most visibly distraught water. Yet, the moment I decided to leave my false security, I realized not only was I safe but also that the solution to my dilemma had been so simple and right in front of me.

I always wanted to be expert in something. I studied poetry and taught for many years. But perhaps we become most expert in what has entered us most deeply. If so, I hope to offer such expert guidance to those in struggling with freedom from cults as the man who got me to jump into the intensity of whitewater—and to safety.

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What Julian and I learned from our experience in *The Context* we wouldn't wish on anyone. Yet what we have gained cannot be had by reading even ten thousand books. Such is one of the litmus tests of recovery: the certainty that this worst of all possible experiences was indeed a gift, a mysterious one to be sure, that keeps revealing itself almost daily.

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I was in for four years, Julian, Mark and Matthew for

three, Caitlin and Vicki for two, Craig and Carla for one—yet there was more than one person on the fringe of The Context who, even after just a few seminars, was nearly as caught as any of us. A cult is not about time but the vertical plunge—the depth of enthrallment that fastens barbs way below the mind. Cults are, after all, brainwashing organizations.

Six months out, Vicki and Vanya were courageous enough to contact the *Victoria Times Colonist* about Justin Snow and be interviewed. The paper ran a triptych of significant articles so revealing that Justin could no longer go to St. Andrew's Cathedral, some of his remaining friends lost their jobs, and the leader of The Context was forced to sell Sunnyside. Soon those near to him, who hated 'the Americans' for stimulating such a cruel exposé, nevertheless began to question him. During the seminar after the article appeared, Nadine, whose straight-forwardness had always impressed me, stood up and presented 33 points for Justin to address. He, of course, called her 'evil.' But Nadine's courage constituted the beginning of the end. That was the last of Justin's seminars and, within two weeks, the former World Teacher left town.

Justin Snow had always been one to relish his disasters as long as there was at least one person giving him power—a part played by Terrence. Here was concrete revelation of the nature of false-teachership—that the great Justin Montclair Snow would take with him the weakest of those devoted to The Context. Last I heard, they shared an apartment in Toronto and Justin was teaching in some private school. We did hear that he had soon declared the Catholic Church to be 'evil' and that Terrence had a vision that Justin had been immaculately conceived—and that Justin Montclair Snow himself had acknowledged that he had had a virgin birth. This was some time after he had announced that Maharishi, the man to whom he had credited his 'enlightenment', was the anti-Christ.

Vanya, who used to phone Julian several times a week, called us with this bit of news and the three of us howled. “It’s so predictable!” laughed Vanya, with me adding how Justin always prided himself on being utterly mysterious to the point of not only being unique but also the only person in the universe who had been gifted with....”

“Yes, the emperor is obviously wearing no clothes!” Julian concluded.

It is humbling to realize that The Context had its hooks so deeply into my way of believing and acting and being that I could have stayed a devoted Justinite, calling his Victoria friends ‘betrayers,’ and reasoning, ‘So what if everyone has left him; at the Crucifixion, was Christ not abandoned by all of his disciples, save one?’ Such is the strength of a cult. Its power is, however, only the power that I gave to it.

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We do well to recognize that anything can be interpreted. The word, even if scriptural, is little better than the consciousness of the one who says it means thus and so. It was belief in ‘the word’ that got me and many others into The Context—coupled with a belief in the special powers of someone who, because I could never imagine having such abilities, was therefore above me, elevated in some way I could not name, which only enhanced the element of grandeur and mystery.

It takes significant understanding to realize that those having such powers—even to raise the dead—are not necessarily of God. Considerable honest inner observance is required to let go of the desire for such abilities—and to see innocence, self-less service, devotion and humility as the real strengths. To understand what St. Paul meant when he said, “In my weakness am I strong,” is to stand on solid ground that cannot be shaken by the onslaughts of any cult.



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Because the line between spiritual authenticity and spiritual charlatanism can be hair fine, experience has shown the qualities that I look for a teacher, guide or mentor: that such a person be humble; that such a person seek no power, but rather seek to empower those in his or her care; and that the students of such an individual be not asked to dress or think or act alike, that each person's uniqueness be respected.

There are other signs of groups that are or are tending toward being cults. Here are some questions to ask: Can a member safely question and even contradict the leader or group, without the stigma of being either weakling or whistleblower? If members are encouraged to give funds, is it a real choice or expected, and is the 'donating' of money or services linked to a rise in status or closeness to the leader? Are deep relationships with other than the group leader permitted, and even encouraged? Is the world outside the group made to look ignorant, corrupt or evil, thereby setting up a sense that inside the group is safe and constitutes the road to 'salvation,' while outside is not only dangerous but also an almost impossible atmosphere in which to 'progress'? How does one 'move up' in the group, and is rise in 'status' determined objectively or by the leader, or council beholdng to the leader? How does a group treating someone wanting to exit, by allowing someone's moving on, by seeing it as natural and perhaps even celebrated, or is that person threatened, spiritually blackmailed, manipulated to stay, forced to stay? And of course, is the way of the leader the way of the group and is it, even energetically, understood to be 'the only way?'

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It was many months before Julian or I stopped

mistrusting any person with a spiritual message. Fr. Norris had counseled Julian to risk again, which is exactly what she did—what we both have done many times.

Our cult experience gave us strong powers of discrimination. As a result, Julian and I have finely tuned antennae. On our journey we have encountered only two suspect ‘gurus’—and a number of true saints and authentic adepts. We feel fortunate that our cult experience, while it has made us question more precisely and deeply, has not hardened us to the possibility—which is very real—that men and women of God exist. They are best recognized in that they live only so that others can find their own intrinsically inspired nature.

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While in the cult, Julian and I used to think that no one else could be as deep or as interesting as Justin had taught us to be, a fallacy we have had delightfully disproved many times. Here in our community at the foot of sacred mountains, we have encountered extraordinary friends. But those once in The Context are now even more strongly close to us, for we share something that transcends anticipated realms of friendship. We were, to use a phrase, ‘fox-hole buddies.’ Yet, even more, each of these stalwart souls was necessary to my freedom and to Julian’s. Having each experienced an inner isolation beyond words, we shared something nameless that bound us together. In the company of one or more of them, valuing our freedom from our once-shared web of thought, we would find that our heads would clear and our hearts would come into the next layer of relaxation. Regardless of physical distance, these souls, to whom this book is dedicated, are always close, very near. They are our family.

The Halseys are our dearest friends. I never cease marveling at the miracle that graced Matthew in little more than an hour’s time to see clearly his error and reunite with his wife,

his heart and his freedom. Caitlin, so close to being irrevocably shattered, has come farther than I or any of us—herself included, no doubt—could have expected. For a number of years, she felt that only Julian, also having been ripped from her beloved, could really understand what was going on inside her. Caitlin wanted so to be a mother and raise a healthy family, but she and Matthew experienced no success in getting pregnant. However, about four years out of The Context and just when she and Matthew were accepted by an adoption agency and in line for a child, they had twin boys—on St. Patrick’s Day, no less—then nine months later a daughter—and in three years another son.

Matthew went to law school after moving to Omaha, after which the Halseys moved to be near us, their four children a testimony to the devotion and respect with which their parents, two of our heroes, have nurtured them. The twin boys just got out of high-school, and it’s as if our own children have been graduated.

Caitlin, recently diagnosed with breast cancer, and, prior to her successful surgery, came to recognize that being in the cult was a deeply contributing factor to her illness. Past traumas can definitely affect the body and our state of health. She senses that this book, which she read in manuscript, and her seeing into the links of what she suffered in The Context and her state of health will strongly assist in her recovery and wellness.

Mark, whom Julian and I came to expect would turn up at any time, as his trips to seek the Highest still take him on adventures around the world, also moved to our village. To our delight, and amazement, he married someone who had been on the edges of The Context, a woman I admired from the time I saw her on videotape before my first trip to Victoria. Julian and I have come to respect Mark’s soft yet penetrating wisdom and

his love for introspective discussion that can still keep me up past my bedtime. He, like me, is coming more into the realm of his feelings and, uncomfortable and awkward as that can be, I have never liked him—or myself, for that matter—more.

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There are others you'll want to hear about.

Nadine and Tobin rekindled a relationship that Justin's interference had once helped destroy, resurrect and destroy half a dozen times. Everyone in Victoria went to their wedding. Julian and I were 1500 miles away, still on the outs, as were most of the Americans, but Vanya relayed that the Rivers seemed genuinely happy, symbolic of the way life works—that love does triumph. In fact, Vanya also married and with her husband has a horse farm up-island. Emulating the strength, energy and beauty of the animals she raises, Vanya loves the fine art of dressage in her horses and in the way she passes her knowledge on to her students.

Jason, who so adored Africa when he had visited in his late teens, expressed, when we last met, his determination to help the starving in the world. Likely he has returned to his beloved Dark Continent. I and others had hoped that he and Celeste, the tall seamstress, would get together. But not so. For some time, he worked for her at Her Majesty's Press, which under Celeste's leadership had become quite profitable. How amazingly life alters and circles as if blown as if by wind or sliding downhill like water.

Klaus and Mary have had their first child and moved to Calgary where Klaus, electronics expert that he is, helped begin the industry of cellular telephones and, Dutchman that he is, could speed-skate in the Winter Olympics haven there. I can only imagine Mary as a marvelous mother—who at some point returned to her physiotherapy practice with renewed sensitivity. Whatever we have suffered, that can we authentically share.

Holly and Adam were on the Snow roll-a-coaster as long as anyone, and I wondered if their rift could ever heal. But they, too, married, and the round-faced Holly must be a mother that a child could really enjoy. I always felt a joy around Holly, so energetic she was, and her vitality, no doubt, has passed to her offspring. Adam and Holly moved to Vancouver to manage apartments and earn a great deal of money. Adam had evidently been able to afford most luxuries before joining Justin. He has picked up where he left off. I think, in our own way, that we all have.

The Boyces, Jonathan and Lilly, run a successful restaurant in Victoria and have a passel of children. Quite devout in their Catholicism, Jonathan teaches classes for the Diocese. The Canadians largely turned to the Catholic Church, taking refuge in a salvation they could believe, since what Justin offered was a promise ever more delayed, ever more unobtainable.

Rhonda Cox and Ted Klein did marry and give tours to sacred spots in the red-rock country of Arizona. We've seen them several times, Rhonda as intense as ever and Ted still ruggedly handsome. They have definitely moved on from Justin Snow to truer guides.

Helene went through a horrible touch-and-go time getting out. By the time she visited us in Colorado, the one-time 'oracle' had arrived at clarity, to the point that she could entertain a significant relationship with a man, a very significant step given how paranoid and utterly analytical about her male friends Justin Snow had made her. Of significant intellect and insight, Julian and I felt that heart had come to balance her considerable intellectual talents in a uniqueness of love. She still dotes on literature, and should she be moved to write of her experiences as an 'Annapurnan', I would only encourage her.

Roland finished his Masters degree in Psychology, worked for the welfare office in Victoria, then gradually formed himself into an independent Catholic commentator, an integral and very perceptive apologist for the Faith. I spoke with him when Julian and I and Mark and the Halseys made a sort of pilgrimage to Victoria—to see old friends, souls with whom we shared so much on levels that go beyond words, with whom our hearts are bound together in ways that few human beings ever allow, whether our outer lives conjunct or not. While we saw Helene and Celeste and the Tobin brothers, Brandon Bench and his wife Anna, we did not see Roland, but got to hear his voice, bright again, over the phone. It brought back rivers of experience, all filtered by time so that the resonances mainly remained. He was to marry Madelaine, but both realized with the valor of hard-won honesty how hurt they were and postponed their marriage indefinitely—a difficult decision but, knowing what getting free of the effects of a cult entails, likely a wise one. Gladly, Julian and I did hear from Mark that later they did marry, and that Angelica sees her father often. Julian and I wonder how his daughter Angelica has managed, being so young in those days when Justin made her believe her father was evil.

We did not see the lovely Eva nor have we spoken to this woman deeply etched into our hearts. We did hear, via Mark's several trips to Victoria, that this woman, whose exit from The Context took so long, still holds a deft beauty and that she did get free, though hers was a hard uphill struggle. We were aghast to learn that Revenue Canada decreed that she owed \$30,000 in back taxes for the various business entities of 'her husband', all which bore her name and not his. Vera, we understand, gave a great deal to Eva. But it was finally Eva's faith that saved her. Given the all-consuming nature of The Context, without a way of understanding that inspires

forgiveness and purifies the heart into clarity, the road out of a cult must be all the more challenging and lengthy

And Lydia. We saw her in Vail, on her way to join the Missionaries of Charity. Her back had for some years given her considerable problems, such that her earlier attempts to become one of Mother Theresa's nuns had proven ineffectual. Yet the time had come and, in our delightful morning together under one of the bluest of blue Colorado skies, she told us how difficult the past two years had been, that her faith was her only anchor and lifeline. She mentioned receiving a letter from Justin saying that he had been in the 'dark night of the soul' for months, asking how she could enter an order in the Church he knew to be evil, yet wondering if they might not 'forget all this cosmic stuff and just be friends,' his mother having told him that everything started going wrong when Lydia left. She confided that she felt the letter, still in characteristically elaborate language, was a poison arrow. "His soul," she told us, "needs to find there is redemption, but first he needs to feel he needs it." Of The Context she offered this: "It was wrong, but wrong in a perfect way." We wished this woman, clearly moving toward a true light, the very best in her new life and knew we had found a sister in Lydia.

Understandably, there have been some tragedies. Anna Bench, mother and wife and talented physiotherapist, died only several years after Justin left Victoria. It was hard to imagine her husband Brandon trying to start up his printing business once again and taking care of their four children at the same time. Mark said that Brandon was in a difficult space, but bearing his cross.

While Julian has been reunited with her children, her eldest son Craig, long ago separated from his wife Carla, did not speak to his mother or me for months. Unable to deal with being in a cult, he repressed most everything of that period. Yet

this lovely soul has in his own way gained the benefit of his experience. We have for years been in regular contact, glad when he can visit, his love for his mother fully intact and, I feel, magnified. His, however, has been a very inward and difficult trek to autonomy.

Vicki, Julian's longtime best friend, whose brilliant mind saw as clearly as any of us the injustices of The Context, could deal with the cult only on an intellectual level. Shortly after our marriage, she turned against Julian, who somehow came to represent every hurtful relationship Vicki had endured in her life. For Julian, this betrayal constituted a wound every bit as deep as getting out of The Context. Yet, here too, this rift has led mysteriously to Julian's freedom from abandonment, perhaps her core issue and representative of her deepest fear. The final benefit of being in a cult is becoming far freer than ever before.

There are others whom we know little or nothing about. Some seem to have disappeared. Dierdra Snow, after we were extricated from the diabolical confines of The Context her father had masterminded, had roamed about Europe, empty and distressed beyond belief. Later, on one of his several journeys to the 'scene of the crime', Mark heard from Eva that Dierdra was back with her mother and moving into the life that a young woman of her beauties and abilities deserves. I never learned if her father wrote her, as he did with others once in his 'care'. But for the daughter of Justin Snow, as perhaps no one else, the maniacal events of The Context will be weights around and within her. May she gain muscle of character, be graced more than she was injured, and led to every healing from the most dissonant experience I can imagine.

I feel for those on the fringes of The Context. While spared many of its terrors, these souls, by never really 'being in' may never really 'be out.' Life is strange that way: by knowing



the heart of the devastation and corruption—betraying our own morality, integrity and even our common sense—that took place in Sunnyside Theatre, those I was close to in The Context got fully out because they had to, by virtue of being in an agony that few people ever know. Those bound by the same chains we were, but with fewer and/or less sturdy shackles, may not shed them so completely. It does not require years or even months to be dangerously caught. One woman attended only a single lecture and had to be ‘de-programmed’ and enter years of therapy. This happened while Julian and I were still within the Justinian prison, and we thought that *she* was the crazy one.

Rudi, the former ‘Celestial’, stayed in contact with us for about a decade. He had never recovered from his last confrontation and, not ever ‘snapping out’ of the cult, he got into another one—an involvement with a group of people who were convinced they were from outer space. If I remember correctly, Rudi said he was from the 12<sup>th</sup> dimension and tried to share his ‘wisdom’ with us. Later, apparently out of that milieu, he started to identify more with his Judaism, a shift Julian and I applauded. He went back to chiropractic school. May his giving be actual.

On a positive note, Marv Zinman, the other ‘Celestial,’ married—we and Vanya attended!—and has three lovely children. He runs his father’s window-and-door company. We saw him several years ago in Chicago and in a quaint café heard how graced he felt his life is, yet how he ‘never could have predicted the course his life has taken.’ Marv has a steadiness we admire and is perhaps the one member of The Context who moved away and got free ‘on his own’—aided, of course, by the agency of grace.

Sondra, who had in critical moments befriended me to a vital degree, was, I heard in the first year of my freedom, doing well in her fashion work in Boston. I wondered how she would

process her cult experience. One day she phoned to say that she had been in a car accident and, though not seriously injured, had all her personal issues of fear and separation brought up and out into the open. Some months later, she phoned Julian and me in Colorado just after our second-year anniversary to say that she also was getting married—to a wonderful minister in Chicago. But within a week her new husband was calling to ask my insights—his wife had left him. I was torn to hear she had thrown her allegiance to a charismatic preacher from southern Illinois, who would not let her out of the church apartments to speak to the man she had wed but a week before. Several years later, I heard that she was yet with another Christian man of fundamental faith. To not see the reins by which a person had been pulled into cult mentality means he or she will likely be pulled in again—by a different leader with a new message, but selling the same pattern of subjugation.

There was one young man, Christopher, a talented actor from the eastern provinces and a strong participator in The Context but never in the inner circle—I think because his being a theater person played into Justin’s jealousy as ‘the consummate actor’. Shortly after Julian and I were freed from The Context, Christopher committed suicide. We received no details, but conceded that cults can, indeed, be deadly. At the hands of a master manipulator and false teacher, the whole of life was opened without moderation to ‘his friends’. Justin released all the valves but built no safety nets into The Context. Heaven and Hell were real, with death lurking around every corner. I pray for the soul of Christopher, this fine young man with whom I shared many inexplicably beautiful moments.

Julian and I have often said that we cannot blame anyone for whatever choices they elected to pursue, for whatever decisions they were moved to make after the cult, given how massive and devastating such an involvement can be.

There were, of course, dozens and hundreds of others in the grips of this mastermind who, despite his confidence, had never mastered his mind. Their tales are likely as vast, complex and devastating as what you have read here. I hope they will share their stories.

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For Justin Snow, I still do not have full explanations for all his abilities and powers, for his layered brilliance, for all the experiences I thought he ‘gave’ me. To whatever degree, consciously or unconsciously, he was a master manipulator. He could to whatever degree read minds and energies. But he used his abilities to keep us under his thumb, and all relationships had to be on his terms. He permitted no one to love someone else more than him. His jealousy was disguised by his pronouncements that we thought had come from ‘on High.’ However accurate his insights, they were tainted by willful projections of his own inner pain, which he could not face but acted out in all who came close to him. The closer we came, the more hatred was heaped upon us. Justin Snow, who brilliantly made every creative attempt to lift up his own stature, hated himself.

There is a Russian saying that if we dig a hole for someone to fall into, we will ourselves fall in. So it is not surprising that Justin Snow railed against ‘*est*’ for being 99% true but that its 1% falseness made it ‘evil’—for the former World Teacher was under the same delusion! Such is the blindsiding power of projection: accusing others of exactly what he was himself doing and believing.

Julian for the longest time considered Justin a Hitler or at least a Rasputin. My version was that he was the one whom Our Lady spoke of in her 19<sup>th</sup>-century appearance at La Salle when, mourning for a sinful humanity, she predicted that there will be a man who will ascend in St. Peter’s Square in the

middle of the Vatican and that God will cast him down. If Justin fails to rise again, then it will be someone like him, I figured.

Had Justin not seduced us all, gotten us to taste the forbidden fruit—the knowledge of Good *and Evil*—that he administered? Was he not the ancient Serpent spreading the most dangerous of all knowledge? But this was in our earlier stages, when we needed someone to blame, still thinking ourselves victims.

For a year I dreamt almost nightly of him pounding on my back to get me to ‘break through.’ Only gradually did I see such dreams and the lofty interpretations of my waking myths as commentary not only on my need to think I had been spiritually raped, but also on my need to continually give him power. For some time I felt an urge to confront him, to see him again, or at least hope to be able to slay him in dreams, of which there were many opportunities. I broke the dashboard of our old ’73 BMW in rage at this man, to Julian’s applause.

It was months before a day went by when I thought of him only a few times, and months more before I realized that I had not thought of him all day. It might have been three years before I had a dream in which, finally, I did not succumb to his power, when in a room in which we were sitting I stopped his tirade by saying, “I don’t believe a word, Justin,” walking to his director’s chair and slapping his face four times, his eyes reeling inside his head.

These were my stages of coming out of victimhood—that I gave myself up to a false teacher and was duped, that I was betrayed, that I was deeply injured, that I also injured others. The five stages of grieving also definitely apply and will take expression according to our personality: Denial (which I did to the hilt, as is typical of those who have been brainwashed), Anger (which took me a while to touch, but

certainly was just below the surface, given the reign of terror that was The Context), Bargaining (which for me went something like, 'If I could just be normal, I will never again seek to be other than what I am. '), Depression (which depends on how deeply the cult got inside, as in Caitlin's experience), and Acceptance, which allows life to move on. I prayed for Justin, dutifully, during the bargaining stage, but after the acceptance stage, I let him be.

At some point he wrote me a letter. He had written Eva, Lydia, Roland and others, as well, to say that he had seen the error of his ways, and confessed to the monumental injustices he had inflicted. But he noted no specific instances. For example, he made no mention of what he had done to Caitlin, nor did he ever write her. Knowing that it is in the details that the energy of release resides, and seeing his verbiage and style had not shifted, I wrote him back and told him so. He then flattered me in a reply, saying how I had caught him in his game and that maybe I could be instrumental in his further freedom. It was a letter I was about to answer. But visiting friends suggested that this man was 'a hungry ghost,' meaning someone who feeds on energy, be it positive or negative. I saw then that this is how Justin operated, that I would be hooked no matter whether he loved or hated what I wrote, as long as I fed him my attention. I sent him back a three-line utterly neutral reply.

Justin,

After much prayer, I am no longer interested in your life or ideas, and do not care what you do or what you think of me.

I wish you well.

William

I hold this response as one of the better decisions of my life. I never heard from him again.

I did, wanting to comprehend how life works in such cases of great talent seeking great power, ponder the case of Justin Snow extensively. After our freedom from the glamour and bottomlessness of The Context, Julian and I learned from Vera, his mother, that Justin had been an isolated child who hated his brother, who felt he could ‘read minds’ at an early age, who never felt loved by his parents, and whose father early on left the Methodist ministry and turned atheist. The incident of thrusting a knife into his thigh to prove a spiritual point describes someone who wanted to be admired for his intensity by others of lesser ilk, that such a drive exceeded all other considerations. In this vein, it is very likely that his experiments with drugs, while lasting but six months, were intense enough to do him lasting harm. Julian and I heard that very deep drug experience can burn and blast away certain protective psychic barriers in the nervous system which, if breached, leave an individual open to undesirable cosmic energies in the form of etheric entities, ‘demons’ if you will. If so, the ‘World Teacher’ may have been invaded and haunted by beings of which he was not aware. No wonder, then, that he came to focus on ‘the demonic.’ Sacred literature records the power that such spirits can manifest, even wonderfully positive powers, healings included. Yet their source is not of love. Such an individual will use these seemingly beneficial abilities to gain allegiance. In Justin’s case, it was to fill his need to regain his father’s love, which he sought in Maharishi and then in Padre Gino Burresi. Whatever Justin’s cosmic experience in my presence on the mountain, it did not prevent him from acting out the abyss of his anger, hopelessness and despair on all those who were drawn to him.

The state of Enlightenment—in which every degree of selfishness has been surrendered into the wholeness of Reality and present in others and in everything—is antithetical to ego

and the urge to fulfill an 'I'. So it is that Justin's sin was manifest from the outset. Yet we were fascinated by Justin's sale's pitch and bought 'this new possibility in the evolution of consciousness'—that there could be enlightenment along with the grandeur of God's greatest creation: the ego. We had Maharishi's knowledge, yet conveniently set it aside for our own need to feel authentic, special, secure, loved, important and powerful in a cosmic measure. It is no stretch to say that we helped bring on all that we received. Yet we also received the inherent blessing of such a hell: the heaven of no longer allowing ourselves to be fodder for such cannonball egos.

I think back on all the assumptions we made: that only confrontation could deal a blow to the demonic; that the remarks by Maharishi about Justin's 'enlightenment' held secret meanings confirming The Context as being the highest expression of the will of God; that the beauty I beheld in Eva and Lydia was only in them and not in myself; that Eva—the night she slowly and unevenly came down the staircase at Herowater, looking a bit disheveled—had been confronted by her 'husband,' whereas actually she had just been ravaged by him; that seeing Justin walking up his Sunnyside stairs as a mere person meant that I had committed some unspeakable error—the list could go on for pages. We saw in The Context a perfect sphere, polished and seamless. But it was full of holes, holes that we didn't see and couldn't see—because Justin did not want us to, for he could not himself acknowledge their existence. What made our sphere a sacred symbol of wholeness were our heightened assumptions. We believed! Yet we lived a life of smoke and mirrors that 'the most developed of all human beings' assured us was the most solid and lasting interpretation of reality.

Justin Snow, according to the sage with whom Mark O'Doyle took council, had goodness in him. That is my

understanding, as well. And yet Justin's focus on 'evil' had him conforming to one of Maharishi's precepts: "That which we give our attention to grows stronger in its influence." Justin Montclair Snow was an amazing mixture of divine and demonic tendencies. We each are—yet, in him, these forces were heightened to an extraordinary, if not inexplicable, degree. It was Marv Zinman who first shed meaningful light on this man who trusted his 'enlightenment' so much that whatever he thought became revelation. Marv found in a 1935 commentary by Sri Aurbindo, an enlightened Indian sage: "It can happen that a man whose consciousness has gone to the next level of awareness, but who has not developed purity of heart nor has done the requisite work of service, comes to believe that his every thought is a message directly from God." Such clarity named exactly what had happened in The Context where the leader's sudden 'revelation' instantly meant a new direction for everyone close to him.

It was only as Justin Snow became associated with and moved toward a true light—that of Christ—that The Context began to noticeably wobble, crack and finally disintegrate.

Yet, Justin Snow may well rise again. Just before he exiled himself to Toronto, he said, "I will go to prison or a psychiatric ward before I will ever give up." I consider him dangerous. He took with him Terrence, and it may well be true to say, as it is with serial killers and other psychopaths, that as long as the former 'World Teacher' has one person whom he can convince of his nobility, righteousness and innocence, he will continue to act out his perceived cosmic stature, perhaps in further communities of souls as well meaning and as ignorant as were the five of us.

Julian and I and the others were tethered on Justin Snow's rope, which was actually a noose of our own quest for authentic spiritual experience. We gave him our power. In



exchange, he gave us ‘knowledge’ and experiences. But the experiences we enjoyed and about which we marveled, were not ‘given’ by him—they were our own; they arose within us. Yet, the demonic energies to which Justin had opened himself likely played some part in what we experienced, and that dimension of his ‘power’ and range of abilities is where analysis simply pales.

While actually we each are powerful beyond belief, made in the image of God, according to scripture, as personalities we are addicts. Marv Zinman said that we needed a mother and a father—that in Justin we found someone who answered our hopes of being true human beings. He abused us, but we went back and back to him, for we were the children that he suckled, told us about life, shared stories and gave us formative experiences when we opened ourselves to being knocked down to the point where we had nothing. At our wedding, Marv told us, “Only Grace got us out, for The Context was much too powerful for human effort; no one could stand up to Justin, who was beyond human power. Had we merely struggled with our human abilities in our human condition, we would never have gotten out of his grip—and he knew it. Only when we each of us let go and let God in were we saved, for only God’s power is greater.” Perhaps that was exactly the way it went. At least this insight did not arise from within Marv the way the revelations of the two ‘Celestials’ had been proclaimed.

What souls seek in cults, they seek in life, in God—yet there is nothing but bright illusion in the realm of teachers who are false.

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All cults function in similar ways, as Dr. Lifton points out in his study of brainwashing. After our release from The Context, Julian and I spoke with others who had been in cults. Our experiences were, while differing in setting and content,

were virtually interchangeable, so much was our recognition of what others had been through.

Sharing this manuscript with a friend of ten years, I was surprised to learn that she had been in a cult in Germany. She had spent some years in intense community, building close relationships and undergoing almost daily communal confrontations, which could take a violent turn—all under the watchful eye of the group's leader. On a trip to France, she was, due to her questionings that to the leader represented doubts, asked to leave. In a single moment she was let out somewhere in Provence with no money or map, with no destination or future. Suddenly without knowing where she was, she had nowhere to go, no family or friends or wherewithal—just as happened to Julian or Caitlin. It took no effort for her to understand The Context, for she had already lived her version of it.

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Why, if God is real, does the Supreme permit such atrocities as cults? It is the one of the great questions: Why must suffering exist?

Julian said it well some years ago, turning to me one Sunday morning at the monastery to say, “You know, I realized this morning during the prayers for all the poor, the sick, and those torn by war, that in getting free from The Context I understand on some fundamental level what it is to starve, what it is to be raped, what it is to have been in Vietnam or any war, what it is to have given birth to a crippled baby, what it is to have AIDS, what it is to be deaf or blind, and what it is to lose a child,” and looking up into my eyes, “or a husband.”

I looked at this vital being, to whom I have now been married for more than twenty years, with all the pain and joy of love, knowing that she was speaking out my experience as well, and the universal experience of anyone who has gained the

benefit of tragic circumstances. To be taken down to nothing, and seemingly less than nothing, is to be in a bond with all who have been demolished. I consider it to be an experience treasured beyond measure.

Coming face to face with the heartless heart of my own loneliness has begun the authentic movement toward brother- and sisterhood. Loneliness is designed to deliver the greatest of gifts. I didn't seek such a present, nor wanted it when it came, nor treated it well once it had been given. Yet from aloneness is born its root: all-oneness.

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I was The Context's resident expert on fear, and ran from its rigors three times because I couldn't face what I experienced as unspeakable horror. I saw my awareness imploding into utter emptiness and gave it the only name I had: Hell. Yet, when over the years I have examined that experience, it was clearly one of disappearance, of not being. There could be no living in such a place, for it was no place at all. Therefore, it was Hell, not a place where souls are punished for their sins, because nothing was there. Nothing at all. This is the most basic fear of every human being: the fear of annihilation, the fear that 'I am not.'

But in dreams, in study, and in direct experience, I have come to understand the fear of annihilation to be fear's last stand and that all fear is illusion. The 'black square' I saw deep inside myself on the blue couch during my first confrontation with Roland represented something I couldn't face, largely because I couldn't explain it, having no vocabulary, no tools to even begin to comprehend what I clearly, if momentarily, experienced.

Now it is very intelligent. In the 'nowhere' of the psyche is the 'black hole' which births all visible light and holds the secrets of the origin of the uni-verse—the unity of all diversity.

That 'black square is the same emptiness I was drawn into in Columbus and in St. Louis. I was utterly afraid, because what I experienced is the final face, and is what I most need to deal with in this lifetime. So it is no wonder that The Context most excited in me that ultimate fear. Fear originates from feeling separate, from duality, as expressed in 'divine/demonic'.

What did I experience? What was it really, that fear I interpreted as supremely negative? It was, quite simply and purely, Reality, the source of all experience that lies just the other side of the final fear.

The most important words that can be stated about Reality is that it is without limit and beyond time and...that it is our own innate nature—not just 'my' true nature, but the true nature of every soul.

It has been fairly recently that I came to realize, to understand beyond mere intellectual comprehension, that Reality was never absent from me, even during my wailings and despair. My plunges into hopelessness were nothing other than my awareness being irresistibly pulled into the source of all experience, which has been called 'the Void.' This state, rather than being empty, which is the name we bestow because of fear, is supremely full, for it holds the entirety of Creation. All of the universe is in every part of the universe, says the most successful theory that has arisen out of Quantum Physics. I beheld the black hole that is the origin of humanity, of history, of art, of science, of love, of the soul.

Fear works by reversal, by seemingly confirming the opposite of what is true. It was only in such a polarized arena of fear, of the demonic and of Justin's verdicts that I could interpret such a revelatory opening as the opposite of what it in truth is. We are that Reality which goes by every laudable and sacred name. We are the essence Life itself.

That is the *modus operandi* of all cults: they polarize, they create enemies, they make us an enemy of our own nature, which is unlimited awareness. Cults reinforce the mind, which is the field of all fear. I completely believed the messages of my mind, believed my thoughts—since Justin so believed his. Yet the mind is a liar—useful for balancing checkbooks and solving problems, but in the realm of truth it is no better a guide than a weathervane.

What a recognition—that what I shut out as the implosion of life was actually life's very essence opening to me beyond time and space and causation! I could not accept the ultimate gift of my attention merging with pure and infinite consciousness. I played into fear's ultimate trick—to turn what is full and pure, priceless and freeing into what we call empty and dense, worthless and imprisoning.

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Not half a year ago, I had another dream of Justin Snow. Whether it will be my last, I cannot say. But in this dream, I was at a house inhabited by his followers. After several confronting situations, I went outside. There was a celebration and, amid the crowd, I saw Justin. He wore a black shirt and slacks. I was in white. We talked and, while he never dropped his 'role', at the dream's finale, we embraced...wholeheartedly. I woke, sat bolt upright in bed and for an hour was stunned in wonderment. How could I even in a dream have embraced the man who had done me and so many of my friends unimaginable harm? Yet it came to me, gradually, that this was the image of my full acceptance of darkness, my union with pain, with cruelty, with 'evil.' Whatever we try to push away we give power to. I felt I was no longer giving power to Justin or his Context. Life is, indeed, whole, its fullness a mystery, remaining so even after it is experienced. All that has wounded us will return to heal us.

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Fr. Norris counseled Julian to risk again. He told her, “You can use your knowledge and experience to help others, or you can hang on until you’re a bitter old woman.” She hated the priest for saying that and wanted to hit him. Yet she followed his advice—many times. So have I, Mark, Matthew and Caitlin. In our search, as a consequence of having chased the mirage of The Context and come under the sway of a false teacher, Julian and I have had the great fortune to meet authentic guides in most of the great spiritual/religious traditions of our planet. We have studied and practiced with adepts—Christian, Sufi/Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu—who gained fulfillment via their own tradition and became integrated and universal beings in whom all true religions meet. In each tradition we sought the original inspiration—which is beyond dogma and ritual and system—and found them all to be deep wells into the same aquifer.

No word is true, no idea, no thought, no government, no religion. Nothing that we can call ‘it’ holds the primacy and mystery and timelessness for which the heart and soul yearn.

Our risking has been significant. It has taken us from the realm of belief into the open space of life as it is. We have gratefully come to love all the great paths that return us to the Source, which is the very definition of ‘religion.’ We cannot thank Fr. Norris, the Visitation Sisters and the monastery monks enough for their love, their insight and presence. Strong, giving souls are present in most every arena, even in cults, as I hope this book has well exhibited. Yet religions, as institutions, have put up walls that too often separate rather than unite. It is time for these walls to come down, to no longer favor any group or class or nation, and to no longer leave out even one person.

It has taken the past five years for Julian and me to see that any belief, any ‘ism’ or model or school of thought is but an

overlay, The Context being a shattering example in the extreme. Finally, every system of belief is necessary and helpful up to a point—and then it constitutes a barrier. Life is not a system or a belief, but the non-dualistic wholeness of what exists timelessly beyond all assumptions and imaginings, beyond the mind and all its matrices of thought.

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What we see depends on what we're looking at—but even more on what we are looking for.

I am referring to an attitudinal concern. If we are looking to find that cults are utterly negative societies, then there is ample justification to confirm this thesis. If we have read to prove to ourselves that we could never be a candidate for such an outlandish group, no doubt we have emerged victorious. If we feel that Justin Snow is the paragon of evil or, conversely, a brilliantly wise soul gone unfortunately astray, both interpretations are possible.

Even after vicariously entering the dynamic and driving saga of The Context, to come away feeling that now everything about cults has been revealed or that all things cultish are perverse and unthinkable strikes me as the urge to simplify so as to grasp the complexity of the human heart and the longing that resides in every soul. The soul will never be grasped.

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Cults will not go away.

No one will legislate against cults, the price being far too great. Cults, in one sense, exist to reveal the emotional need to belong and the turgid material that underlies what it means to be in a human body. We are drawn to learn about cults precisely because the psychic material that they excavate is the stuff that gets swept under millions on millions of carpets, is ignored by governments, courts, corporations, religions, families and even those we call spouse and friend.

Cults will not go away because they deal in the coinage that every person must pay to gain purity and happiness of any lasting and authentic nature. Everyone has an ego which assumes that it—the 'I'—is the center of the universe. That ego, that false sense of self that identifies with the body, thoughts and senses, sets itself, when push comes to shove, against those it defines as 'other,' against the universe. Therefore, that makes each of us a cult of one, as long as we obey the voice that puts 'I' above all else. This is our basic addiction, one we all share. The things we do to ourselves inside our private cult constitute the basic definition and scope of all the suffering we can imagine.

Those who are in or have been in a cult are obvious addicts to the stuff that we all are addicted to: the urge to be secure, the love of affection and esteem, the hope of being special, the lust for power and control...and being right...and being separate.

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A cult of one. This is the knowledge of the self—the limited self—that every personality tries to hide...until that deception has by life been broken open into the deeper desire to be real.

We each, being a cult of one, form relationships and groups and organizations that promulgate our inner cultishness. We see this truth demonstrated in our governments, military, institutions, corporations, religions and families.

Cult knowledge is hidden knowledge. It is *the* knowledge of our day, *the* knowledge that can bring the greatest gift to our human family, to our societies, to ourselves. It resides in all the places we refuse to look—into the feminine, into poverty, into the deeper causes of illness and into the energy/space/spirit beneath the surface of all that we make into an 'other'.



Cult knowledge is life knowledge—is the knowledge of what we accept as life. Cult knowledge rises when our assumptions and beliefs about life are exposed as limited, resulting in impure aspirations. What we take to be ourselves and life itself is limited and merely an idea based on our limited vision. What makes limited vision? Our continued agreement—with our sense of limitation within us and with other persons who choose to remain limited—to not look at the basis of our thoughts and actions.

We do not have to suffer. It is not our nature. Yet suffering continues because we continue to give our power to persons, groups and institutions that will gladly take what we offer in order to energize programs which seemingly serve society, but which also are serving the addictions to power, greed, influence, fame and wealth. And to the extent that the people, groups and institutions in our lives serve such addictive agendas, society is robbed of immeasurable energies, untold creative possibilities, inconceivable inner resources. The greatest untapped natural resource is the boundless reservoir of insight, harmony and peace within each of us. But the cult of one, and all the cults that we consciously and unconsciously support, will never permit us to tap this reservoir.

If we do not know cult knowledge, we do not and cannot understand the nature of civilization and the nature of the human personality. To admit and look unflinchingly at the original fault—call it desire, call it fear, call it cowardice, call it ignorance—within the human personality, which is to say the idea we each have about who we are, is the falls we, who are in the middle of the river, refuse to jump into. But until we do, we will rant against offers of real help and will shiver in our weaknesses, our hearts cold. Suffering's mirage and the unimaginable loss of energy and intelligence stop the moment

we realize that we have no other choice but to save ourselves, to jump.

Knowledge of exactly what a cult is is the knowledge that would most spiritually free us.

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There is no illusion on the author's part that reading this book will get anyone out of a cult who is currently in one. No one in a manipulative group that brainwashes its members thinks that he or she is in a cult.

However, many readers may know someone who is in a cult. *What to do?* is the obvious and urgent question. This book has tried to explicate the deep conditionings that result in conflictive emotions of a vast order. Someone in a cult is in a delusional state, and no frontal assault will work and no swift and merely explanatory cure exists.

There are individuals who call themselves cult de-programmers, who can be effective, if the concerned member can be physically freed to meet with such a person. However, caveats here abound. Certainly the credentials and experience of any de-programmer must be well-examined, as well as his or her character. Some de-programmers can be brutal and have taken up such a profession to cover up deep hurts within themselves. Yet, knowing a dear one is in a cult may well constitute an untenable situation that demands action. What little counsel I can provide, not having used such a tactic, suggests step-by-step prudence, careful weighing of possibilities, patience and interviewing people who have been assisted by a given de-programmer.

In any event, getting out of a cult is no light matter and, should a loved one be physically freed, please recognize that the mental and emotional cords will take time to fray, unravel and break—more time than is expected.

Exit counseling by a trained professional is definitely advisable. Most of those who are fortunate enough to get out of a cult will likely not have the added good fortune of having other former members of the cult to converse with for hours on end. Whatever the circumstances of one's extrication, counseling and therapy will be well worth the expense, and may need to continue for some time.

It takes time to get out of a cult, if by 'getting out' we mean not getting into another one. Because the draw of cults is the addictive tendencies of potential members, those who under whatever circumstances leave a cult then must face the unconscious inner material—the stored experiences of fear, the need for love and acceptance, the longing to matter in a ever-widening world—by which they were hooked and, to the extent they leave these volatile spaces uninvestigated, will likely be hooked again.

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Despite the mountains of evidence to the contrary, ours is a very spiritual age. Most everyone is searching. Whether or not a person can name what he or she longs for, the sense that life is not enough is prevalent. Thanks to our contemporary society's obsession with materiality, people all over the world are looking for 'more', for a way out, for meaning, for authenticity, for essence, for freedom, for higher functioning and greater consciousness.

The common element of all cults is that its members are seekers. It is such seekers who in escalating numbers have made the self-help and spiritual aisles of our bookstores so popular, not to mention the related sci-fi and fantasy sections.

In such a charged time of looking for something greater than one's own boxed-in ignorance, the world is blessed with true teachers, selfless enough to not manipulate those who come to trust their guidance.

On the other hand, many are those whose search has brought insight and even ‘flashy’ experiences, yet who have not come to abide in the reality that creates no divisions, which we call the power of love. Spiritual gifts take a long time to integrate to the point that the heart is open and the person is transformed in purity. Many potential saints don the role of spiritual teacher before they are cleansed enough to want nothing for themselves. Such awakened dreamers, such enlightened egos, are in a precarious position and, if they push ahead into claiming the fruits rather than tending to their roots, the results can be dangerous and devastating—as we have seen.

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The actuality of ‘cult’ exists in many dimensions beyond Justin Snow and the other 3,000 known cult leaders currently identified in North America. There are cults, like The Context, which justly bear that name. There are other groups and organizations—from our religious sects to corporations, to clubs and cliques—that may tend toward cultishness, to a greater or lesser degree. After all, do most organizations not try to grow in stature, be right, protect themselves, assert their influence—just like any ego-bound person? There are still other associations, such as one’s job, that a member or employee one can make into a cult by devoting excessive time and believing totally in its mission and actions. There is a significant difference between a cult and a group that may be ‘cultish.’ Almost any organization can to a given member become cultish to some degree, which is to say that ‘cultishness’ may have to do as much with an individual who deeply identifies with the group and/or its leader as with that group and leader per se. Discernment is required in any discussion about cults.

Originally, ‘cult’ was a positive term given to a group of individuals who were specifically more focused, devoted and intent than others who professed the same allegiance. But in

our era, 'cult' has come to mean a situation in which someone has control over and manipulates 'followers' for personal gain. The result is the most seemingly promising possibilities led by the most seemingly talented and charismatic individuals promising exactly what we want but offering the most convoluted and ruinous actualities.

Justin Snow is not new. You have met him down through the ages in countless personages—from Shakespeare's Richard III, Iago and the wife of Macbeth to the Hilters, Mussolinis and Stalins of the modern world.

Mark O'Doyle, who had great insight into Justin Snow's proudest possession—the demonic engine of his ego—hoped this book would effectively demolish the Snow machine. But that is not possible, since this 'machine' lives within each of us. Each of us has the freewill to invent wars and famines and cults, as well as printing presses and light bulbs and computers. But lest we forget that we cannot tolerate such cruelty to our fellowman, I offer the analogy put forth by one of our many friends in *The Context* whom you did not meet.

*To say that what the cult did, even though we all benefited immeasurably from it, was good is like saying that a woman—whose empire-building husband is shot down by a gunman, thereby leaving her to run the entire business and without experience does so and grows to love her work—seeks the gunman out and shakes his hand.*

This book has been offered as an inoculation, so that you might, having here entered *The Context* in a virtual way, be spared the equivalent of its actuality. Perhaps you saw from the outset how duped I was, or how idiotic that I bought what Justin Snow was selling or that I was but a child longing for fatherly

acceptance. Perhaps, despite knowing that this book was about a cult, you felt pulled in, dazzled by Justin and his aesthetic band of followers. You might even have been sad to find out that *The Context* turned out to be a false container of Reality, and felt that it would have been grand had its promises proved authentic. If so, welcome to the lure of a cult. It is no condemnation to be drawn to such glittering and terrifying hope. Rather, here is a call to look within and find the roots of our pull toward speciality, glory, spiritual knowledge and power.

The beginning of getting free from addiction is the ‘sobriety’ of seeing our neediness at work, and how such a drug can take over a life and make it a pseudo-life. You are not alone, by any means. In fact, you are in good company. It is the one who recognizes his or her addiction who has the chance to choose freedom. Those who don’t see the obvious and remain in comfortable denial cannot be free until they wake from the nightmare they still consider a tolerable and perhaps even fortuitous dream.

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I wrote this book as a therapy. Just out of *The Context* for 18 months, it got me in touch with some of the injury, some of the pain, some of the lack of self-worth that made me a candidate for destruction. Then I realized that it might also help my wife, and my dear friends—Matthew and Caitlin, Mark, Vanya, Marv, Rudi and the many others who shared the hell of the paradise we thought we had contacted. Gradually, talking with members of other cults and friends who had a family member in a cult, I came to realize that the purpose of my experience could serve many aspirants who are looking for deeper and more meaningful lives in waters that felt too shallow and obscure.

Yet there is even a larger and more pervasive reason for *CULT*. Were I hoping to write the definitive book on cults,

would it not be incumbent on me to announce the reasons for and basis of cults and their continuance.

The greater justification for this book is the following dissonant observation: Cults are not just hidden away and led by strangely oriented people, madmen and conmen, nor are they confined to fanatical delusionists—the criminal masterminds and the good people gone astray with self-aggrandizement. If by cult we mean an organization of two or more persons in which one is subjected to the will of another and thereby harmed by such confinement, no matter how amazing are the experiences within such subjugation—then we find cults in far more ‘regular’ and everyday venues than we might suspect, or, frankly, want to admit.

Relationships, be they ‘friendships’ or other partnerships; families; corporations, governments and other institutions can, under strained and dynamic circumstances, fall under the definition of cult.

If we look with eyes alert to the energies of power and manipulation, we will find no end to cults, and surely no boundaries to cultishness. The battered wife who continually returns to her abusive husband is an obvious example. We can hardly imagine why she keeps bouncing back—until we realize that she is bound to this relationship with cords that go way into the unconscious. A father who constantly tells his son that he will never amount to anything, or the mother that communicates in untold ways the disgust she has for her unwanted child—is this not cult behavior? It may well be disillusioning to consider political campaigns, military programs and troop maneuvers, governmental regimes, scientific expeditions, educational or medical institutions, corporate production or takeover to fall into the realm of cult or cultishness. But any group acting as if the ends justify the means; whose banner, spoken or unspoken,

is righteousness in any form; and whose progress proceeds by power, control and manipulation is at least cultish.

Why is it that we can cast our gaze virtually in any direction and in any stratum of society and find the stuff of cults? The ‘why’ of such an assertion lies in the recognition that life itself is a cult. The psychologist Rollo May put it well: “To be alive is to be addicted, and to be addicted is to stand in need of grace.”

Being in a human body finds us with infinite hopes, dreams and desires yet with only (seemingly) finite resources. The life we are brought into demands socialization, which necessarily diminishes individuation, just the way adulthood virtually suppresses childhood.

The life we have been handed by the genetic history of our race teaches us the common denominator of human experience: suffering. We come to believe that we are our thoughts, our emotions, and our bodies. Our society, and civilization in general, have no inputs to the contrary, and so we believe the information of our five senses. We get the message that externalities are more important than who we are inside. We come to fear death and change and the unknown. We learn to mistrust others and, to that extent, ourselves. Why are we taught these untruths? Because there is a social structure and system that benefits—in power and pleasure and wealth—from our servitude. If we try to exit this charged milieu, we are faced with ostracism and potential penury, bullying, even incarceration, injury, death and madness—just as in any other cult. Try not paying your taxes or telling the whole truth about the banking or military or medical industries, to name a few examples.

The insight of a master cult leader (Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, written about his life while in prison) is terrifyingly simple: The bigger the lie, the easier it is to get people to



believe it.. Quite an insight. The question then follows: What is the biggest lie? The biggest lie would be the one we—meaning virtually every person on the planet—must believe, a lie that is so ingrained that it would be ludicrous to even consider its actuality. The biggest lie is more fundamental than that there is enough food to free everyone on the planet, or that every society can freely run on energy more available than sunlight. The biggest lie has to do with what the latest efforts in physics and biology are revealing in an objective light. What, then, is the biggest lie? It has to do with our common experience of suffering, specifically with the antidote to suffering: love. The biggest lie, however, will even challenge those who feel that God is love and that, as the Beatles sang, “Love is all there is.”

The biggest lie is that we are each separate beings. How deeply we believe the walls that separate us from one another—from our parents and teachers, from our neighbors and employers, even from our spouses and children! We are not unified because we are divided in ourselves. Buying such ignorance, we are even separate from our own experience. That assumed separateness powers our governments, economic theories, schools and workplaces, and even our religio-spiritual beliefs.

Yet our inbred sense of separation is based on false assumptions. Our scientists and our true spiritual teachers are pointing to the fundamental unity of life that embraces all perceived dualities. We are not separate beings, even though our acculturation and uniqueness of experience paint a seamless picture that we are different one from another. Such a world-wide assumption, accepted as obvious and incontrovertible, defines the immensity and disastrously energy-draining proportions of the cult of Newtonian life.

Freedom from this cult requires that we see its falsehood. Seeing is the key in every art, especially the art of living. We merely treat the largest of lies as any other lie—seeing it for what it is, we ally ourselves with its opposite, which constitutes truth. The truth is non-changing, and therefore eternal. If we lived without any lies whatsoever, we would be living the truth.

To live without lies requires full dedication, the help of like-minded persons and those who have been irrevocably extricated from pre-conditioning. It is such souls of wisdom, freedom and unbounded love who see the world and find boundless fullness where others see only form, texture, color, utility, problems, danger, hopelessness, despair and the like. To get free of this cult is called ‘waking from the dream.’ Other names are ‘self-realization’ and ‘enlightenment.’ Justin Snow asserted that he was enlightened. Hopefully, from reading CULT you have gleaned the essence of enlightenment as being not what someone says or dreams up or even experientially stimulates in others, but who one is, how humble one is, how pure and selfless.

“Inscrutable are His tracings out,” says St. Paul, meaning that each way to the Infinite—of which there are infinite ways—is inconceivably varied, mysterious and perfect. To become complete and free from all that can be called ‘cult’, we travel a unique path, through ‘the valley of the shadow of death’ and all the cultishness that defines the world and the limited self. We are, finally, both individual and universal, unity in diversity. The changing universe and its timeless, changeless source—that fullness is who we are.

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I intended this as a book of hope, so anyone—with or without cult experience—could come to this story and find, no matter how desolate today may seem, that life will not let down

anyone who yearns for life. May we each be led out of the confinements we feel have been thrust upon us. May we trust that we will meet those souls who can 'educate' us, who can lead us out of our current boundaries. May we recognize these guides by their wisdom and their willingness to serve without asking for anything in return. May we be inspired to what the modern mythologist Joseph Campbell called 'the hero's adventure,' the spiritual journey that every human being, consciously or unconsciously, is on. May we be moved to pull away all false claims and stand in what remains. May we be free. And may we selflessly share this freedom in ways that can freely assist others. May we live in a world of mutual respect, especially on that most tender level of life represented by our religions. May we come to see that our only hope lies within us, in clearing our minds and opening our hearts and being glad that life offers no resistance to those who long to love.

*Come, come,  
Whoever you are,  
Wonderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.  
Come even if you have broken your vow  
A thousand times before.  
Ours is not a caravan of despair.  
Come, come, yet again  
Come.*

—Jalalluddin Rumi—

We live in watershed times. In our unprecedented day, human capacity has set a course toward the brink of destruction at the very time when we, as a human family, stand at the gateway of harmony. While our species seems intent on exploring outer space, it is inner space that requires our individual focus.

Cults are one of the vehicles to get us to look at the landscape within, which is both fraught with trepidation and teeming with untapped potential. This is the exploration to which Rumi's invitation is directed. Whether or not dark clouds are building on the brink of our outer world, our inner weather holds the spaciousness and tranquility that alone can fulfill our purposes for having taken a human body. May we all graduate from the 'cult of fear' to live in the clarity, peace and love that naturally arise when cloudy assumptions and storms of divisiveness melt into pure sky.