

Confessions of an AntiChrist

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Introduction

I have heard it has been said that fact is sometimes stranger than fiction, and this work is an example of one of those times, for you see, my parents, before I was even a gleam in anyone's eye, became involved with some very warped individuals who worshiped the Devil and enacted horrible rites in a practicing satanic coven. Associated with some very rich and well-connected members of Omaha's elite, the events that occurred here are far from fantasy, and would mire Omaha, Nebraska with a dark cloud of suspicion that would reach out and eventually ensnare a political system in its web. Reports of child prostitution leading to the Whitehouse would blaze on the front page of the NY Times, while other media outlets spoke about drugs being brought in from the Contras, but all this paled in comparison to what was honestly going on here.

Rumors and conjecture still surface in Omaha about a time in the mid-1980's when a group of rich men drove a local bank called the Franklin Credit Union into the ground. Books like *The Franklin Cover-Up: Child Abuse, Satanism, and Murder in Nebraska* by John Decamp (1992) and *The Franklin Scandal: A Story of Powerbrokers, Child Abuse & Betrayal* by Nick Bryant (2009) have recounted details of a pedophile ring that was based in Omaha but reached all the way to the White House. Among other crimes the group managed to swindle Franklin Credit Union out of \$40 million. The British documentary "Conspiracy of Silence," detailing many of the concerns at the time, was scheduled to be aired on the Discovery Channel on May 3, 1994--so said *TV Guide* magazine, but it was cancelled at the last minute, due to pressure by influential members of Congress. Thanks to YouTube and the internet, however, it can now be viewed by the whole world.

Concerning the Satanism that was being practiced, Omaha's local Offut Air Force Base, headquarters of [U.S. Strategic Command](#) (USSTRATCOM), was believed to be somehow involved, as was the MK-Ultra mind control project. Beginning in the Cold War Fifties, this

program had a plethora of projects dedicated to opening the frontiers of *trauma-based mind control*. That is, they used drugs, hypnosis, and torture to break the mind into compartments that could then be controlled. The story told to those Congresspersons who were privy to MK-Ultra's existence – although the American public was never informed – was that it was a “necessary evil” in the race against the Soviet Union to create the perfect spy. Dissociative identity disorder (DID), once known as multiple personality disorder (MPD), was the result for many of us children, as severe trauma was used to better understand the effects of torture on mankind. Many MKUltra survivors have continued coming forward over the decades since the 1975 Church Committee (United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities) tried to expose its existence and failed. We tried again in 1995, when there was a presidential Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments. Victims gave startling testimony, but thanks to the “embedded” corporate media, most of America did not hear a word about it.

Whether or not what my siblings, friends and I went through in Omaha was part of a government conspiracy, I can't say for certain. Considering the missing children in the area at the time, not to mention the hundreds of reports of child abuse with no real investigations, it is logical to assume that the criminal drama around children was well funded and definitely well connected.

Missing, murdered, and abused children added up to a “Satanic panic,” in Omaha — and to this day none of the cases associated with that time have been solved or prosecuted in any way. One after another, “Satanic panics” like the 1983 McMartin Daycare case in Manhattan Beach, California, in which hundreds of parents claimed that their children had been made victims of satanic practices, have fallen through the cracks. An interesting fact is that McMartin was but one of a dozen preschools in the area reporting problems of a similar nature, (one of which was a Long Beach Catholic church), but that was kept quiet in the media. A similar scandal occurred at the Presidio military base (which finally closed in 1995), with familiar issues

that were strenuously covered up by organizations such as the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF). Years later, it was revealed that members of the early FMSF board were connected with and funded by the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). The fact that the main purpose of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation has been to discredit accusations of abuse that are ritualistic, as well as satanic in nature, makes it suspect in my opinion- as I am left to wonder why so much time and money has been invested in discrediting something that has already been deemed a conspiracy theory. Why waste the time and money to battle such an idea so ferociously unless there was a reason why it was necessary.

With regards to “today’s news”, it is my contention that there are reasons why the Memphis Three received the deal that they did, first and foremost being an attempt to prevent anyone from reconsidering the social hysteria that our nation experienced in the 1980’s. It is funny, we have come to associate satanic practice with Goth kids, and yet, now- the very three we generally think of as an example, have been let free because of DNA evidence. If these three aren’t responsible for the satanic panic this nation experienced, then who is? It has been my personal experience that there was more involved than just a bunch of therapists and parents trying to take down their daycares, which also explains the lockdown this nation has been under investigating such allegations.

For a long time, I just figured that my parents’ friends were a bunch of sick rich pedophiles enamored of the 1960s and 1970s cinema genre of witchcraft and the devil, like the popular Vincent Price movies portrayed at the time. Often referred to as “happenings”, drunk, drugged-out narcissists paid my parents to do what they wanted with my siblings and me. (All three of my siblings are much older than I). For many years into my young adulthood, I thought that the satanic stuff was basically their one step beyond hedonism. Bored, rich, and demented beyond reason, I assumed that my father in his high priest red robes (signifying blood sacrifice) would be their fall guy if the group were exposed. Both of my parents participated in orgies involving children, which was instrumental to Omaha’s “happenings”.

Satanism, however, is far more than a movie set. Practicing the black arts leads to what lives within the shadows, and you never know what you are going to attract by dabbling in such things. Often times, those who argue that black magic doesn't work haven't personally practiced it. Having experienced it Directly, I am one who believes that some doors are meant to remain shut, but fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and if anything could be said of my father- it was that he was a fool.

Both my parents were beyond imagination. My father was a violent man, abusive in every way. In his younger years he was a gangster wanna-be, gambling, drinking, and having sex with children –his own and others. My mother was a narcissist who was aggressive and victimizing when she was inebriated. Both were intelligent and physically attractive and neither 'had a problem' with what was occurring in our family, as both financially benefited from selling their children for sex, which there was a strong market for.

My siblings and I always believed that a demon lived inside my father as a result of his practices with the dark arts. When enraged, he became *someone else*, his grey eyes going cold like a dead fish, at which point his atrocities knew no bounds. Whoever or whatever it was, it wasn't *him*. Children are intuitive, and considering my parents' "social activities," it wasn't a difficult conclusion to come to.

My father was very proud of being a generational Satanist in a bloodline coven of witches. Through their associations with a group called the Colonial Dames, our family discovered we were one of the first in be in power within our nations beginning 13 colonies, first to arrive in America, as well as also distantly related to Beethoven, along with our satanic history. Expected to take my place as my father's son, my grooming began the day that I was born, 120666.

Whether it was owing to my parents' activities when they were young, or was inherited from earlier generations, I couldn't say, but the fact is that *something* indwelled my father.

Perhaps ritual blood sacrifices opened him up to being inhabited by something *unnatural*, in the Nietzschean sense of *If you look into the Void, the Void looks back into you.* - but my father and his friends did more than *look* into the Void, and in turn we all got more than we bargained for.

Tales of an Antichrist

From conception on, I have always been considered by my father and his family to be the “bad seed.” The night I was conceived, my mother had been three months or so out of the hospital after a terrible car accident where she had both of her kneecaps ripped off, several bones broke, and where she also experienced a serious head injury. Anyway, that night she and my father got into an argument. None of my three siblings, the youngest of whom was born twelve years before me, remember what the argument was about, but what they did remember was that it became violent and that my father ended up raping my mom in front of them. When she discovered she was pregnant, my father told the family and neighborhood that he couldn’t be the father because of a supposed vasectomy, although later, with another wife, he would purportedly conceive two more children. So my mother was ostracized from family, friends, and neighborhood, and I began life as the bastard child.

Early in the pregnancy, the family doctor had told my mother I was a tubular pregnancy and that she should abort me before I broke through (the Fallopian Tube) and both of us bled to death. Despite the pain she was in, she refused. Her excuse was that she was too busy, but later in life she told me she was hoping to die in order to get away from my father. Then, one morning, she awoke and the pain was gone. If that doctor’s diagnosis was correct, then I was one of the very few “ectopic” babies that found its way into the womb.

Mom went into labor on Thanksgiving night although I wasn’t born until December 6, and to say I was a complicated birth is an understatement. I was breach with my hands behind my head and the resulting pressure on my mother caused her to have a stroke, flat lining her for a

time. Regardless, my mother thought I was a miracle baby, which was a theme that followed me throughout childhood and adolescence.

This ran side-by-side with the theme that I was a bad seed, supernaturally ordained to be the anti-Christ, which my father and his friends began to impress upon me from the day I was born.

Thus you can see how the story of my birth deeply affected my self-image. It was kind of like the Omen, just without the special powers. As far back as I can remember, I've feared waking up and being if not *the* Antichrist, then *an* Antichrist. Understand that I never WANTED to be the Antichrist, but I feared that the *thing* living in my father would someday live in me and that I would somehow become like him. Assured that it was an honor, my parent's friends prepared me to embrace my fate from the very beginning, despite my horror.

It was because of this fear that I have always had an unusual relationship with God. As a child, I read everything I could about God and the devil to find some way out of what I considered my destiny. I read the Bible again and again, studying Eastern religions, Greek mythology, and any occult book I could lay my hands on. Believing myself to be in hell and desperate to get out, I tried to kill myself several times. Once, ending up in the hospital as a teenager, my father asked me why I didn't just jump in front of a train. That is the kind of advice you offer a "bad seed," I guess.

As a result of my traumatic childhood, I was diagnosed with severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and have been receiving financial assistance for over a decade from the federal SSI program. What my siblings and I went through as children "rented out" to a bunch of pedophile Satanists was unspeakable enough, but add to that the devastating psychological abuse in our own family; it simply destroyed all of us. My oldest sister and brother are dead now, one from mysterious circumstances and one from a lifetime of alcoholism and intravenous drug use. My surviving sister, whom I shall call Sarah in this book, suffers from an illness that is

deteriorating her bones and I have been in therapy for over a decade now and have actually had to be hospitalized twice as an adult with PTSD and severe depression. I get into that later, but I feel it is important to get it out on the table right away.

Also, I am gay. My oldest sister was always convinced it was due to the abuse I suffered as a child and that I would outgrow it, but I never have. My father and his family harped on it, further contributing to my belief that I was inherently bad. Much like the Catholic Church, my father believed it was okay to hurt children but a sin to be gay, as did his third wife; my stepmother- a narcissistic, vicious, unattractive, shrew-like Jesus freak Nazi. Twenty years his junior (a year and a half older than my oldest sister), she became my father's secretary shortly after I was born while my mother, after 18 years of marriage, was finally divorcing him on grounds of emotional and physical cruelty.

Long before the divorce was final; my father moved in with the new lady and eventually, because his parents demanded it, married her. While my parents were complete opposites in many ways, my father and stepmother were a perfect pair- (commonly referred to as a marriage made in hell, as we kids used to say). It wasn't until after my father died and I started looking into what they both were involved with that I fully began to appreciate the truth of this statement. Anyway, I stayed with my mother until I was three, at which point she abandoned my older sister (who was still living at home), and me, and we went to live with my father full time.

Completely broken during the divorce, my mother had become a drunken prostitute, often leaving for days at a time. Looking back, I now know that severe head trauma also played a part in her demise, but in those days, no one understood and so no help was available. Therefore, we were forced to live with my father and his wife. The Brothers Grimm stepmother in "Cinderella" was an angel compared to this woman. Unlike my mother, who had grown up elegant in her day, our father's new wife had grown up as the fat, ugly, and abused daughter of two alcoholic parents on the "wrong side of the tracks." It has been my experience that she is a complete and utter sociopath. A cunning plod horse, verbally abusive and physically aggressive, she uses her

belief in Jesus to justify any nasty thing she can think of, and was (and, I presume still is) a thoroughly cruel and miserable person, now a widow.

Two peas in a pod, my father and step mother often compelled each other to new levels of bad behavior, the least of which was physical abuse. As a result, Sarah was removed from their home and placed in foster care early on, leaving me alone with the two sociopaths.

Suffering through amazing abuse until the age of 18, I left three days after graduating high school. Practicing Satanism and the sexual abuse stopped when I was 10, but soon after my father and his wife became a couple of weird Christian zealots who justified abusing me for my sexual orientation, which was impossible for me to hide even at a young age. Calling me an “animal who only went off of instinct,” and preaching that I “deserved to die or go to jail,” and that Jesus “hated homosexuals so I would burn”, I grew to associate Jesus with my abuse, believing that the beatings and assaults were because of something wrong with me, and that Jesus couldn’t love me.

As you can guess, religion has posed many problems for me. For years, I felt more anger than love towards Jesus, and besides, believing you are someday going to be the Antichrist puts a damper on the whole saved-by-the-Cross idea. God was a whole other matter totally. I have always had a relationship with God, albeit tumultuous, and though I grew up often feeling abandoned by God, I never lost faith in God’s existence.

Finally, in my late twenties and after getting into therapy, I discovered a spiritual practice called Shamanism. Usually associated with the Native American medicine faith, my particular practice, as I will describe later, is more Celtic in nature. Shamanic practice involves ritual and drums that produce an effect of a “waking dream” which enables one to symbolically explore the spiritual world that dwells within us all. Out-of-body experiences and angelic spirit guides fit well with my background of growing up believing in demons and witchcraft, though little did I know that Shamanism would eventually save my soul.

The Myth of Satanism

I once heard that the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the people that he didn't exist, but when I was a child in Omaha, I assure you that he was partying hard and having a great time. Unbeknownst to the public, was a group of rich Satanists who were in control of Omaha, and many of the abducted or abused children who were reported (and there were plenty), as well as those who never were, (which I assure you there was more of), who were not used in ritual sacrifices were being sold into a human trafficking ring. The public was aware that children were disappearing, but no one really knew what the disappearances meant. However, even the most fantastic tales barely approached the truth, for who could have believed it?

As my father's son, I was expected to practice blood sacrifice. There is a misconception Satanists only kill babies, but it was my experience that a baby doesn't offer enough blood. In blood sacrifice, it's all about the blood, and I was taught that the endorphins released when a person is under a great deal of fear and pain act as an aphrodisiac if drunk at the crescendo of suffering. BECAUSE GOD FORBIDS THE SPILLING OF BLOOD, Satanists exert extreme effort to spill as much blood of children as they can. High ceremonies always meant murdering young boys.

The belief that someday I would take my father's place as high priest afforded me no advantage with regards to my own pain and trauma. However, I must say, the ritualistic rapes I experienced were nothing in comparison to what else was happening. At what I always believed to be a local funeral home on the outskirts of town, my father and his friends furthered their enjoyment by playing horrible games of hide and seek in where, as children, we were told that if we were found, we would be killed.

Later in life I recalled that I was put in a casket inhabited by a corpse. Sometimes burying children alive; I was once forced to lie on the grave of a young boy to see if I could hear him

scream. My sister later told me that they often dug the children out, but the psychological damage had already been done.

Many of the atrocities were proclaimed as being done in my honor, so naturally I was often forced to participate in them. Cannibalism, bestiality, murder and rape were common practice with my family's friends, and as a result, I suffered constant nightmares of children coming from their graves to enact their justified revenge on me. It was because of these dreams that I would eventually seek counseling as an adult.

For me, during childhood, every day meant I could be next. Each minute was a fight for survival while my young mind struggled to find a way out of the hell I was living in, barely able to cope with the chaos I was experiencing, believing no one would listen to me if I told, and scared of the consequences I would face if I did.

In many ways, the experiences of my siblings were worse than my own, given that my father was much worse when he was younger. When he wasn't selling them on the sex market, he was hog-tying them and driving around with them naked in the trunk. Engaged in some sort of competition as to how deviant the abuse could get, one time he and his friends buried them up to their necks and left them after convincing them they were being left to die.

Rich, affluent and powerful, my parents and their friends held beliefs that were well thought out and complex. Doctors, lawyers, law enforcement, high ranking businessmen and politicians – the people involved were community pillars, rich, well educated, well connected, and completely drunk on the power their group wielded.

Although there are Satanists who proudly attest association with the dark arts – such as Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), Temple of Olympus aka Ordo Astrum Serpentis, Temple of Britannia, and America's own version of a church of Satan, the Temple of Set – most, as you can imagine, don't advertise their practices; probably from fear of association. Such was the case in Omaha. As a child, I couldn't tell anyone what was happening because I couldn't trust who was

involved and who wasn't, and what was happening was so crazy that I figured no one would believe me even if I told. People were adept at looking away, fearing they would somehow become involved in things too sordid to speak publically about.

A book entitled *Ritual Abuse in the Twenty-first Century: Psychological, Forensic, Social, and Political Considerations*, edited by Randy Noblitt and Pamela Perskin Noblitt, hit the bookstores in 2008. It is a collection of essays by experts who say that ritual abuse and satanic ritual abuse (which are not the same thing) happen not just today in America but are and have been a longstanding problem worldwide. Though the book didn't address or even mention events in Omaha, it was nonetheless like reading part of my life story that held answers to childhood puzzles that had perplexed me all my life. In many ways, it was a life-changing book in that it gave me the validation I had previously lacked.

Still, there was no mention of demons, or anything that happened in Omaha. Whether the people involved were just a collection of rich wacko's enamored of the Devil or involved in a government project to terrorize and dissociate victims, I experienced a strange and twisted intention behind what they were doing. I was taught there were reasons for the rituals and ceremonies, reasons why they believed a devil lived in my father, and reasons why they believed it would someday live in me. Please be patient as I try to lay this out for you while at the same time giving more particulars about my own history.

A Satanic Fairytale

The particular Satanism I was raised with was apocalyptic in nature and grounded in ancient beliefs of myth and prophecy, many of which are pagan and Gnostic in origin. All of it was grounded in a Judeo-Christian language.

To understand the theology of Satanism, you have to go back long before Jesus Christ, when *mythos* was just as important as *logos*. Back when intellectual mystics, later referred to as

Gnostics, under the influence of Jewish, Egyptian, and Greek mythology, developed convictions concerning the Fall from Eden and beginnings of humankind that can't accord with evolutionary biology. Later considered heretics by the Roman Catholic Church, these Gnostics believed that the true sin in Garden of Eden didn't lie in eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil but rather with a God Who envied Man's new-found knowledge; that humankind's problems began not with the Serpent, who revealed wisdom and knowledge, but instead was the fault of a jealous and vindictive God, Who cast Man and Angel alike out of paradise in a tantrum; selfishly preventing Man from eating from the Tree of Life as well.

As a child, I was told that there were two Gods: the God of Israel, God of the Old Testament considered the God of history, transcendent and "unknown" to Man- ineffective, envious, and tyrannical. Then there was the God of humankind, ruler of the world, defender of personal choice, and generally considered to be the Serpent in most Christian texts. (Yes, you read that correctly).

Way back in history, God's female counterpart was devoutly worshipped. The Hebrew tribe knew her as Ashera, the wife of God. Egyptians knew her as Isis, the Greeks as Sophia or Wisdom. Regardless of the name, this female aspect of God represented a special knowledge residing within, which can only be discovered in stages, a process the Greeks referred to as *gnosis*. Often worshipped in rituals involving sex, the Sophia aspect of *gnosis* was seen as holding the keys to life and death.

I was told that the Archangel Uriel guarded the gates to the Garden of Eden. Referred to as the Flame of God, Uriel was the angel of Divine Presence, archangel of salvation, keeper of Eden. Uriel recognized the power of life residing in Eve, and believing in free will and free choice, revealed to her the secrets of good and evil by allowing her to eat from the Tree that provided the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, Uriel was banished from Eden by the jealous God and handed the book of Hades that forbade him to enter Heaven until every soul in the world had been tested.

All that subsequently happened to humankind resulted from this event. Wanting to return to Heaven, Uriel had sex with Eve and produced Cain, bestowing upon him godlike abilities. Later, to subjugate Eve and the divine power of the deep feminine within her and thus keep her secret knowledge (*gnosis*) from humankind, Sophia sent seven angels to rape Eve and produce Abel. All this was fueled by the tyrannical God jealous of the relationship between His two creations, Man and Angels. The goal was to eradicate the consequences of the hidden secret knowledge now at humankind's disposal.

Secret knowledge is very important to Satanists, who believe the answers to life and death are found in the occult (hidden knowledge). As they see it, salvation (perfect *gnosis*) comes from experiencing all manner of sin. Libertine behavior acted out in rituals includes invoking certain angels, who in turn offer their services and protection. Satanists believe the commandments of the Creator God reflect ill will and envy, and that those who follow His laws do so out of bondage, duped by His promises that only end in death.

Rituals rotate around these premises. For example, disembowelment reflects the truth that humankind is the progeny of the Serpent and is done to offer a special reverence to the hidden parent residing in the shape of a snake within us all. Although disembowelment rarely kills the victim immediately, as a child listening to the screams I always wished it would.

To be sacrificed in a Satanic Eucharist is considered an honor, a blessing that frees innocents from their bonds of life and sends them back to their Creator. Bathed and well-fed days before their deaths, they are exposed to the best life has to offer. But since the Creator decided long ago that life should be pain, God's favorites are delivered back to Him with a message as to how bad that pain can be. During rituals, emotional outbursts are not tolerated. Tears are viewed as a sign of weakness and dealt with ferociously. Self-control (dissociation) is always expected.

The Creator is not viewed as omnipotent or omniscient, (Note: he had to ask Adam where he was after he ate from the apple of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). Thus it is easy to see why Satanists believe in the power of Uriel – Angel of Repentance, Bringer of the Cataclysm, Angel of Prophecy – and other earth-bound Angels, who, with Satanists' help, will one day be strong enough to rule over Heaven. For their devotion, Satanists are rewarded with unimaginable power and riches, as has been true for generations. Considering the social status that each Satanist outside the coven held, I believed this to be true. As my father's son, the next vessel that Uriel would inhabit, I would take my place as Antichrist in the war with Heaven in the days of the Tribulation, which would occur in my adulthood.

Many Satanic prophecies depend upon the constellation Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer, as it will reveal when the gates of Heaven open once more. Ophiuchus began with the Egyptian Goddess Isis aka Sophia, female counterpart of the Creator God, mother of Creation. Through history, Isis has changed many times, until – due to persecution by male-dominated religious sects that displace all femininity– she morphed into the male healer Asclepius.

Believers of this religion hold that Asclepius, raised by Chiron the centaur, eventually became the constellation Ophiuchus. Symbolic of mystic healing, it stands as the 10th sign in an astrological chart of 13 and is the most feminine of all the signs. In between Sagittarius and Scorpio, the Serpent Bearer touches the tip of the Sagittarius spear and stands upon the scorpion's stinger, while holding a snake that represents eternal life. Mayan calculations used a very similar astrological chart, as did the mystic Nostradamus, as well as the Chinese.

In classic mythology, Zeus killed Asclepius with a lightning bolt because of his power to heal, taught to him by the Centaur, which threatened Pluto's reign in Hades, thus safeguarding the key to Man's immortality, (a secret prize that Satanists believe will be theirs when Heaven is overthrown).

Later, Zeus resurrected Asclepius by placing him and the Serpent (symbol of renewed life) among the stars. Today, Ophiuchus stands with the Serpent power between Sagittarius the Centaur, the mentor who taught him healing, and Scorpio whose occult stinger he stands on and controls. I was taught that Ophiuchus' heart is astrologically in the exact middle of the universe, where the gates of Heaven are located, and that a planetary alignment was going to occur in my adult life that would signal the ushering in of the coming antichrist. Directly in the middle of the Milky Way, I would learn as an adult that this planetary alignment was spot on and scientific fact.

Just as the Mayan Calendar and Nostradamus predicted, so the Satanists I grew up with believed we are in days of upheaval. Sometime before 2012, the Earth will align with the rest of the solar system within the heart of Ophiuchus in the middle of the Milky Way. Whether this time is also that which ushers in the Antichrist, at which time Uriel will usurp the Archangel Michael's power, remains to be seen, but as a child I was assured that this would be the case.

Although this knowledge was bestowed upon me as a great honor, it terrorized my entire adult life until it all came to a head on my 40th birthday. It was after that things became very strange indeed.

Satan Worship in America: A Disclaimer

All Satanists are *not* alike. What I am explaining speaks only for me and my experience, for there are as many divisions to Satanism as there are denominations in Christianity. Satanists have varying opinions when it comes to worship and the reasons for their practices — America's history of worshipping Satan reveals this.

Back in the 1960's, Anton Szandor LeVey (1930-1997), author of *The Satanic Bible* and notorious cult figure, started the social experiment known as the Church of Satan. LeVey developed his church as a way to mock Christianity and the Bible: he regarded Christian

theology as a collection of myths and sought to promote the other side of the argument by casting Satan as a champion for personal freedom and individuality. Reflecting the hedonism of the 1960's, the Church of Satan was an example of free love and devotion to the narcissism that was a part of the time.

Then in 1975, one of LeVey's ex-students, US Army Lt. Col. Michael Aquino, broke away from the Church of Satan to found the Temple of Set. A Satanic mimic of Martin Luther's Protestant Revolt, Aquino created a separate sect. Whereas the Church of Satan didn't believe in God and was formed basically to mock the very concept of the Christian God and Bible, Aquino's Temple of Set believed in an Antichrist who would rise and lead his followers to absolute power. Aquino's followers profess faith in the Egyptian God Set, brother of Isis and Osiris, as well as their arch-nemesis. Like all Mystery religions, they have their own astrology, numerology, dark magic, and prophecy. In 2008, the Temple of Set hosted a worldwide conference in San Francisco that members from four continents attended. Obviously, the Antichrist business is doing well.

The Church of Satan and Temple of Set serve as a simple example of how *legion* satanic philosophies can be, even among Satanists.

MK-Ultra

Now that the Catholic Church is mired in scandal for conspiring to move and hide pedophile priests for generations, people are beginning to realize that conspiracies actually do exist. The fact is, they always have. The rich and powerful have always done what they wanted, and as it is said, *Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely*. Such was the case with MK-Ultra and Project Artichoke, run by the CIA.

Many in Omaha at the time of my childhood believed that the Satanism being practiced in the city was linked to the government and to the local Offutt Air Force Base. Victims

associated with the Franklin Credit Union told stories of government involvement in abuse and trafficking and directly named MK-Ultra as part of their “training.” Years later, when I was trying to make sense of what happened to me as a child, I began researching MK-Ultra to see if there was any connection to my experiences.

The MK-Ultra project seems to have originated from Germany, and the Nazi party. Its most famous member, Adolf Hitler, had an obsession with the paranormal and the occult and during World War II, in concentration camps, horrible experiments were conducted on prisoners in an attempt to understand, amplify, and control psychic abilities that could help Germany win the war. Hitler employed hundreds of Germany’s best minds, bringing them together to effectively commit atrocities against their fellow men to better understand *and control* the mind.

After Germany was defeated, the United States was determined not to allow the data from these experiments to fall into Russian hands. In 1946, President Harry Truman authorized *Project Paperclip*, a secret operation to bring Nazi scientists to America in hopes that they could work on our behalf during the Cold War. (I am not 'speculating' here; the data is available today in declassified documents.) By 1955, more than 760 German scientists, many former Nazis, had been granted US citizenship and were given prominent positions in American science as they continued their work with human psychology and the mind, among other things. Project Paperclip was discontinued in 1957, or so the government claims.

Note that in 1951 a project called *Bluebird* (later renamed *Artichoke*) was established by the CIA, to invent techniques for *special interrogations* (similar to what is now being done at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib). A document issued in June of that year described the essential elements of the program as physiological research that could lead to a better understanding of the constituent factors in human behavior. By using physiological and pharmacological research, the military would better understand the action or effectiveness of various agents in connection with efforts to control human behavior. In other words, mind control.

As a result of Nazi data gathered in concentration camps and delivered to the CIA, a hydra of projects were spawned, including the umbrella project MK-Ultra, brainchild of Richard Helms, later a CIA Director, and Allen Dulles, who was CIA's Director at the time. A secret government program purportedly designed to defeat Russia in brainwashing, MK-Ultra employed drug therapy, electroshock, sleep deprivation, memory erasure, sensory modification, etc. These techniques are now called *enhanced interrogation*, but quite plainly they are *torture*. Unwitting victims were also exposed to radiation, lethal biological agents, etc. – all in the name of “national security.”

In 1973, Helms, then Director of Central Intelligence, was alerted about a forthcoming congressional investigation. He therefore ordered all MKUltra records to be destroyed and spread the “official” story that the program had been terminated in the late 1960's. Fortunately, 20,000 pages got overlooked. These were subsequently declassified and released (though with many redactions).

Revealing outrageous crimes against humanity perpetrated by the American government (and its contractors) on unwitting American and Canadian citizens, MK-Ultra then surfaced for brief public attention. Most people heard about the 1975 hearings conducted by the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, as the mainstream media gave it page-one coverage. The hearings were chaired by Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho).

With most of the documentation destroyed and no one connected with the MK-Ultra project working at the CIA any longer, public indignation fizzled out. Given that my experiences didn't end until 1976, and that the victims of the Franklin scandal were speaking of MK-Ultra abuses well into the 1980's, if any of the events in Omaha are related to a “secret” government project like MK-Ultra, then it seems that business as usual continued after the Church Committee much as before: in secret.

Books like *The Manchurian Candidate* by Richard Condon (1959) and *The Project MK-ULTRA Compendium: The CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification* by Stephen Foster (2009), allowed me to see similarities between the objectives of the MK-Ultra project and what was happening satanically to us as children. Unimaginable abuse and being drugged during rituals was common, and though the drugs probably made anal penetration less painful, they also made it difficult to determine what was real and what was not, making it easier for me to tell myself I was dreaming. A psychological attempt to shield me from the horrors I was experiencing? Perhaps. Besides ambiguity, I have to say that the drugs also added fear and terror. Sleep deprivation came with the territory of growing up in my house, given how violent the household was. Often, my enraged father would wake us up at night and beat us; then, having worked himself into frenzy, he would rape us. As a result, I had difficulty with sleep for years into adulthood.

Although I was never diagnosed as such, Sarah was diagnosed with dissociative identify disorder (DID). From what I understand about MK-Ultra, DID was not an "offshoot" of the program, it was the goal. Breaking the mind into compartments and afterward programming the different compartments for different functions was part of building spies and assassins. Our experiences might also have been designed to effectively cause psychotic breaks. Whatever the objectives at the time, in the end it basically destroyed our psyches. Most of the torture could have been some sort of experiment, but certain events make me wonder if what we went through wasn't some sort of *programming*.

For example, at about seven, I was brought into a room in which a dark-haired boy sat with a dog and three men. Judging from how the boy was clinging to the animal, I believed it to be his dog, but looking back I realize he could have been clinging to the dog out of fear. While being intensely observed, I was forced to watch as the boy was first tortured with cigarette burns and threats of death, then forced to kill his dog with a knife. Afterwards, sobbing and terrified, he was tied to the chair. I was told he was weak and therefore unworthy to live. As a tribute to me, I

was ordered to kill him and release him from his life bonds. Saying no under such circumstances, especially as a child, was not an option, but even so I found myself unable to commit such an act. I complained that I couldn't do it because he was looking at me, my hope being that my excuse would excuse me from committing murder. The men were not to be daunted. Grabbing hold of the boy's head, proclaiming they were doing it in my honor, they removed his eyes with a scalpel. I can still hear the boy's screams. Once they realized that the screams were bothering me, they removed his tongue. The sounds of his gurgling screams were finally enough; I plunged the knife handed to me into his chest. The point of this ritual I can't say, but I remember that the men didn't take their eyes off of me. Whether it was a government project or a ritual committed by fanatical weirdoes, try as I may, I will never forget those eyes.

Psychic ability was expected, and I was taught at an early age how to look into a person's eyes to figure out what they were afraid of. I was also taught that there are three kinds of people: the material, basic cattle to be used at will, sometimes referred to as "eaters and breeders"; the psychic, who can be ambassadors to the third type; which is the spiritual, the level I was expected to achieve. Encouraged to open myself up and trust my intuition early, this may have been why my father, who eventually came to fear me, told me on a daily basis that I was *an animal who only went on instinct*. Having an idea of things I was being trained for, I imagine I made him uncomfortable, and for many years I hated my father. In fact, like a good Satanist, I hated both my parents.

(Note: when I say 'my parents' I generally mean my father and step-mother – if I am referring to my life up to age 18. After that I lived again with my real mother. My father was married three times. His first wife does not figure in this book. His second wife, my mother, had five offspring - me being her youngest. His third wife is the one I call step-mother.)

A Master of Ceremonies

With risk of jumping too far ahead of myself, I need to make a further introduction in order to help put what I have explained into perspective. As a child in all of this, you need to understand that no introductions were ever made, and no explanations were ever offered. Having the perceptions of a child, I focused on what I needed to survive, and little else. What I was being forced to do took more of a precedent than who was making me do it, and the question of why didn't factor into things until long into my adulthood. Sedation beforehand and electro shocks to my head afterward helped me forget a lot of it, keeping my experiences in a fog that only manifested in my dreams. Never wanting to look back and remember, I was adept at avoiding the past until, although it wouldn't happen until well into my adulthood, I would see the man in my dreams, changing everything for me.

My worst nightmares always involved a man I believed to be a figment of my imagination. Always elaborately dressed in long and flowing attire, he was a gay version of Eddie Munster from the popular television show in the 70's, as flamboyant as he was sadistic, and evil to the core. Dominating my dreams, and often my waking life, it wasn't until after my father's death and I began to research my past that I discovered that the man of my dreams was an actual living breathing person. It was this realization that began to put everything into perspective for me.

It is hard to explain what it was like to see Col. Michael Aquino for the first time as an adult. Just seeing a video of the man being interviewed on a national talk show physically sucked the air from my lungs, leaving me unable to breath for a while. As you will read, for many years I did everything I could to disassociate myself from my childhood, trying to escape the effects of my past any way possible- but all that changed when I laid eyes on the man who

had tormented my memories and dreams all my life, thus making it impossible to deny my past any longer.

I guess the first thing you need to understand about Michael is that people are afraid of him, not because he is a founder of the satanic cult Temple of Set, but rather it is the people that he is associated with that scares people. He likes to hang with nasty people who like to do nasty things- and they are all connected to the government and projects that no one really likes to talk about. Good friends with both Regan and George Bush, Sr., he has a long distinguished career in psych ops, and, among other things, was a person accused of satanically abusing children at the Presidio day care. He was also my main handler in the instruction and practice of black magic. In so many ways, I owe this man so much I couldn't begin to explain, for had he not opened me up as he did, I might not have survived what I have.

Teaching me the value of consciousness, he awoke me to the vast possibilities of the mind and its ability to manifest, although it would be decades before I would find myself able to appreciate his efforts, for who could have guessed that he and his friends were onto something. It takes a man of strong convictions to build a temple to practice his faith, and Temple of Set stands as a testimony to Aquino's fortitude to further explore concepts most would rather deny existed, as does his distinguished military career. Had he not shared his exuberance for celebrating the dark with me as a child, I would not understand what I do today, looking back. As much as he would hate to admit it- I am a testament to his brilliance.

Growing Up in Paradise

Being groomed to be a psychopath lasted until I was ten, at which time the father of an abducted girl caused my family's circumstances to take a turn for the worse (though in the end this would save my life.)

As I mentioned, back in the 1970's in Omaha an inordinate number of child abductions were occurring, including murders. During that time, a dark-haired little girl, a playmate of mine, who lived a few blocks from us disappeared. Soon afterward, I and my parents moved out of Omaha to a town 45 minutes away. I didn't think much about the move until the summer of 1976, when the deceased girl's father knocked on our door. Still desperate to find his little girl and knowing that she and I had been playmates, he'd tracked us down years after the fact. He wanted to know if my family knew anything about her disappearance. Inviting him in, my father sat with him in our living room as my stepmother prepared refreshments in the kitchen, drugging his iced tea. They waited until he passed out, then dragged him into the basement and tied him to a chair.

My father then called my oldest sister Cindy and my older brother Stephen, both of whom did the bidding of my father until the day he died. With my stepmother, they decided to perform a ritual of our own, without the help of my father's friends. They were all panicking and they needed to involve me to ensure my silence, so as a group they decided I could handle what they were about to make me do. Desperate times call for desperate measures, as they say, and so late that night, as we surrounded the unconscious man tied to a chair, my father doused him with lighter fluid and my stepmother handed me the match that I was forced to throw on the man,

thus lighting him on fire. He woke up instantly and his screams pierced the confines of our basement. I stood with my hands over my ears. Grabbing a shovel, my father plunged it into his stomach and silenced him instantly. My stepmother then ordered me to my room where I sat huddled in a corner for the rest of the night. Afterward, we quickly moved out of state to a small town in northern Iowa where I would live until age 18.

The damage from that night PTSD'd me into a mess, (post-traumatic stress disorder, well known today among soldiers.) Plagued by nightmares, I became unable to control my emotional outbursts, posing a threat to my family, so my father and stepmother stepped up my physical abuse until I had a psychotic break at twelve. Not knowing what to do with me, they sent me to stay the summer with my older sister Sarah in Minnesota, who was then 24. She had been removed from their care in childhood and placed in foster care, and had eventually moved north to escape our father.

Sarah had her hands full with me, given how I constantly lied about everything and stole from her friends. She was also involved in a physically abusive relationship with her first husband at the time, struggling was to overcome her own childhood experiences. She was patient with me until the day I physically attacked her son, at which point she called the police. The details of what happened are unimportant, but immediately after attacking her child, I tried to kill myself by taking pills I found in her medicine cabinet.

For the first time, not only were the police involved but doctors and social workers as well, and they all wanted to know why I was having a psychotic break. After telling them that I was the Antichrist and needed to die, and after listening to my sister's explanation as to what she

believed I was going through, the Minnesota courts ordered social workers to monitor my father's house in Iowa after I was returned to him.

The small town in Iowa where we lived was isolated, (30 minutes from the Minnesota border), and everyone saw us as a bunch of weirdo's. I was psychologically fractured and unable to hide the fact that I was gay, so I grew up with no real friends. Lonely, angry, and hopeless, a month later after returning to my father's house and convinced I was saving the world, I tried to kill myself again. Thanks to a social worker, I ended up being looked after in a mental hospital for five months, which was a life-changing event.

When I'm asked how I survived what I went through as a child, I always look back on the events leading up to my hospital stay as a time when things began taking a different turn. Though unable to convince myself that I wasn't the Antichrist, it was the first time in my life that I wasn't being abused, and as a result I began to realize that abuse didn't have to be a way of life. At thirteen, this was a major revelation.

Another revelation was that I was of above average intelligence. Having no self-esteem after being told by my father and stepmother that I was not only evil but also stupid, I learned early to distrust my perceptions concerning what was going on around me. My reality was constantly being rewritten by my parents, as they denied their actions of abuse. In other words, I was constantly being told that what I knew to be true was not true, and as a result, I came to distrust my own experiences and intelligence. Those five months in the hospital gave me a chance to explore who I was without my father, stepmother, and their friends rewriting me. No one believed me when I told them what had been going on at home all my life; nonetheless I felt a freedom I had never felt before.

Although the hospital recommended a group home after my stay, I reluctantly agreed to return home with my father after a tearful reunion. Other than when I was admitted – when he asked why I didn't just "jump in front of a train" – it was the only other time he was to visit me, though he sent his wife one other time to attend a family counseling session. Still, I loved him, and though I knew the physical and emotional abuse would continue, I figured it was better to return to what I knew rather than take the chance on something new. Years later, my therapist told me this was typical of abuse survivors, but I chided myself for years afterwards for my decision. However, everything happens for a reason, and this was no different. Try as they might, neither my father nor his third wife could beat out of me the budding self-confidence that began during my stay in the hospital.

Returning as a gay mental patient, whom my father referred to every chance he could, I was pretty much a leper at thirteen. At the local café, he told everyone I was a "crazy fag." In fact, discrediting me became a lifetime commitment for not only my father but for most of his family as well; then there was my own bizarre behavior. To keep everyone at a distance I told fantastic tales about my biological mother. Constantly uptight, I disrupted classes and spent much of my school day roaming the hallways. Unable to hide the fact that I was weird but unable to tell anyone why, I spent a lot of time trying to say and do the right things to fit in, but failed miserably. Being gay in the early 1980's in small town Iowa was anything but well received.

It was worse than being bullied: everyone went out of their way to avoid me. Having no friends other than teachers, I excelled on stage and played every lead in every play from freshman to senior year. I owe my drama teacher Ms. J more than I can ever repay as she gave me the opportunity to escape my life by giving me the chance to be someone else during my high

school years, as well as giving me a safe place to go. My fellow classmates laughed at me, and with only 31 people in my graduating class, I spent years being the class joke.

Humiliated by the physical abuse I was enduring and having no one to tell, God became my only confidant, and believing in the training I had undergone as a child, I convinced myself that I could sense God in the elements around me. My relationship with God would be one of the few constants I could count on in my life. I suppressed my conviction that I was the Antichrist and went out of my way to make God proud of me, probably because no one else in my life liked me, hoping I would be able to skip the whole responsibility of being the Bringer of Doom and all.

In my later teens, I grew taller and beefier than my father and began to fight back. I was never brave enough to strike my father or stepmother, but I spent a great deal of time verbally fighting back, which at first made the physical abuse worse. However, a person can only be treated like an animal for so long before he has no choice but to fight back, and by my late teens I had reached the point where enough was enough. Highly intelligent, I became good at mind games. Once, hiding a butcher knife in my bedroom, I waited days for my step-mother to find it, knowing that she routinely went through my things. Finally one day coming home, to find her hysterical and convinced that I was planning to kill her and my father in their bed at night, she began to think twice about beating me. Harsh but effective, I used their own sense of paranoia against them and slept better for it.

Three days after graduating from high school in 1985, I left their house forever. At the time I had no idea where I was going or what I would do, but any place was better than where I was.

Returning to Wonderland

After roaming around for the summer living off the compassion of strangers, I found myself living with an older man who was kind enough to offer me a place to stay until I got on my feet. After a few months, with no job, no car, no money, no hope for a future, and constantly fearing when the other shoe would drop, I once again grew depressed and decided to kill myself. At 19, death had become preferable to what I was afraid would happen in my future.

I waited one morning for my friend to leave, then blew out the pilot lights on the gas stove and sat down, expecting the gas to eventually overwhelm me. Five minutes later, however, I received a call from my sister Cindy who, sensing something was wrong, asked me what I was doing. After telling her, she convinced me to turn off the gas and, calling back five minutes later, informed me that our mother needed help. She was just getting out of the hospital after drinking herself into a diabetic coma and was willing to wire me a bus ticket to come back to Omaha. Having no idea who my mother was as a person, and from the stories my family told me expecting the worst, I nonetheless agreed. The next day, I returned to "Wonderland".

According to my family, my mother had come back from the hospital a completely different person after her car accident the year before I was born. Once driven, brilliant, outgoing, and ambitious, she had become a binge drinker and a bar fly, commonly taking men home from the bar and making a few bucks in the process. "Drunken slut," "whore," and "skank" were words often used to describe her. I remember the venom dripping whenever my father and his family would speak of her, which would generally be directed at me for being "my mother's son."

I had a great deal of rage against her for abandoning me, but my anger was nothing compared to that of my older siblings who blamed her for our entire childhood. Too weak to save us from our father, she was best friends with many of the pedophiles who abused us. My siblings held her responsible for my father's actions in a way that I, who was much younger, never quite understood. Years later, I realized that my oldest sister and brother probably never felt safe showing their anger toward our father, so they directed most of their blame toward our mother.

Although I too was angry with her, I still loved her, and in many ways it was hard not to feel sorry for her. Abandoned by everyone in the family, she had spent her life in and out of hospitals and now she'd drunk herself into a diabetic coma and had been repeatedly raped for two weeks by her roommate, a disgusting old troll drinking buddy. Had another friend of hers, worried, not come to check on her and called an ambulance, she would have died. This was her pattern. Another time she fell in the snow, passed out for eight hours, and got frostbite. Before that, she'd spilled a 32-cup pot of coffee over herself causing third degree burns. The list went on, always hurting herself while drunk, sometimes spending weeks at a time drunk with drinking buddies and glasses of Gordon's gin; chilled, no ice.

As with most binge drinkers, she was a Jekyll and Hyde. After moving in with her, I discovered a completely different side to her when she wasn't drinking. Gracious, intelligent, and funny, my mother wasn't the one-dimensional being my family made her out to be. Although awkward at first, given that neither of us had any idea who the other was, we eventually grew quite close, becoming friends as well as mother and son, although her drinking would be a problem until her kidneys failed and killed her in the end.

Coming together was not an easy process. Conflicted, I bounced between hating her and needing her desperately. With little respect for her and her drinking, and constantly angry due to the abuse I had just escaped from, I wasn't much of a caregiver; blaming her for abandoning me and resenting the fact that I now had to take care of her. I would often fly into loud fits of outrage; screaming at her about the indignities of my abuse. Desperate to reach out to me, she endured my rants quietly; in the end expressing her sorrow and regret for what had happened.

For my part, I was angry with God, the world, and myself, and I began shoplifting and experimenting with drugs, which infuriated her. I don't wish to give the impression that my mother was timid and quiet for just the opposite was true. She was one of the most opinionated and outspoken women I have ever known and often voiced her disapproval over the choices I was making. Concerned that my anger would one day get me into trouble, she would often tell me to go "beat a tree" and "yell at the wind." Strong-willed and spiritual, she constantly urged me to seek out God, in whom she believed emphatically, though she disliked religion. She urged me to talk with her, to use her as a sounding board so that things would stop eating me up inside. As a result, we had long dinner conversations in which, for the first time, someone was actually willing to listen to me.

But that was when she wasn't drunk and calling the police at three o'clock in the morning, having them wake me up to throw me out. Gin made my mother mean, and the care she offered me when she was sober dissipated the more that she drank. The worst alcoholic I have ever seen, my mother would spend weeks sober and then would spend just as much time consuming gin. During drunken episodes, she would sit in a chair and drink for weeks, often not getting up to eat, sleep, or urinate, surrounding herself with "friends" such as the one who raped her for two weeks, who would enable her to drink nonstop for weeks at a time. They often showed up during

the first two weeks of the month when she got her disability check, always disappearing when the money ran out.

Sooner than later, they would be the least of my worries, as the past was about to come a calling; the wind was building, bringing a storm that would wash over me. As the second witch in Shakespeare's Macbeth predicted: *Something wicked this way comes.*

The Prince of Temptation

BJ was in his early twenties, newly married with a wife expecting, and living in the apartment downstairs from my mother. Hearing all about me from my mother the night before I arrived, he anticipated my arrival before I even knew him. Bisexual, he was excited to have a gay man living in the same building, although it turned out I was nothing like he expected. Later commenting that I dressed like some sort of Jehovah Witness (and having a grandfather who was an elder in the church, he would know), we nonetheless struck up a friendship.

To me, he was a paradox: married and yet an effeminate gay man, and though I wasn't attracted to him in a sexual sense, I found him intriguing. Both he and his wife were physically stunning. However, he was physically small and suffered from a "Napoleon complex." Far from weak, one of the first stories he related was how it took eight or nine police to subdue him just a few months before when he'd gotten drunk and out of control. Prone to violent rages, he had a severe problem with alcohol, but I didn't know any of this yet.

Being the first person my own age I had ever met who knew what it was like to be gay, we struck a bond immediately. Friendly, personable, and – I would later learn – a complete mess, as we got to know each other, we realized that we both had survived terrible abuse. He'd lived

the majority of his life in Omaha and his parents were a weird opposite to mine: his father the alcoholic and his mother the sociopath aggressor. The fact that our abuse was similar in severity was what bonded us tightly for better or worse.

BJ's basement apartment was immaculately clean except for the countless cats, their fur and smell permeating everything. His beautiful wife lacked all social graces, was overbearing, and generally hard to take; of course, I didn't realize this the first night. I gladly accepted a dinner invitation from them, happy to finally have people my own age in my life, although later I would find out that the delicious steak sandwiches BJ and his wife served that night originated from my mother's freezer. Stealing my own food and graciously serving it to me was just a small indication of the darkness BJ promised, but at the time I was just glad to have a friend, not knowing that the fun was just getting ready to begin.

At the Gates of Hades

Omaha is a much different place today than it was in 1986. After all the child abductions and ritualistic murders, citizens were breathing a collective sigh of relief after the arrest of John Joseph Joubert. A 20-year-old radar technician stationed at Offutt, he was caught in January the year before for killing two paperboys. Although he had absolutely no connection to previously abducted paperboys, or to the murders of previously discovered children, it was something, and citizens were beginning to feel safe. (Joubert was eventually executed for his crimes).

Like almost everywhere in America in the 1980s, drugs were flowing, and especially in the gay community in Omaha, where it was touted one could find the best drugs. Rumors abounded about sex parties with children present, drug enhanced orgies attended by the elite somehow connected to abducted children- but I wouldn't hear about these rumors until later on,

and it would be even longer before I connected my childhood experiences to those rumors. At 18 and new to Omaha as a young man, the gay lifestyle seemed like paradise as I was finally able to be myself.

From my experience as a homosexual, there are three types of gay guys. First, there is the homosexual, a person who just happens to have sex with another person of the same sex. Then there are gay people, activists hanging out at the Castro in San Francisco, joining bowling clubs, attending social events, and generally hanging out with those who, if not gay, were still open-minded.

Then there is the third type. Jaded, bitter, and critical, a fag will use anyone to achieve whatever he is interested in at the moment – drugs, money, sex, position, it doesn't matter. Feeling a sense of entitlement either because he is young, desirable, powerful, or rich, he lives a life of hedonism, never once concerning himself with the pain his narcissistic life style causes others. In the 1980's, power in the gay world was concentrated in this third type, and though many of them were married, they nonetheless were fucking any and every one they could- causing chaos in all the lives they touched.

A month after my return, my mother received a call from another of her shady friends who wasn't interested in drinking but wanted to meet me. Saying that "a little bird told him I was in town," he asked my mother if he could come and meet me, perhaps to offer me a job. As a prospective job opportunity, I agreed to visit with him.

Dick Bishop's name fit him, for rumor had it that although he may have been small in stature, he was endowed with a very large penis which he paraded around like a strange circus act. A member of a wealthy Omaha family, he had become a flaming homosexual holding large

parties at his spacious, colonial-style mansion in a rich area of town. As an honorary member of the Hell's Angels, he often invited motorcycle clubs to his parties that ended in orgies in the upstairs rooms. Actually, there was more to the story, a lot more, but I wouldn't realize it until later.

Our first meeting was uneventful. He came to my mother's apartment and stayed just long enough to size me up, asking about my education, and appearing to appreciate my manners and intelligence. He asked if I would like to come to his house at a later date to discuss a job in his interior design company, which excited me. That a wealthy business owner would show interest in me gave me a real lift, and I readily agreed. Before leaving, however, he made a strange comment about how much better looking I was than my brother. Assuming it was pure flattery and that he was making a play for me, I blew it off. Still, it struck me as an odd thing to say. Later, I asked my mother how Dick knew my older brother. Quickly, she replied that they had met once, and then changed the subject.

In the Devil's Den

Dick's job offer was nothing like what I was expecting. I met him at his lavish mansion a week later and was told that I would be maintaining his house – dusting and vacuuming as well as cleaning the pool daily once it got warm. Explaining that he was about to leave for his vacation house in Hawaii and planned to return in a couple of months, he still hired me, solidifying the deal by handing me a roll of money; \$1,000, more money than I had ever seen in my young life. Assuring me that it would be wonderful, he grabbed hold of my butt as I got up to leave. Not wanting to throw a fit, I decided to ignore it, figuring I would deal with it if the time ever came. At 19 and having gone through what I'd gone through, I could be a pretty docile kind

of guy. Sexual abuse has an effect on a person's psyche, and coming from years of isolation, I was desperate for attention. Not that I would ever have sex with Dick, money or not, but I figured that a grab now and then was no big deal. Laughing it off, I walked out with a job and a thousand dollars richer.

I was attractive, but never felt like it. In high school, I'd been plagued with terrible acne. At 6'2" and 160 pounds, I'd jogged ten miles a day in that isolated Iowa town because running connected me with God in a way nothing else did, and it was a wonderful escape. Being the first in town to own a Walkman, I would lose myself in my runs, forgetting the suffering that I had to endure at home. I was scolded for eating too much chocolate, but the truth is I hardly ate anything, let alone chocolate, given that I had no job or money. My father and stepmother commonly referred to me as "zit head" and "pimple face"; mysteriously, the acne cleared up a few weeks after I escaped their house. Regardless, I still felt like an ugly, stupid, useless piece of crap whenever I looked in the mirror, given that I still looked too thin in my clothes.

My mother was binge drinking on and off during this time, and when she was sober she would tell me to "look straight ahead, do my job, and get the cash." So while Dick was gone, I went to the Old Market to get a job. Kids gravitated to the area because back then it was THE place to be if you were anyone, and figuring it was as good a place as any to get a job, I procured my first job at Stars Restaurant. Billed as a gay establishment, it nonetheless served a diverse crowd, though many of them were indeed gay. Unfortunately in the month and a half that I worked there, I was reintroduced to the seedy side of Omaha. I wasn't much of a waiter, but by flirting with patrons, I discovered that men were bringing in young boys they called "trade." Sensing a connection with the Godfather's Pizza upstairs, I began to grow uncomfortable with the situation. Having been nicknamed Prudence at a party for refusing sex, I viewed the sordid

way sex was being manipulated as wrong, but needing the job, I did what everyone else seemed to do and looked away; while I rejected my own offers with a smile, always walking away feeling disgusted and dirty.

When I told my drunken mother about what I thought was going on at Stars, she would say cryptic things like, "You don't know what you're dealing with" and that I should "get out now, while I still could." Later, when she was sober, I'd ask her what she meant, but she would always dismiss it as the drink talking and change the subject. BJ was the only other person I told. Laughing it off, he'd say there was nothing wrong in making a buck and if I wanted to, he could introduce me to some people. Horrified at the prospect of prostituting myself, I declined, though secretly I was intrigued that he knew such people.

Finally, unable to deal with the fact that child prostitution was taking place, my paranoia got the best of me and I quit. I figured my mother would be dismayed, but she seemed relieved. "Just get another job" was all she said. Escaping Stars and thinking I was better for it, I had no idea that I was just beginning my journey into the devil's den, nor did I realize that my curiosity about BJ's offer would get the better of me in the end. Unconcerned at the time, I figured there was always the job with Dick too look forward too.

The Run

As a young gay kid technically unable to get into the bars until I was 21, there was very little to do other than to hang out at a place in town called The Run, a two-block radius surrounding the local jail a few blocks up from the Old Market. The Greyhound bus station was across the street and around the corner was a bar called The Run that allowed teens in after one in the morning for dancing on weekends, making it a popular place for teenagers. Men drove

around the block over and over to pick up tricks and trade, tricks being sexual hookups and trade prostitution. Boys walked around the jail, selling themselves sometimes at twenty bucks a pop. There could be 30 to 40 kids or more, either hanging out on the wall by the Greyhound bus station or sitting in their cars in the parking lot, making it a veritable meat market for old trolls looking for sex.

The Run bar was something else altogether. Dark, smelly, and generally filled with falling down drunks, it was the only place for teens to go on weekends. At one o'clock, the staff would empty the bar, clean the glasses, put the alcohol away, and a half an hour later open their doors for after-hours dancing that lasted until four in the morning. As a result, The Run was packed every weekend. I've heard that nothing good happens after one in the morning, and looking back on what was happening on The Run, I'd have to agree. As a kid, it was exciting and fun, but now I realize how dangerous The Run was. Besides prostitution, there were always fights or "fag bashing": uncomfortable straight boys with their girlfriends dancing at The Run hit on by a gay guy in the bar usually brought fists flying.

Another bar called The Hollywood, across the street and half a block down from the police station, had been torn down by the city after allegations that child pornography was being filmed in the dungeon of the establishment. Once brought to the place when I was 15, it wasn't hard for me to believe the rumors that snuff films (porn ending in murder) were being filmed down there, but instead of investigating the allegations, the city decided to tear down the bar and put up a parking garage.

Across from the police station was a bar called The Stage Door, right up the street from The Hollywood. It was a hot spot at the time, but the manager quit after being accused by the

Des Moines mother of paperboy Johnny Gosch of being involved in his 1982 abduction. Once again, there was no investigation into the allegations, nor any investigation into Gosch's disappearance whatsoever, but those who heard about the situation figured Sam Soda, the manager of The Stage Door, left just to avoid any problems.

Behind the police station was another bar called The Max, a one-room crap hole whose doorman was Tank, an unattractive middle-aged man who allowed minors into the bar if they submitted to a blowjob. Finding the prospect distasteful, I declined and thus alienated myself from the bar for a time. A couple of years or so before the whole Franklin Credit Union went sour, The Max went from being a one-room shit hole to a five-bar extravaganza in a matter of a year and a half, and with a state of the art light and sound system, became the nation's most talked about gay bar. If rumors are true, it owed its overnight success to helping Franklin launder \$40 million of bilked money.

So by the middle of the 1980's Omaha gay lifestyle was pretty out of control on The Run and in the bars. CORRUPT would be the word I'd use to describe it. Corruption has its own entertainment factor, though, and most of the participants were too busy having fun to notice what was wrong.

The Denial of Existence

After what happened in my childhood, why would I return to Omaha? For the longest time, I had no answer. Even after years of therapy, my reasoning was vague, claiming that I had nowhere to go other than my mother's, so I did what I had to do. It took years of therapy before I would even let myself think about what had happened in my past. I was in complete denial, as is common with abused children, and I lied more to myself than anyone else. Since childhood, I'd

done everything I could to deny my existence and pretend I was somebody different. Lying to yourself can be very effective, especially when you so desperately want to believe it. Dismissing the memories of the physical and emotional torture I had endured at the hands of my father' and his friends as mere imaginings, I was accustomed to living in chaos and denying that anything was the matter, so I continued doing what I had learned to do- overlooking and dismissing what I was experiencing. Inevitably, I taught myself to avoid consciously thinking about the trauma I'd gone through.

But denial has a strange effect on the psyche, and being a liar takes its toll on the soul. By refusing to deal with what had happened to me as a child, my mind continued processing the truth in other ways: constant nightmares, the inability to sleep, fear of what I would see in dreams. Sleep deprivation heightened my already erratic sense of fight or flight, so I panicked over nothing and the stress added to the paranoia I felt, further alienating me from myself. Later, I discovered that I was experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to (1) the satanic ritual abuse I had suffered as a young child *and* (2) the ritual abuse I suffered under my father and stepmother. Ritual abuse is simply abuse dealt out on a daily basis to the point that being beaten and treated like an animal becomes the everyday norm. Both ritual abuse and satanic abuse impact the victim, and for a long time it was just easier to observe the 'ordinary' abuse and keep the bizarre, scary stuff buried deep.

To survive my father's house I had spent most of my time in my room with my nose in a book, a psychological pattern that carried into my young adulthood. Books offered an escape fundamental to my survival for many years, allowing me brief moments of living imaginatively in realities other than my own. Years of hours alone in my room was how I learned to live in my head where I could read, journal, and talk to God. Often dark and cynical, I spent an inordinate

amount of time worrying about when the next bad thing was going to happen. Overwhelmed at home, I fought deep self-destructive periods of depression and hopelessness. Dealing with my mother's alcoholism as a young adult was more of the same, and in the end I stopped caring so as to avoid my constant feelings of rage and depression. Under the vise grip of severe stress, not caring became my only way to cope. Deny, lie, and look the other way became my motto.

Grasping at straws of a severely challenged self-identity, I spent a lot of time focusing on the fact that I was gay. I had used it as a weapon in order to embarrass my father and his wife in our small town, and they had used it to beat me down. Their horror at having someone call and ask if the faggot was home gave me a certain satisfaction, the only trophy I could come away with. It always hurt me deep down though, because I believed that being gay was just one more indication of my future as the Antichrist.

Quite honestly, as a child I would have given anything not to be gay. I was conflicted, battling what I believed to be right, such as the fundamentalist conviction that homosexuality was wrong, in comparison to whom I was. Growing up, I learned to treat my sexuality as a sword and shield, striking at my father and stepmother's hypocritical sense of propriety, while at the same time shielding myself, using it as a way to distance myself from others so I could feel safe.

Safety and the inability to feel safe have been strong constants in my life. Growing up I did have the stability of a roof over my head and clothes on my back, but rarely ever did I feel safe. Beatings and living with people who consider you an animal is never a safe or healthy environment, and outings with my father and his family always ended in arguments as I would often become enraged by their comments about my sexuality and fire back my own insults. I was also never allowed to forget that I was my mother's son.

My mother accepted my sexuality without question, remarking when I told her about being gay, "Thank God, now one of my children will have some taste." It was because of this that I first grew to trust, then to love my mom. She may have been the worst, the dirtiest, the most promiscuous alcoholic I have ever known, but she loved me, and for a long time in my life she was all I had.

The Prince of Charms

Have you ever met someone for the first time and felt like you have known them forever, like you'd been friends in another life? I have only felt this way a few times in my life, and David Klotz was the first. He was standing outside The Run in jeans and a black fringe jacket that was all the rage of the 1980's, while I was waiting with my friend Mark Anderson for after-hours to open. Mark was a really cool older guy who had befriended me a few weeks after I arrived in Omaha. Showing me Omaha on his motorcycle and never making a pass at me, I felt comfortable with him, and for a while I fell under his protective wing. Mark introduced us to David and we began to talk, our conversation lasting all night. We were never sexual, but I instantly felt brotherhood between David and I. After dancing, I invited David back to my mom's so we could keep talking until early morning about God, creation, the universe, and life as we knew it.

Other than BJ, it was the first time I'd spoken with someone my age about the things that interested me and David was no slouch when it came to his own philosophy on life. A year younger than me, he had also come from a chaotic background, which was probably why he veered toward danger his whole life. An only child in an upper middle class family, his father had been career military, and his mother was a social climber homemaker. Both of David's

parents were disinterested in him, and they pretty much abandoned him as soon as they could legally do so. He'd gone into the armed services to get an education, but after stealing a bunkmate's boom box and almost being strangled to death, he got thrown out with a dishonorable discharge. That was fine by David, just as long as he got out.

Although incredibly personable and funny, growing up gay as an only child in a disapproving household was lonely for David. Whereas I blamed God and raged over the injustices in my life, David believed that everything happened for a reason, carrying a strange sense of peace about him. Determined to enjoy life, despite living by the seat of his pants most of the time, he compared himself to The Fool in the Tarot deck, always on the edge, stepping off the mountaintop, happy to take on the world at any moment. I personally identified with him in a way I had never experienced before, and have always considered him my first real friend and brother. Given that BJ was busying himself with newfound fatherhood, David and I in the beginning had a lot of time to hang out on our own.

A week after our meeting, I discovered that David was living with an older guy who had carved holes in his bathroom walls so he could watch young boys shower and pee. I insisted that David come and stay at my mother's and bunk on the couch for as long as he liked, so he moved in with us the following week and we became inseparable for the next year and a half – for better or worse.

The Angry Atheist

Unlike David, I didn't believe that everything happens for a reason. I was extremely angry at God and blamed Him for all I had gone through in my short life. In childhood, I'd received great comfort from relying on God, but in my late teens I'd grown skeptical and come

to believe that God, like everything else, was just something I had made up in my head. I bounced back and forth between belief and atheism, striking back at God by denying His very existence. Looking back, I think I felt abandoned by God.

My mother had her own relationship with God. Explaining that she had no need of a church, she would often just look up and say, "Hey, pal," and then say out loud what was bothering her. Considering her lifestyle, history, and the fact that she often drank herself into oblivion, it was easy for me to dismiss her faith as empty words and view her as one of the most hopeless individuals I had met. Still, her relationship with God was undeniable, and when she was sober, she often tried to offer hope and compassion to deter my rages.

It is said that our personalities are formed by the time we are three and depending on those formative years, you either view the world as safe or not. Confused by much of what I had experienced in my childhood, I spent a lot of time feeling completely lost and stressed. I'd been destroyed by childhood caretakers and often wondered what I had done to God to deserve what I had gone through. Unable to express how I felt, I felt alienated and alone. Though I still felt the presence of God, I didn't want it. Believing the world was evil and that the bad guys always win, it was hard for me not to fall back on the old teachings that God is demanding and distant. I'd been taught that before killing Abel, Cain declared there is no afterworld, no consequences for bad behavior, no good reward for the just, and no punishment for the wicked, and at this point in my life, it was easy to see how true the old teachings were. Confused as to why God had created me in the first place, I spent a great deal of time wishing I had never been born.

What I'd been told about my mother had not been the real story, as my father had also destroyed her. She too had endured his beatings. As we discussed my conception and birth, it

dawned on me that my mother had been just one more person my father had used, abused, and discarded when she no longer served his purposes. Although a product of her own life choices, she had been as broken by my father as we all had, while he'd come out smelling like a rose. My mother, siblings, and I were left to suffer the consequences of his behavior, and the injustice of it fueled my rage.

Though estranged from my father and his family, I still suffered mentally and emotionally from their abuse. Picking up where my father and stepmother left off, my brain constantly undermined me, looping over and over again about how worthless I was. Feeling that the world could rot and me along with it, I spent a great deal of time feeling sorry for myself, unable to find a way out of my predicament. Battling such anger all the time was exhausting, and I often had headaches and body tension along with panic attacks, all the while blaming God.

David had an interesting saying about *evil* being *live* spelled backwards, and he thought the stress I was force-feeding myself was an example of it. I adamantly disagreed; declaring that evil was a living breathing force that compelled people to perpetrate terrible atrocities upon each other. Agreeing to disagree, David would always reiterate that everything happens for a reason and that there's always a bigger picture that we just can't quite see. "Yeah, God sucks" would be my usual reply, but years later, I realized he was right. In many ways, we both were.

Quantum physics teaches that without the friction life offers, we would soon cease to exist. By that argument, it could be said that evil is a necessary component of life and therefore in and of itself is natural. Unlike the larger forces of Nature, good and evil are issues for humankind. Morality separates us from the primates and connects us with our humanity, offering us the choice to become better or worse than what we already are.

Whether or not the evil in Omaha was natural or necessary, I am unable to determine, but it certainly was pervasive, and I was about to get another bittersweet taste of the darkness I thought I'd buried with my past. Like the slow-boiling frog in tepid water, I wouldn't realize I was on the menu until the very end, (By that time, of course it is always too late.)

Something Wicked This Way Comes

BJ finally met David and we all started hanging out together. It could be said that both were an incredibly bad influence on me, but relishing the having of friends my own age was good. With BJ's connections and my money from Dick, and tips from Stars, we smoked countless bags of pot. Smoking marijuana for the first time in my life, it was like nothing I had ever experienced. Getting high released me from the stress I constantly felt and energized me in a way I wasn't used to. Thus began a routine of "waking and baking" with David and BJ, much to the dismay of my mother. "Drugs and friends, they come in that order," David would say as he puffed on BJ's bong, and we would all laugh, not realizing how true his insight would turn out to be. Never considering the consequences of what we were doing, David and I allowed BJ to constantly press us to try new experiences and we were happy to oblige.

Acid was also in heavy supply at the time, and BJ pushed us to try it. I held out for months, but with both David and BJ urging me, I finally broke down one night and tried it. Acid for me was a religious experience. It pried open pathways in my mind and I fell for hours into the grace of God. BJ explained that the experience vastly depended upon the environment and the company you're keeping when high. Not once did I equate what we were doing with what was

done to me as a child, so I guess he was right. The three of us just spent hours talking about God and man's relationship to the universe, high on both drugs and life.

David was the most adept thief I have ever known, and he began to teach me the finer nuances of shoplifting. Sometimes we had contests of who could steal more and would go all over town stealing from business after business. Once my mother realized that I was stealing all my new toys, she became enraged and warned us that we were going to end up in jail, but David and I just laughed and disregarded her good advice while planning our next escapade. The best way to steal is out in the open, so I became accustomed to simply walking out of the stores with merchandise: answering machines, clothes, books – it didn't really matter; I just took whatever I wanted. Once, falling behind in our contest of who could steal more in a day, I walked into a bookstore and left with six hardcover books. My abilities didn't compare with David's however; his crowning achievement in thievery was an entire Bose sound system.

My mother's apartment became Grand Central Station, with new friends and acquaintances constantly coming and going. My lonely existence had finally come to an end, or so I thought at the time, and all the activity seemed to slow down my mother's drinking.

Mark Anderson came around often on his motorcycle and took us for rides. He didn't approve of the drugs or the stealing, but he generally minded his own business and kept quiet. In his late 40's too early 50's, Mark felt young again when he was around us and enjoyed our company as much as we enjoyed his, and we spent many hours talking and laughing. In some ways, he was a father figure for us. Later, he introduced us to his friend Walter Carlson. Quiet, shy, polite, and middle-aged, Walt was pretty docile next to Mark's outgoing personality and blended in with the wallpaper whenever he came over, living in the basement of his parent's

house over by Crossroads Mall. Neither of them realized that knowing us would mean their future downfall.

On weekdays, BJ, David, and I got high and hung out; sharing in a way that only comes with youth, pouring out our souls in hours of talk, seeking solace in the comfort each offered the other. Since none of us had it easy growing up, we all had tales to tell. David was somewhat secretive about his childhood, saying only that his parents didn't like him because he was gay and spent most of their time avoiding him. Ostracized in school, he had grown up as the weird kid, something BJ and I understood very well.

Unlike David, BJ was incredibly forthcoming about his childhood. Growing up with an alcoholic father and an overbearing, narcissistic, beautiful sociopath mom, he had found himself in a lifetime of situations that no person should have to experience. Once while drunk, his father had awakened him and demanded that he do a back flip for his friends. BJ broke his shoulder blade in the process, but neither of his parents took him to the hospital so it mended badly. His mother, always in quest of a new husband, had a history of marrying and divorcing men. Bounced between the two until his mother remarried a man who didn't like him, BJ's life had been one letdown after another. Despite a gay childhood, he'd married his high school sweetheart, his only hold on stability. He bragged about being able to get into the bars at fifteen due to his "connections," and was a compendium of information concerning the ins and outs of the Omaha gay scene.

The prospect of his friends getting me into the bars early should have been a waving red flag for me, but although I sensed a hidden darkness in BJ, I dismissed it. Our weekends were spent on the go, hanging out, socializing, and dancing. Neither Mark nor Walt ever came dancing

with us, but they eagerly soaked up the stories we had to tell. Getting high and going down onto the Run around nine o'clock at night and hanging out before after-hours opened became customary on weekends. Finally feeling like I was beginning to fit in, I started to allow myself to enjoy life for a while.

When Dick returned from Hawaii and asked me to start my cleaning position, I wasn't all that anxious to begin. Hanging out with David and BJ had become as addictive as the drugs we were imbibing, probably because I'd never had friends and so I was pretty co-dependent when it came to our camaraderie. BJ suggested he had a way for me to make money without having to work, but my mother insisted that I take the job, Dick being her friend and all. I would soon learn that both BJ and my mother wanted the same thing: to pimp me out. They needn't have worried however as I was soon to discover just how small Omaha really was, and how tightly wrapped in my past my present and future were to become.

A Pederast's Playground

The summer of '86 was a bold time for those involved in nefarious activities in the Omaha area, and the party was going fast and hard. The arrest of scapegoat John Joubert meant the "Satanic panic" bullet had been successfully dodged, so Omaha again became a free-for-all of anything goes. Working for Dick meant coming up to speed on how true this was. All I knew about Dick was that he'd been my mother's business partner and family friend who had struck out on his own and left my mother behind. His house was an over-the-top Victorian, every corner of every over-decorated room filled with expensive eye candy that never allowed the mind to relax, and cleaning his house gave me a clear impression as to how wealthy the man was. I wasn't allowed upstairs where he was renting rooms to bikers he knew, but I cleaned the rest of

the house and the pool, which was vaguely shaped like a penis and balls, supposedly in honor of its owner.

Dick was a voracious sex fiend constantly obsessing over his next lay and talking about it incessantly. Small, thin, and aggressively effeminate, Dick was all hands when he addressed me, which bothered me no end though I pretended to laugh it off. My mother said it was how Dick was and that he meant no harm by it. However, after watching how he paraded around with bikers and pubescent boys, I began to suspect there was more to him than met the eye. I never saw any money change hands, but I suspected sex for hire, which made me very uncomfortable. David laughed and told me to get over it, while BJ just listened, quietly sizing me up. Not finding much support, I continued working for a few more weeks.

One day Dick came into the house with an extremely attractive biker who lived upstairs, asking me to come into his bedroom where he was hanging curtains to talk about my wages. Mom's binge for a week or so had stressed me and I was not sleeping well so Dick offered to give me a massage. I declined until Dick pointed out that his friend was also in the room, assuring me I had nothing to worry about. Against my better judgment, I complied, lying down on his pedestal bed a good four feet off the floor while he sat fully clothed beside me and began massaging my shoulders. As I began to relax, he started down my back, commenting on how tense my muscles were. Finally, using the excuse that he wanted to massage my lower back, he straddled me. Feeling his erect penis through my clothes as he began rubbing his erection on me, I panicked, throwing him off of me and onto the floor, knocking the wind out of him in the process.

Scared he might be injured, both his friend and I rushed to his side. I apologized, convinced I had overreacted, and implored him to forgive me, that I was young, etc. Still struggling to catch his breath, he looked up at me and hissed that youth was no excuse, that “when I was six, I was going on twenty-six”, and that he didn’t want to hear any excuses about my age. Taken back, I stood up. Still furious, he told me that I was “nothing like my older brother.” Noticing my befuddlement, he smiled coldly and said, “I was fucking your brother at ten years old. We all were, and you know what? He loved it.”

I left immediately, angry and confused over what I had just heard. My mother had lied to me; Dick was one of the people from the past I had spent years telling myself didn’t exist. But instead of talking to my mother, I did what I always did at such times: I kept it to myself. It is amazing how secrets can eat a person up, and this one was a difficult one to accept. I told myself that none of it was true although I kept my distance from Dick, a self-admitted pedophile. Years later, I asked my brother about it and he confirmed what Dick had said, but told me that if I told anyone he would kill me.

Sensing that something bad had transpired between Dick and me, my mother was silent. At times, she would catch me looking at her and ask what I was thinking but, just beginning to understand the anger my older siblings held toward her, I would just smile to avoid the argument that would have ensued had I said what was really on my mind.

Once again jobless and broke and tired of hearing my mother bitch about how she was sick of supporting me, I told BJ I was ready to meet the “friends” he said could help me out. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step, and until recovery, abuse survivors are drawn to putting themselves in re-victimizing situations, which was definitely true for the three

of us. Especially for BJ and I, given how we both had suffered major childhood ritualistic sexual abuse, prostitution looked like the norm at the time. I felt there was no other option, given that I couldn't keep a job. BJ assured David and me that it was no big deal; there was big money to be made from the men in town who were constantly seeking the company of young boys and willing to pay for it. Completely unaware, the Devil was about to exact a price that would gouge all of our lives.

The Devil's Handiwork

BJ was running boys for a man named Alan Baer, a wealthy businessman eager to meet young men such as us. Explaining, BJ assured me that my being of age was a big plus in the mix as Baer had just gotten busted for soliciting sex with minors and was being extra cautious about age. He'd skated through the charge with a \$500 fine, but was still paranoid of another Omaha "witch hunt."

BJ hustled boys in the Old Market and hooked up with Boys Town boys as they came into Omaha via the Greyhound bus station every Saturday morning. He befriended them as he had me, and then introduced them to Alan for a commission. His own mother had brought him to Alan at a young age and he'd become a courier at fourteen, his reward being access to bars by fifteen. Referring to himself as a Baer boy, BJ expressed how nice it was to have a powerful man who could do things for him, and assured us that if we let him Alan would do the same for us. All BJ had to do was make the phone call. His talk scared me, and I backed out. The easy money was intriguing, but I wasn't yet ready to take on the role of pimp.

David, on the other hand, was all for it. Always jumping in feet first, he was ready for the next adventure. To him, the danger sounded like just one more experience to add to his growing

list of dangers. I stood my ground, but then as usual relented and agreed to meet another of BJ's friends just to test the waters. Peer pressure coupled with our usual competition made it hard to continue saying no, and I was afraid they would leave me behind and all alone again, so I ignored the little inner voice telling me that I was going in the wrong direction. No one held a gun to my head, but I was always conflicted and desperately afraid of loneliness. Still, I had a sense that I would regret what I was about to do.

BJ made a phone call and I hustled my mother out of the apartment to her friend Aunt Ruth's across the street so I could have some alone time with my "gentleman caller." My mother was on a walker at the time and getting around wasn't that easy, so she asked me what I was up to. Assuring her that nothing was going on, she still managed to overhear the three of us talking, when she, hobbling across the street, began yelling at the top of her lungs, "I am NOT living in a brothel!" Horrified, I tried to quiet her ranting by saying I would only be an hour or so, at which she looked at me and said quietly, "You have no idea what you are getting into," then continued on to Aunt Ruth's.

I would like to say that it was an awful experience and it all ended there, but I can't. Michael Van was about 5'9, thin, dark hair and mustache, and one of the hottest guys I'd ever met. BJ and David went downstairs to BJ's apartment and left us alone. Nervousness inducing at first, it ended up being a really hot sex session resulting in mutual masturbation. He gave me \$100 and told me I would have gotten more had he been able to fuck me and that he'd like to meet me again sometime. Having no interest in anal intercourse, I waited for him to leave, then went downstairs to give the other two the details. My mother returned later, poured a drink, and stayed drunk for the next week and a half.

The Devil Himself

I am now able to introduce the notorious Alan Baer, a man who, in many ways, would change my life forever. My first impression of him was right out of *Planet of the Apes* because he resembled a small primate, and yet he was one of the most intelligent men I had ever met. He picked me up at my mother's apartment and we drove around in his black sports car, talking about my education, my background, and funnily enough, my family. A consummate game player, he kept me off guard with questions and had a way of getting information out of me without my even knowing it by using flattery and coy knowing smiles. He made me feel comfortable; the ride was fun and the man intriguing, however, when he asked me how my father was, I should have known that he too was somehow connected to the sinister happenings of my childhood. Noting that I was estranged and unwilling to talk about him, Alan changed the subject.

We drove into an area of Omaha called Fair Acres and he pointed out a large mansion with a huge party tent in the backyard. He said he was having a party, and went into great detail about the work involved in throwing such a gala. Later, I would discover it was all a lie. He did live in Fair Acres, but that particular mansion wasn't his. Not knowing this at the time, I was suitably impressed. When he dropped me off at my mother's, he handed me \$50 for the time I'd spent with him and asked if it would be okay to call me in the future. I gave him my number, got out of the car, went into the house, and told BJ and David everything.

A week later, I agreed to meet Alan at his Twin Towers apartment eight blocks from my mother's apartment. I knocked on 2J and he opened the door in shorts, sweating profusely. For an older man, he was in great shape, thanks to the veritable gym he'd fashioned in the living room. It dawned on me that 2J was his run-down bachelor pad, and he explained it was a great

getaway from his workday. Alan had a way of coming off as just a weird old guy who was extremely charming in his strange way, so I often dismissed his behavior as mere eccentricities. But they weren't: he was a real snake in the grass with a motive for everything he said and did. Walking on his treadmill the whole time, he asked about BJ and David and what we did when we hung out. Happy to answer his questions, I told him the basic situation at my mother's house. He was a complete gentleman, never once suggesting sex. When our time came to an end, he handed me \$250, walked me to the door, and told me he would be in contact.

My mother kept trying to convince me to steer clear of what she surmised was prostitution and to go get a real job. I thought her objections were hypocritical, given that she'd done the same thing herself, but since then I've learned that the best lessons to be learned are from people who have made the same mistakes. Of course, I thought I knew everything back then and so disregarded her warnings as jealousy. Just what she was supposed to be jealous of, I couldn't say, but I wasn't accustomed to thinking things out. I figured since she wasn't getting a share of what I was bringing in, she'd rather I get a "respectable" job, and I dismissed her concerns accordingly.

Over the next few weeks, I met Alan a few times. We always conversed as he drove around in his car. He liked my vocabulary and the fact that I was well read, and we often spoke of politics and what was happening in the world. Getting paid every time we met, sometimes up to \$500, I started to genuinely like the guy against my better judgment. So by the time he actually asked to have sex, I was a willing participant.

His penthouse apartment on top of the Brandeis building was in stark contrast to the Twin Towers apartment. Lavishly decorated, with dozens of animal heads on the wall, it was elegant in

its masculinity and incredibly impressive. Nervous and eager to get sex over with, I asked if I could use the bathroom, at which time he told me that he wanted me to shower as well. Having just taken a shower before I walked down, I thought it was a strange request but, in no position to disagree, I simply asked where the towels were.

Considering David's experience with the pervert and the holes in the wall, you'd think I would have been nervous about being filmed. In retrospect, I realize that I probably was, and that the whole thing was some weird sort of set-up, but at the time I was too nervous at the prospect of what I would have to do to think much about it. Alan ended up giving me a blowjob on the balcony of his penthouse. I was uncomfortable with the buildings around us and the people working in them so I couldn't get into it. My lackluster performance ended 20 minutes later, at which point we got dressed and he handed me \$500, showing me to the elevator.

The next day, an acquaintance of mine and my mother's named Andrew, told Alan, at my mother's insistence, that I was emotionally unstable and dangerous. When Alan told me what Andrew had said and that he had decided it was best that we end contact, I became enraged and returned home to find Andrew and my mother sitting down to a bowl of hot chili. It was hot as hell in my mother's house, being the dead of summer, and Andrew had taken off his shirt and was sitting bare-chested on the couch, blowing on his chili to cool it off.

I flew into a rage I couldn't control, as if I mentally moved aside and let my body take control. It was like I was someone else, watching myself from afar. Grabbing a knife in the kitchen, I put it to Andrew's throat, warning him that if he moved, I would cut him from ear to ear. Reacting, he spilled hot chili all over his bare chest and began sobbing, scared and in pain. Mom stood up on her walker and begged me to put the knife down while I demanded to know

what he had told Alan. All I can remember is my mother pleading and Andrew sobbing, and a female friend of mine who had come with me to the apartment urging me to leave with her and stop the madness. I told Andrew that if I ever saw him again, I would hurt him, then put the knife down and walked out. Andrew left and never returned, and my mother and I never once spoke about what had transpired. Terrified by my own rage, I did my best to forget the episode, but every time I looked in the mirror, I saw the devil and felt like a psychopath – exactly what my mother had chosen to warn Alan of.

My business relationship with Alan was over, but his influence on my life was just beginning, in ways that I could have never imagined.

The Prince of Power

Back in the mid-1980's, Thomas Thompson wrote a book called *Celebrity* in which three friends come together, form a friendship, and then collapse – a foreshadowing of what was about to happen to BJ, David, and me. We had even adopted the names from the book: BJ the Prince of Temptation was always tempting us to go one step further; David the Prince of Charms enchanted everyone with his personality and laughter; and myself, the Prince of Power who never quite fit his name, given that I wasn't as good looking as David or BJ and lacked their grace, charm, and sexual prowess. Both could get any guy they desired and left me in the dust when it came to sex.

Nor was I that great of a friend, given my few boundaries and no idea of what friendship really was. I was demanding and unforgiving and when I became jealous of their relationship, I began spending a lot of time away from them, especially after BJ introduced David to Alan Baer and they began hanging together, BJ still a favorite of Alan's. BJ and his wife and new baby

were busy in their own chaos, as was David, with his downtown sex parties- where all the sex, money, and drugs flowed. He had quickly become enmeshed in the world that my mother had wisely, it turned out, declared off limits to me.

I began hanging out in East Omaha where Mark lived. He and Walt and I would have cookouts by the lake and I'd help mow Mark's lawn. It was fun associating with them, laughing about nothing. Walt was slowly coming out of his shell, and the three of us talked about science and history.

Meanwhile, BJ's chaos was growing. He was drinking pretty heavily, and like my mother, he was an incredibly mean drunk. One night he terrorized the whole apartment, attacking his wife, chasing a neighbor and her five children out of their own apartment after he had chased his wife into it. Everyone somehow ended up hiding in my mother's apartment while I tried to deal with the madman in the hallway that wanted his baby girl but was too intoxicated and out of control to be trusted with her. He ran down the hallway and slammed his body weight into our backdoor over and over as I stood on the other side, pressed against the kitchen counter and bracing the door with my legs. My mother held his daughter in the living room, along with a knife that she planned to use on him if he succeeded in breaking through, while everyone else hid in her bedroom. Finally exhausted, he sped off in his car and totaled it, and had his daughter been with him, she would probably have died. David slept through the entire drama, not wanting to deal with the chaos.

Angry with both pals for leaving me behind to live in the fast lane, I felt things spiraling out of control and began further distancing myself from them. Shoplifting sprees were becoming a thing of the past for me, as I was tired of feeling like a criminal all the time and seemed

incapable of keeping a grip on anything. Owing to the influx of strangers going through our apartment, we were constantly getting robbed. I was jealous of the fun the two seemed to be having and so I tried to control David as if I owned him, meanwhile blaming BJ for bringing Alan into our lives and conspiring to take David from me. Our three-way relationship became more and more strained as David fought for his independence. It felt as if everything was slipping through my fingers.

That Christmas was the last really nice time we would have as a group, as if a *grace* fell upon us to help us get along. David's parents had tempted him with a trip to Hawaii and then dashed his hopes at the last minute. Hearing of this, my sister Cindy duplicated everything she was giving me and sent it from Florida in time for Christmas, making David very happy. BJ and his wife were getting along, and no one was drinking. The calm before the storm, it was the last time we would be together as friends. A Judas in the group, one would run, one would die, and Mark and Walt would spend years of their life in prison.

All the King's Men and the Naughty Baer Boys

The gay community in '87 was extremely ostentatious; with two well-known groups of "kept" individuals called "Baer boys" and "King's men," nicknames earned by those being kept by two rich men in town, Alan Baer and Larry King. King, a middle aged African American who was currently serving as president of Franklin Credit Union, was also a well-known Republican who sang at President Ronald Reagan's inauguration ball while at the same time bilking the credit union out of \$40 million.

Alan had married into the Brandeis family and thus had a vast fortune at his disposal. His foundation supported arts and culture in Omaha, and he owned several successful businesses, as

well. Gay men constantly pandered to these two, hoping to find favor with them for money and position.

Intricately involved in the gay community at the time, Alan and Larry funded lavish charity galas in the bars and hosted even bigger parties at their homes. “King’s men” often provided muscle for Larry’s enterprises and parties, and young black males acted as bodyguards and bouncers. Being a Baer boy or King’s man was prestigious. Along with money, it often meant an apartment, a car, and being invited to all the best parties with all the best drugs. The tradeoff was that Baer boys and King’s men were expected to entertain guests at the parties and make sure everyone was having a good time. Trips were granted to the chosen, such as when Alan wanted to take BJ to Florida with him.

However, involvement with Alan and Larry was risky. Displeasing them in any way meant finding yourself out on the street without a moment’s notice. King’s men came out onto the street to find their cars missing, repossessed by the very men who had given them in the first place. There were always strings. I’ve heard it said that if you give a man enough rope, he will hang himself, and this was especially true of those who worked for these arrogant, boastful, and temperamental men who enjoyed watching people squirm. Fun could just as well turn to pain at a moment’s notice.

For people like Alan, Larry, Dick, and Peter Citron – a local columnist for the town’s only newspaper the *Omaha World Herald* who eventually went to jail for pedophilia – Omaha was a virtual playground. It hosted the rich, the connected, and the demented. Rich men were making heaps of off-the-books money with drugs and prostitution, and though plenty of people

knew what was going on because it was blatant and in your face, since local law enforcement was in on it as well, there was nothing anyone could do or say.

In the beginning, I went with BJ and David to the impressive, ostentatious parties. Sparing absolutely no expense, Larry and Alan threw party after party. Given their powerful connections, you never knew who you would see or what you were likely to see them doing. Bathroom coke breaks were the norm. Publicly, Alan and Larry were dead set against drugs, but everyone knew what was going on as groups of people would hang out in the bathrooms filling their noses. It was the 1980's and everyone was doing it, so it didn't seem bad or wrong, and the money being made off of coke was incredible.

The big reason I began declining BJ's and David's invitations was that kids were at the parties. Although child prostitution wasn't out in the open, everyone had to know what was happening, but in my experience that people will overlook almost anything if there is enough money involved. There was always a free bar, so it seemed easy enough to order another drink and look away, figuring the kids wouldn't be there if they didn't want to be.

It all began to break apart around the first of the year in '87 when rumors of an investigation into Larry's Credit Union began to circulate. Investigations into children had already begun, so people were whispering about a bad moon rising, which put a damper on the never-ending party that had been raging for generations. The question was who was going to get stuck with the bill? Being the men they were, Alan and Larry had quite a few enemies looking for any reason to nail them, and kids and money were used to bring them down.

The Unraveling Begins

Even with the arrest of John Joubert, the problems associated with child abuse and prostitution didn't go away. The gay community was abuzz with rumors of satanic practices, child pornography and snuff films, and a myriad of other crimes that had been taking place in the gay bars and Old Market area. The Iran-Contra affair was just hitting the news, and some knew that Omaha was involved with importing Contra cocaine. A local dealer in town by the name of Kevin Dobson was connected with Dick and his Hell's Angels and had been bragging for years how he'd been running guns to Nicaragua and shipping cocaine back, which was why Omaha was the coke-rich area it was. Offutt Air Force Base was accused of being involved in secret government projects entailing children in the area. A few years later this would all hit the media, and a circus would ensue, but not before things started to get ugly in Omaha.

In fact, the summer of '87 was when what I call Project Clean-up really began. A great deal of power can be brokered from a campaign of fear. An epidemic of "suicides" that summer made being a Baer boy a dangerous pursuit. Several of the "suicides" opted for the method of wrapping plastic around their faces, although it was never explained exactly how or why someone would choose to die that way. Needless to say, fear stalked the gay community. Meanwhile, the suicides were not reported in the media nor tracked in any way, so the community at large was unaware of these numerous deaths while those in the gay community who knew anything quickly learned to keep their mouths shut.

Despite the fact that many of the people involved were my mother's best friends, I adamantly denied that what was happening had any connection to my family's past, but I was soon to be awakened in a way that would force me to pull my head out of the sand. It started when I went with acquaintances to a funeral after some Baer boy shot himself in the head on the

promise that hot gay guys would be there and I could possibly find a date. Sitting down in the pew, I scanned the crowd, later opening the memorial program to see if I recognized the deceased, at which point my stomach lurched.

I'd known Charley Rogers when I was 15. We'd been introduced by my uncle's daughter who would later humiliate me by saying in a room filled with my father's family that since Charley was gay and I was gay, it just seemed natural to match us up. Back then, Charley lived about a half mile from my grandmother's condo, and I would walk to his apartment when we visited my grandmother and hang out with him as the only openly gay man I knew. In his mid-twenties then, 5'9" with sandy blond hair, a mustache, and a tan, he was like some hot 1970's porn star, and I found him fascinating as he also proved to be good in bed. When I was 15, he took me to The Hollywood bar and showed me the dark, scary, and incredibly creepy dungeon set-up in the basement. Scared, I demanded to leave immediately. When the town tore it down and built the parking garage over it, I said good riddance.

After being narked out by my cousin that I was doing the wild thing with an older man, my father squelched the relationship with Charley. Sitting at his funeral, I knew that Charley was too supremely narcissistic to ever kill himself and I got an uneasy feeling that not all was as it seemed, leaving the funeral shaken. Knowing that he was considered to be high in the ranks of Alan Baer's boys, I figured Alan and his associates were cutting their losses.

It was also during Project Clean-up that Mark and Walt were charged with crimes against children, which I found to be ridiculous. Mark had invited three hustlers to spend the night on his living room floor and had either inadvertently or intentionally touched one boy's butt. The boy's parents tried to extort money out of Mark and failed, then turned to the police and pressed

charges. Suddenly, the *Omaha World Herald*, whose owner Harold Anderson was reportedly involved in the Larry King/ Franklin Credit Union scandal, began touting Walt, the shyest person I'd ever met, as the Pied Piper of Pornography, and Mark and Walt were proclaimed as menaces to society by the local media. Mark told me that he would just try to keep his distance while his troubles played out, but everything was turning upside down and I didn't know what to think, or who to trust.

Besides Mark's withdrawal, things had cooled off between me and David and BJ. Both had been deeply involved with Alan Baer and had disassociated themselves from me, probably due to secrets I knew nothing about. Despairing over my failed friendships, I once again found myself alone, miserable, and angry -- with no job, no money, and no options. My mother pressed me to leave town for a while and visit Cindy, and her prodding irritated me as I saw it as yet another example of how she was trying to control my life in her newfound role as my mother. Now I realize that she was saving my life by sending me away from a situation she was afraid would somehow envelope me. Confused and a bit scared, I finally gave in and let her buy me a bus ticket to Florida. Looking back I see that more was going on in Omaha than even I was aware of at the time, and my decision to leave probably saved my life.

Had it not been for a conversation I had with God, however, I probably wouldn't have gone. On the bus one afternoon, I found a New Testament in the pocket of a jacket I hadn't worn for a year. Telling God that I was going to open the New Testament and do whatever it told me to do, I let the pages fall open, and looking down, before me- in black and white, was the story of the rich man who had gone to Jesus inquiring what to do. *Give away all you own and follow me* was the gist of it. Three days later, I stood with nothing, having either returned or gifted out all

the things I had stolen. I look back on this experience as one of great release, better than any Christmas I had ever experienced.

Escaping what my life in Omaha had become, I packed a suitcase, hugged my mom, got on the Greyhound bus and headed for my big sisters', believing I was leaving all the chaos occurring around me behind. I couldn't have been more wrong.

The Summer of Loss

The summer began well. Within a week of arriving in Florida, I found a job at a local resort as a waiter in a barbeque restaurant right off the beach and was able to move out of my sister's right away into an apartment also off the beach.

My relationship with Cindy had always been tenuous. She'd saved my neck more than once while she and her family lived with me and my father and our stepmother, but she could also be vindictive and vicious. A game player to the max, she was expert at setting people up. After everything had gone down in '76 and I was hospitalized a couple of years later, she and my brother had turned me in to the Minneapolis-St. Paul police as the serial killer frequenting gay bars at the time. Later, she told me it was because I looked like Jeffery Dahmer. (Of course, so did my brother, who was 15 years older than me.) My sister's husband, whose name was Ralph, was an extremely overweight, loud, and obnoxious man who had always disliked our family and as I was a member of that family, did his best to constantly declare his feelings to me. Her children, who were close in age to me, were obnoxious game players themselves, with drugs and beer and up until four in the morning party lifestyles.

Needless to say I didn't see much of them. Occasionally, I hung with people from work, but most often I wrote in my journal on the beach, watching storms roll in like clockwork every afternoon, imagining I was watching God on the ocean, as the wind and rain picked up until I was surrounded by lightning and thunder and had to leave the area. A daily religious experience, the ocean spoke to me in a way that touched me deeply, comforting me, helping me to feel normal. I excelled at my job and was promoted from waiter to front room manager, and in many ways it was the best few months I'd ever had, although the peace was not to last long.

My mother had taken to calling me with concern about David and what he was telling her. Sworn to secrecy, she wouldn't tell me exactly what he saying; only that he was in over his head with Alan Baer. David and I weren't speaking at this point, having ended our friendship. I was concerned but had no idea what to do. Testing the waters, I wrote BJ, using him as a sounding board as I explained what I planned to say to David, hoping that he might give a heads-up to David. I had reached the point of being big enough to say I was wrong, and often relished the image of David forgiving me, enabling us to work things through and resume a friendship.

I will never forget that next week, the week David was murdered, at the tender age of 19. With the help of local media outlets, at the same time the problems regarding misdeeds in Omaha would magically disappear the same week. During a dinner rush, drunk off her ass and sobbing, my mother reached me at work. She'd been calling all over town looking for me, and convinced that it was just another drunken tirade; I spoke abruptly into the phone, angrily demanding to know what she wanted. Asking me if I was sitting down, I became even more irritated with her dramatics, demanding she spit out whatever she needed to say so that I could get back to work. Her voice at a whisper, she responded: "David was shot in the face and killed by his roommate."

Dropping the phone, I caught myself almost about to wail in a restaurant filled with people. I hung up on my mother and retreated to the back office, feeling as if my world had just come to an end, and began to sob. Then the phone rang again. Thinking it was my mother calling back, I answered, "What do you want?" However, it was BJ. "I wanted to be the person to tell you," was all he said. I thanked him, claiming I had to go, and hung up.

David died September 6, 1987, a little over a year and a half after we first met.

Having to buy a plane ticket two weeks in advance, I spent the next two weeks sobbing, waiting to fly back to Omaha to say goodbye to everyone in my life. Omaha media stories that week said David was killed by his roommate Mike James, for reasons unclear; John Joubert was convicted and sentenced to death; and Mark Anderson and Walt Carlson were convicted and sentenced to spend years in prison. No real evidence linked Mark and Walt to any crime, but Omaha had become a circus dictating justice from a kangaroo court. The fact that the parents of the boy had tried to extort money from Mark before going to the police (which came out in court), was insufficient to save he and Walt from prison.

The media taught the public to associate these names and faces with crimes against children to thereby keep attention away from others who were truly guilty. Two men and a convicted killer were sacrificed as scapegoats upon which everyone could vent anger and frustration. Convicted by the media; it worked like magic. I couldn't believe it. And Alan Baer, guilty of pandering sex with minors and of so much more, only received a \$500 fine by the same judicial system. The disparity enraged me.

Unable to work those two weeks, I was fired and felt my life was over. My despair was a living, breathing thing that dug its claws into my chest, and I often found myself doubled over on

the floor, crying in fits for hours at a time. I locked myself in my room, scaring my roommate who had no clue as to what was going on. Unable to talk, I spent night after night crying myself to sleep, dreading the next day as more of the same.

Finally returning to Omaha, as my cab drove through downtown, I saw the same three hustlers who had put Mark and Walt in prison selling themselves down on The Run. Disgusted but not surprised, I stared at my hands until the cab pulled up to my mother's apartment. Drunk, my mother went on and on about David wanting to kick out the roommate who killed him. I never met Mike James (the roommate convicted of David's murder), nor did I ever want to, but soon I would have reason to be doubtful as to his guilt.

Unwilling to answer my questions about Alan Baer, my mother told me to "steer clear" of the situation. BJ, however, had been present at David's death and put it all into perspective for me, throwing me over the edge in the process. Mike, David's roommate, had just gotten a job as a bank security guard complete with gun. Having no training or guidance in handling a gun, he would often playfully point the gun at people and pull the trigger repeatedly. When the gun went off on the second click, entered David's cheek, and blew out the back of his head, killing him instantly, Mike had been unaware that the gun was actually loaded. David had been laughing with him at the time, perhaps the only saving grace to a horrible situation.

BJ told me that David had been deep in debt to Alan Baer. Wanting to know what my mother had told me, he impressed upon me the importance of keeping my mouth shut. Asking him what he meant, BJ looked me straight in the eye and explained that Mike had no idea the gun was loaded. I paled, speechless. He went further to say that he had a gift for me from Alan Baer. Wanting nothing from the man, I demanded to know what it was. BJ walked to a cupboard

and retrieved a red-spotted towel. "This is what is left of David" he said, trying to hand me the towel of brain and bone fragments. Horrified, I began putting things together in way I hadn't before.

The fact that BJ would slip a bullet into a gun and set up another man to kill David for Alan was too much to handle, but in light of Mark and Walt being set up, it seemed sadly plausible. It was like living a nightmare, the blood and gore in the towel right before my eyes. David, Mark, Walt, gone, and only BJ and me left, with BJ involved in ways I didn't want to know. *Just live my life* was what I was being told to do, even though there was little left.

I flew back to Florida the next day in a state of shock and suffering a severe case of survivor guilt, wondering why I'd been spared when everyone else had been taken. I was scared, confused, and totally alone. Once again I found myself in a soul desert where I would wander lost for the next several years. Jobless and soon after homeless, I spent the next six months losing my mind and telling people that I had \$521 million frozen in a bank account of drug money and that when I could get at it I would be rich. Although ridiculous, and constantly making a fool out of myself, I did what I did in order to escape the reality of what happened. Feeling responsible for David's death, I have often regretted sending BJ my letter, often wondering how things would have worked out had I not unintentionally narked out David the week before his death.

I spent no time with my sister and her family, instead fabricating a life that didn't exist. Some people actually believed me, and it was amazing the lengths at which they went to please. I got involved with an airman stationed at a nearby base and began weaving a fantastic web of lies to a man I was supposedly dating, feeling worse about myself daily. He was involved in his own chaos, and wanted to get out of the service, so I convinced him to tell them that he was gay and

dating me, not realizing that they would try to court martial him as a result. Convinced that everything I touched turned to shit, I left in the middle of his disaster and called his family in hopes that they could help him. Two days after I left, they arrived and he called me, infuriated that his parents were sitting in his living room, and I confessed everything to him, or at least about the bogus \$521 million dollars. Without a doubt, my life was out of control.

Returning to Omaha broken and downhearted, I made plans to go to the East Coast before the bus even pulled into the station. BJ had gone to Massachusetts to live with his mother. The only friend I had left, his marriage had been destroyed and his life overturned by guilt and regret over the "do or die" situation Alan had put him in. Having nothing left to loose, he bolted from Omaha. Indeed most of the players left alive and not in jail scattered, many fearing being implicated in the upcoming investigation into Franklin. Even Dick picked up shop and went to Hawaii. In the end, only a handful of people would be implicated, and of those only a smaller handful would ever see jail. Neat and tidy, those really involved had dodged another bullet, and barring an act of God, would remain free to prosper while I spent years running from myself, trapped in an unspeakable hell.

The Franklin Fiasco

Public perception may have been manipulated and controlled, but there was still the matter of \$40 million missing from the Franklin Credit Union. In 1988, the FBI finally raided and shut down Franklin and seized all of Larry King's files and property. Although there were allegations that he was running prostitutes into the White House and involved in many nefarious acts concerning children, the only charges that stuck were fraud and those concerning fleecing

the credit union. Larry King and Peter Citron were the only persons of influence to be implicated.

Most of the focus fell on those I call the "famous three": Alisha Owen, Paul Bonacci, and Troy Boner. Involved in King's child prostitution rings, they came forth with allegations concerning Larry King, Alan Baer, and a slew of other wealthy businessmen, plus, most interestingly, Omaha's ex-police chief Robert Wadman. Although their fantastic stories of abuse resembled mine, I knew Troy Boner to be a pathological liar and so discounted the entire exposé. After David's death and learning of BJ's complicity and Alan's involvement, I had little stomach for the whole mess and so I turned a blind eye, not giving a damn how it all played out. History chose to focus on just three victims when the truth was there were thousands; and Larry King was put away when most of well-heeled Omaha was involved.

But the message to victims was loud and clear. The grand jury threw the book at Alisha Owen, sentencing her to 27 years. This ended up including solitary, because she refused to recant that Robert Wadman, Omaha's police chief, was the father of the baby she had as a minor. Naturally, Alisha's experience effectively silenced other victims who yearned to come forward. She was finally released in 2000. (As for the other two witnesses in the massive pedophilia, Paul Bonacci won a lawsuit for damages, in 1999; Troy Boner was found dead in 2003.)

The media shredded the wild claims of the three victims and harped on their mental illness as the stories kept changing and becoming more bizarre, never considering that going through what they had gone through would make anyone crazy. Backed by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation that had defeated similar allegations in California in 1983, the press

vilified the three as liars, claiming they were conspirators in a carefully crafted hoax, though never expounding on who exactly could be behind such a hoax and why.

The British documentary "Conspiracy of Silence" was supposed to air on the Discovery channel on May 3, 1994 but was pulled by Republican congressmen who threatened the cable industry. It too addressed only the three victims and major players in the scandal, saying nothing of entrenched crime in Omaha and at Offutt Air Force Base.

The Franklin matter would have ended up under the carpet and all the other victims forgotten if it hadn't been for Gary Caradori, an ambitious prosecutor who continued seeking the truth about what really went on in Omaha. He contributed to John DeCamp's civil suit of Paul Bonacci versus the Catholic Archbishop of Omaha and Lawrence E. King, businessmen Peter Citron, Alan Baer, Harold Andersen, Michael Hoch, Kenneth Bovasso and other Nebraska persons and institutions. (Larry King himself was released from prison April 11, 2001).

Caradori went over thousands of reports of child abuse and trod further into the lion's den in order to discover what else lay behind the mess that Omaha was eager to forget. (Many of these complaints are documented in the film *Conspiracy of Silence*, and is an element that added to the Satanic panic in Omaha). Then his private plane was blown out of the sky on July 9, 1990 with him at the wheel and his young son aboard. Coincidentally, the plane went down in Robert Wadman's new jurisdiction in Illinois and it was he who was first on the scene. No one bothering to raise the concern that Wadman was one of the very men Caradori was investigating, all evidence concerning the aircraft disaster was destroyed, and DeCamp's investigation was dropped.

Years later, I listened to Alan Baer brag at a church Christmas party how he had avoided the ax by simply pulling all of his foundation money out of Omaha for a year. His money, along with the Brandies fortune, influenced and pretty much controlled many facets of the city, so no one had gone after him, thus solidifying his power. Able to buy his way out of anything, the man was basically his own state and could walk away scot free from any fallout.

After David's death, I felt that never seeing Alan's monkey face again would be a blessing. When Caradori's plane went down, I knew Alan had won and there was nothing that could be done about it. What I didn't know was that he had plans concerning me. Heavily connected to the people from my past, I now know that is why he refused to leave me alone. Years later, I would return to Omaha, and he and I would become involved in one last dance.

Travels in the Desert

I pause now, in telling you my life story, to note that many readers will probably not understand one major consequence of being a ritually abused child, that being that traumatic memories are generally blocked out most of the time, and can even stay blocked forever. A similar thing happens to soldiers when they come away from a war in which they witnessed unspeakable things. If lucky, they may forget completely, but many get PTSD. Nightmares or "daymares" pop up, giving the soldier almost an exact re-enactment of what he or she went through.

As I will describe later, I did not accept that what I was experiencing were flashbacks until 2000, after my mother died, and I did not begin to put together my family's involvement until a few years ago, after my father's death. The only way I can describe my perspective at this time of my life is that even though I knew so much, I avoided dwelling on it to the point where I

wasn't able to see the bigger picture happening around me. "Remember to forget" was a mantra that I was taught as a child, and I did everything possible to do just that. The truth of the matter was that I wasn't ready or able to admit the truth of what had happened, and so I just blundered on blindly, emotionally paralyzed and in the dark.

It was the injustice that occurred here that was the hardest to take. For reasons I was unable to articulate, I was so fractured that I had no hope of repair and thus became desperate to get away from Omaha, my family, and most of all myself. Beaten in a way that most people never have to go through, I suffered a great sense of defeat over what was finally seeping through to me- that the people responsible for stealing my childhood were somehow responsible for hijacking my young adulthood as well..

So I bought a one-way ticket and with \$60 in my pocket headed toward BJ. I'd forgiven him, knowing that he had been caught in Alan Baer's crosshairs. He was living with his mother and her boyfriend Jeff and I had no idea of what I was walking into. After a month with him, I realized he was a bigger mess than I was, so I ended up sending him back to his grandparents with the money we'd set aside for an apartment, becoming homeless in the process. He was undergoing a breakdown and was suicidal, and as cold as it sounds, I had no interest in trying to help him.

I was estranged from my family, even from my mother. Although she had saved me by sending me to Florida, she was still involved in the Omaha and the events of my childhood in ways I didn't yet understand. I had grown uncomfortable with her, and considering what had just transpired, I didn't know whom to trust anymore. The only thing I knew for sure is that I couldn't trust BJ, even though I did my best to try.

The old adage of keeping your friends close and your enemies closer was certainly applicable to BJ, and yet our relationship was so much more. I figured that we'd both been victims of Alan Baer and the Omaha situation and I still loved him as my brother, yet I couldn't help admitting things had changed. Learning that one literally needed to learn how to dodge bullets with BJ, as it was his nature to sting those closest to him, I still loved him although I had no doubt that, if it ever came down to it, he would gladly push me under a train if it came to benefit him. Adept at overlooking the past, I chose not to think of David and his death but rather concentrated on helping BJ and I get through the aftermath of what was left of our lives, all the while trying to watch my back at the same time.

Sending BJ back to Omaha effectively made me homeless with no job or money and, once again, I found myself alone. Fortunately, BJ's mom and Jeff had broken up, so Jeff offered to let me stay with him in Nashua, New Hampshire and work at his mailing company out of his garage. I accepted gratefully and it turned out to be the longest job I've ever had: although also the most stressful. Jeff, a decent man, was incredibly demanding. As an only child, he was used to getting his way and prone to temper tantrums when he didn't. In his early forties, he was a successful businessman who fashioned himself as somewhat as a playboy, womanizing every chance he could.

Despite the fact that Jeff was hedonistic and temperamental, I grew quite fond of him. He had a great sense of humor and was one of the most generous people I'd ever met. I found him endearing in a way that was refreshing, the best part being that he was safe and in no way connected to Omaha and my past. Besides the home business he ran out of his garage, he also owned a lake house and we spent a great deal of time between the two. The mailing business was fast-paced and stressful, so the times at the lake were special. Being out in nature connected me

with the spirit of God and I would often just stand by the lake, breathing it all in. Jeff and I spent a good deal of time talking about the universe and our relationship with it. I had overcome my anger at God and was clinging to my relationship with God as the only real, truly safe one I had left, resuming my prayers in hope of finding some direction.

My depression eventually drove a wedge between Jeff and me, first with the business and then with us personally. Despite my attempts to suppress the past, I often found myself overwhelmed and it would put me in bed for days. I couldn't eat and all I had the energy to do was sleep and pee. I avoided human contact and personal hygiene for days at a time, unable to talk to anyone about what was bothering me. Sleep was the only way to prevent it all from constantly replaying in my brain. The harder I tried to run, the faster it followed me, catching me off guard at times where all I could do was weep, unable to tell Jeff or anyone why. Feeling responsible for David's death and regretting the letter I'd sent BJ, I constantly dwelt on the fact that I hadn't been able to apologize to David for the way I'd treated him. Guilt for everything I'd done was eating me alive.

Finally, Jeff couldn't take anymore. He told me I had to leave; that my depressions were beginning to have an effect on him. Giving me a month to find another job and place to live, he promised to help me with in any way he could as I quietly accepted his decision and began to make plans to go.

I'd be homeless the next year and a half as I drifted from one place to the next. I made friends with people willing to put me up and stayed until my welcome wore out, which it always did. I was fired from every job I found, generally because I was a complete and utter screw-up. Waiter jobs were a dime a dozen, so I went from place to place, working a couple of months at a

time before being terminated, living hand to mouth in Boston, going from one gay guy to the next.

In fact, this was when I started sexually acting out, often not even knowing my sexual partner's name. Believing I was fated to suffer, I made the decision to begin exploring the life I'd denied myself, figuring if I was going to burn in hell, I might as well enjoy myself. Becoming promiscuous was breaking all the rules but was liberating at the same time, and anonymous sex provided a wonderful escape. Discovering that men actually wanted me empowered me, and sex being the only power I felt in my life, I started to become addicted to the experiences.

I talked earlier about the three types of gay guys. Another take on it is the distinct difference between being homosexual and living the gay lifestyle. The gay lifestyle is based solely on sex, focusing on one aspect of human nature, which is inherently unhealthy. Driven by youth, flesh, and a hedonistic lifestyle, the emptiness of the superficial gay lifestyle is undeniable. When the meat market bars closed and the music, lights and glitter disappeared, I'd either go home with someone or not. Everyone was looking for someone, be it a lover or a one-night stand, so while it was easy, it was also very lonely and almost impossible to make friends. Growing up gay in America is far from a picnic and many gays are often severely jaded by the time they reach adulthood. Effeminate males, having it the worst, are often singled out while growing up; so many gay men are full with stories of abuse, either at the hands of their family or bullies in school. Not to say every homosexual is a product of abuse, but I have found that there is an undeniable constant there.

Homeless much of the time, I slept on the couches and floors of friends who let me live with them. Until you're actually homeless, it's hard to imagine the *soul exhaustion* of not having

a secure place to lay your head. What I remember most was not having keys, a symbol of security. No place to live, no car, an armful of clothes, and no keys. I found homelessness to have on me a strong psychological effect that was incredibly hard to escape, and though no one knew how big of a loser I was better than I, figuring out where to sleep the next night began to take precedence over everything else. Having personally experienced homelessness, I have a much greater respect as to what it is like, and how hard it is to escape.

I hooked up with some people who were using cocaine and decided to experiment with it. Trying it for the first time one night at a party, I smoked five rocks and snorted five lines, not really seeing the point. The first 30 seconds after smoking crack, I felt like I was being run over by a freight train of clouds, but the feeling was fleeting, and it caused my heart to race, scarring me. I left the party and drove the car Jeff had loaned me over to his house. He and I smoked a huge joint and I left, feeling sick. I must have passed out at the stop sign at the end of his block because all I remember is waking up and feeling my heart race.

Getting worse by the minute, I drove back to the party and begged my friends to go with me to the hospital. Suggesting that I try another line in the hopes that it would calm my heart, I went in search of a pay phone and called Cindy collect. Crying and scared, I told her what I had done and what was happening to me physically. Helping to calm me down by saying that everything would be okay, she demanded that I go to an emergency room. Hanging up, I went in search of a hospital, where they kept me under observation for ten hours. My chest hurt for two weeks afterwards and it was hard to breathe, an undeniable reminder that my life was completely out of control. David saying *Drugs and friends, they come in that order* rang over and over in my head.

Having no options, desperate to avoid loneliness not to mention the street, I continued to hang with my drugs associates. Scared of coke, I refused to partake and eventually grew tired of watching people get so strung out that they would frantically search the floors for any trace of crack they might have dropped (which they never did). Reminding me of my mother and her alcohol addiction, I eventually opted to find a new place to sleep.

Boston afforded many opportunities to explore my spirituality and despite acting out as a complete whore I was desperate to return to God's graces. While staying with a man in the Back Bay area, I became entranced by a two-block pool of water that I mistakenly believed belonged to Scientologists, located up the road from Copley Square. Picking up *Dianetics* by L. Ron Hubbard, I thought it was a great book until I realized I didn't have the money to be a Scientologist. It seemed like sensible therapeutic advice until the last few chapters, when it transformed into some big moneymaking scheme. Later, I read in Lloyd Eshbach memoirs *Over My Shoulder: Reflections on a Science Fiction Era* his claims that Hubbard had once said, "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is." While waiting tables at an ashram, I had the opportunity to pray and feel what it felt like when a group of people were focusing and consciously building positive energy: important in the fact that it demonstrated proof of the power in *two or more being gathered in Thy name*. The power of the mind is an amazing thing, and though it was working destructively in my life, it began to realize that it wasn't without its blessings.

BJ's grandparents were Jehovah's Witnesses, so I also took the opportunity to study with a group of them, amazed at how devout the church members seemed to be. However, knowing that my sexuality would always be an issue, I quickly drifted away, convinced that everything I touched was fated to turn to shit and that I had been abandoned by God. I once again began

entertaining the fact that I was fated for something terrible and old fears of being the Antichrist resurfaced, while I completely disregarded the fact that I, having successfully avoided spending even one night on the streets during periods of homelessness, had every indication that *someone* or *something* was watching out for me. Obsessed with a gnawing pain that I had somehow abetted in the murder of my best friend, I was totally oblivious, stuck in a limbo I couldn't get out of, and the hopelessness I felt compounded the stress of being homeless.

No longer able to feed myself and starving as a result, I decided out of the blue to call my father and ask for his help. The first and only time he ever helped me, to this day I still don't understand why he did it. Buying me a one-way ticket back to Omaha so I could return to my mother's apartment, I thanked him profusely; packed what little clothes I had left, and headed back to Wonderland. Thirty minutes from Omaha, despite the fact that I was on a plane full of strangers, it all overcame me and I began to openly sob about returning to a hell I believed I would never again escape. Grief and fear crashed over me in waves and though it was a relief to finally have someplace stable to live, returning to Omaha was another defeat on my long list of indignities, and I hated being back. Little did I know at the time but I was actually on the road to my salvation!

The Only Constant Is Change

The early 1990's gay lifestyle was night and day from what it was in the mid-1980's. Stars and The Hollywood were gone, The Stage Door had wound down and closed, and The Max now dominated the bar scene. The Run had been cleaned up and police were patrolling the area, arresting both trade and their johns alike. After-hours was still going, but The Run was no longer the teenage hangout it once was. Alan Baer had faded into the background and was no longer the

party animal he'd been – at least as far as the gay community was concerned. Larry King was in jail, my mother's friend Peter Citron, with whom she worked at the SUN newspaper until it closed, was either dead or dying of AIDS in prison, and the "famous three" had been silenced.

Other than Contra supplier Gilberto Montoya appealing for a new trial in 1991 regarding the drug connection with Kevin Dobson, his pot dealer friend Mike Dillon, and Garcia-Escobar – all Contra suppliers themselves– there was little evidence that there had even been a problem in the Omaha area. Working with the CIA, Kevin had helped bring down Pablo Escobar's drug cartel in the Contras, and was in turn rewarded with obvious immunity and protection, considering he never went back to prison and is still living today. With all the loose ends neatly tied up, Omaha had been tamed and had seemingly returned to normal. All was quiet on the Western front.

Everyone I'd known had scattered, except for BJ, now divorced and living with a friend of ours and her five kids in Omaha. My mother's drinking had increased and she was back to living with the man who had raped her years before when she lay in a diabetic coma. Resembling Bill Paxton in *Weird Science* when he turned into a bibulous, pus-spouting creature, my mother's roommate had sores all over his body from not bathing and the smell of decay always wafted around him, often making me want to retch. Basically pretending that past events hadn't happened, we just went on with our lives, busying ourselves with everyday living while doing our best to avoid the elephant in the living room. Moving out as quickly as I could, I still lived near my mom so I could keep a closer eye on her.

My father and stepmother, with the two children she had produced in 1975 and 1985, had moved back and were living in West Omaha, a upper middle class part of town. Dad may have

helped me to get back to Omaha, but we remained estranged, given that I couldn't stand him or my step mother. Living some distance apart, with him in the nice part of town and me in the ghetto, we never ran into each other. My sister Sarah had also moved back with her husband and four children, and although she lived a mere ten minutes from my father's house, she remained estranged from him as well. She and her family occasionally came to visit Mom, so I began to develop a relationship with her very different from when I was a child and we were subject to our parents' divide-and-conquer mentality.

Neither I nor any of my siblings have ever been close or trusting of each other. Cindy and Stephen had a somewhat close but tumultuous relationship, but Sarah had grown up like me, isolated and despised, as each of us were compelled to set the other up for our father's amusement and to win his acceptance. Out of all of my older siblings, I was closest to Cindy. Our brother Stephen was also living in Omaha with his new wife. While I was on the East Coast, he'd returned to Omaha with his family to mooch off of my mother until, immediately upon my return, I threw him and his family out. It would stand as the last time we ever spoke to each other. I always did my best to avoid my siblings, as it was common for the police to have to get involved in our family gatherings. Stephen and his wife shared the same alcoholism as my mother and my sister Cindy's kids, and one could never predict what would happen in their company. Addiction running rampant in my family, chaos was always right in tow, and I found it best to avoid rather than engaging in the pandemonium.

I began attending the Metropolitan Community church in town and it was there that I met a local school teacher named Art. A decade older than I, Art was also a fundamentalist Christian who would become instrumental for helping to set me on the path to my return to God. Often disagreeing about religion and God, he was like no other Christian I'd ever met in that he lived

by example and treated others how he wanted to be treated, believing that love conquered all. Always a gentleman, he never once made a pass at me, and I came to enjoy his company more and more. I was working job after job and living in place after place, so in a way Art was my only stability. I was no longer shoplifting, doing drugs, or hanging with bad crowds, but I was still pretty much a lost soul.

In fact, I was sexually active in a way I hadn't been before and was quickly succeeding in making a name for myself as the town whore. I went dancing alone every weekend at The Max, but rarely left that way. Art tried to impress upon me the consequences of my behavior, but at that time I wanted to be desired and found solace in the company of strangers. Feeling that my body was the only thing I had going for me, I had decided to travel down the path of debauchery – single, free, and loving every minute of it, or at least that's what I told myself.

My only companion, I spent a great deal of time alone. Feeling as if I had no one to love and no one left to love me, I often chose to simply stay home. Unable to keep any kind of job, there were days that I couldn't get up, let alone get out my door. It wasn't exactly agoraphobia, but part of me was scared of becoming overwhelmed in public, given that Omaha was a huge vat of bad memories for me, and everywhere I went pulled at my heartstrings. As a result, I spent a great deal of time reading books, writing in my journals, and indulging in nostalgia, reminiscing over the adventures David, BJ, and I had when we first got together.

BJ was an enigma to me, and though I still loved him and chose to spend time with him and his family, I hated him in a way I couldn't articulate. Consciously ignoring my feelings and kept silent, I tried to put the past on a shelf where I figured it belonged. However, issues repeat themselves, and BJ and I had many.

Sira

In retrospect, I have to admit that I've never prayed for something without getting what I asked for in some way or another. Actually, my life seems like a collection of miracles.

Hanging out with Art and listening to what he had to say about how I was living my life made me realize how incredibly lonely I was. Lying in bed one night unable to sleep, I asked God to either send me a dog or a boyfriend. A day and a half later, Sira entered my life. A couple of guys walking in the neighborhood had thrown a German shepherd/Golden Lab mix puppy over the fence where BJ's girlfriend's children were playing, never returning. BJ, calling me later, encouraged me to come and take a look at their new dog, but recognizing her in the same way I had David, I claimed her as my own. The first time I ever actually took something from BJ and not the other way around, I declared that he could "barely afford five kids, let alone a dog" and simply walked out the door with her. Taking her home; a big fluff of yellow hair and cute as all get out, already fast in love, I still called the Human Society and local radio stations in case anyone was looking for her.

Constant diarrhea that night compelled me to take her to the vet the next day. Discovering she was infested with worms, I paid for the medication and vet bill, figuring that whoever claimed her would reimburse me. After the weekend, after no one claimed her, I decided I was meant to keep her, considering her a gift from God. Naming her Sira, the female form of Sirius, I was unaware that hers would be the first relationship I would be given that was safe and sound and, most importantly, one in which I was needed! Just a dog, Sira would teach me more than I could have ever guessed about myself.

Although I completely adored her, she was nonetheless a handful, both physically and emotionally. Nothing more than a small child, she depended on me in a way I desperately needed, and I grew to value our relationship more than I ever knew I could. Compelling me to be more stable and reliable because, whereas I didn't have to eat every day, she did, I finally pushed myself to get a job. My mother and Sira took to each other the minute they met, and surprising the hell out of me, she declared that Sira was meant to be my dog and insisted that I not abandon her. I moved into an apartment about six blocks from my mother's place, and I'd often take Sira for walks that generally ended at my mom's when she was sober. Making dinner and later watching *Murder She Wrote, 20/20*, and the myriad mystery shows my mother enjoyed, I'd listen to her talk about her soaps as if they were real people, recapping her shows as if they were part of her day's events, and although we never spoke of the past, we once again started to allow ourselves to become close.

I found work as a banquet waiter, a job that I actually kept for some time, but although the pay was good, the hours were intense and the work laborious, and I often came home tired and stressed. Knowing that Sira was waiting for me was a comfort, and it was the thought of losing her that often forced me out of bed and off to work in the mornings.

In the beginning, I was unfortunately quite abusive with her. A rambunctious puppy, she often found herself in trouble, and having a severe problem with anger, I'd often smack her with my hands or kick her, even while wearing shoes, ignoring her flinches. It all came to a head when I almost killed her. It was Easter weekend and I'd worked 15 hours, gone home to sleep five hours, only to return to work another 18 hours. Tearing down and setting up banquet after banquet, I was beyond tired and to the point of near dementia, so a co-worker, who was on the verge of becoming a friend, gave me a ride home. When we walked into my apartment and I

saw that Sira had basically destroyed my kitchen, having dug up and chewed most of the linoleum to pieces, I flipped out, beating her severely in front of my friend, never once considering how it made me look. Later, I discovered a huge knot on her head so large I was surprised I hadn't killed her. Declaring this to be the last time, I vowed to myself that I would never again touch her in anger, but at work the damage had already been done.

Horrified, my co-worker told everyone what he had witnessed and word began to go around that I was violent. Paranoid that people were judging me, my days became numbered as I once again began to fade into myself. One thing that I have learned is that lasting impressions can last longer than you want, and though I was deeply sorry and incredibly embarrassed for what had happened, regret rarely matters when you are fodder for gossip. Years later in therapy, I learned that we often act upon the beliefs of our self-perceptions. Believing myself to be a bad person, I was acting in ways to prove that self-perception. The good news is that my relationship with Sira transcended all of that in a way that allowed me to start learning how to trust myself. Teaching me forgiveness and patience, Sira had gone through what everything I had put her through and yet adored me all the same. As my constant loving companion, she offered me a relationship that would continue to heal me until she died of old age, when I was in my thirties.

God often speaks in strange ways. Sira may have been only a dog, but she was the first being to teach me about unconditional love. A gift from the Universe, she helped me to realize that God wasn't finished with me, while helping to renew my faith as a living example of an answered prayer.

Marching Gaily Forward

Sex, like most things in my life, has always been, for me, rather weird. As the product of ritualized sexual abuse, I often found myself disconnected and conflicted about my sexuality. Although I viewed the sexual act itself as dark and somewhat dirty, I was still addicted to the physical contact I was getting from my anonymous encounters as well as the power in being desired. In the process, I was making a bad name for myself in town and reinforcing my negative perception of myself. Feeling powerless in every other aspect of my life, I felt compelled to sleep with as many men as I could and being a top in a city of bottoms, it was pretty easy to get laid. Let's just say if I had been able to afford a bedpost, it would have been filled with notches, and leave it at that. If the gay lifestyle is known for anything, it is sex, and I had every intention of taking advantage of that fact.

I had been somewhat frigid when David was still alive so, in the beginning, I told myself that letting myself loose was a tribute to him, although at this point it had become a fixture of my identity. Driven by loneliness and sexual compulsion, I hung out in bars on weekends and parks and bookstores the rest of the week. This behavior can be typical of sexual abuse survivors but it was hard to say what was truly behind my many sexual encounters. Reaching out in all the wrong places, they were the only places I had any physical human contact. BJ had returned to the East Coast to live with his mother, once again leaving his life in Omaha behind him, which included me. We were still pseudo friends, but had drifted apart, unable to speak about the very things necessary. My mother was drinking constantly, so apart from Sira, I had very few people to hang out with.

Omaha, for the most part, has always been "closeted". For example, both Larry King and Alan Baer were married and yet their propensity for young men was well known. Omaha parks

were filled with homosexuals who were married, confused, and scared - who found solace in the company of gay men. With The Run closed down, there was nowhere else to hang out or hook up. Many times, guys just wanted to talk, and so I spent hours listening and talking about what it was like to be young and openly gay with men who, even if for a moment, enjoyed life through my eyes. Coming to relish my new capacity, I believed that for the first time ever I was actually helping people.

I was always between jobs, unable to endure the stress of being out in the public all the time, thus I had little social contact, considering most people usually get all the contact they need at work. Anonymous sex was a great escape for me as often, the sex was incidental; the real attraction being the company, which I used as an escape from living constantly in the memories in my head. Years later in therapy, I would learn that what I was doing was called *displacement*, escaping my emotions by projecting them onto something or someone else so that I didn't have to face them.

Promiscuity, however, takes a toll on the soul- and it's hard to respect yourself when people are whispering about what a whore you are. The gay community in Omaha has always been small, but after the Franklin thing it had become even smaller, and gossip is often harsh. Full of single prima donnas, the focus in Omaha's gay community had gone from the continual party back to the traditional lifestyle values of worshipping youth, beauty and sex- and everybody was in competition with everyone else for every good looking man who happened to be in the bar at that moment. I told myself that the gossips were just jealous and that who I slept with was my business, although I couldn't count, let alone tell you the names, of the sexual encounters I had back then. Intimacy is about sharing energy, and because an exchange of energy always occurs, partners should know who they're having sex with. Sleeping with arbitrary

strangers and absorbing all that unknown energy makes life chaotic, and my life was spinning faster and stranger the more encounters I sought out.

No longer into drugs and never much of a drinker, I spent weekends dancing on the speakers at The Max, four foot high platforms raised over the dance floor, where I could dance and watch the people down on the floor. The darkness that had once dominated the gay scene in Omaha was gone, and dancing on the speakers at The Max was sometimes the only safe place I had to go. Enveloped in my own little world, I would concentrate on the beat of the music, visualizing the energy that was all around me, using my intense weekend workouts for manifestation, prayer, and giving thanks for whatever I was thankful for.

Contrary to my father and stepmother's beliefs, I don't believe that homosexuality is a choice, and so being gay wasn't an issue with me when it came to my relationship with God. Promiscuity was another matter, though, and Art would counsel me on the repercussions that my behavior was having on my life and my outlook on life in general. Often I would tell him that he lived in a world and believed in a kind of love that didn't exist and that his ideals would screw him in the end. Looking back, I realize that Art reminded me of myself before everything happened, back when I struggled with idealism that good wins out in the end, and that true love existed. Jaded by my past and convinced I knew how the real world worked, I patiently listened to Art's arguments, disregarding him before he even finished.

I managed a distinct split when it came to my views about God and sleeping around. While I was out searching for sex, I pretended God didn't exist. Out of sight, out of mind, afterwards I'd make excuses explaining away my behavior, and since there was no real attachment to anyone, I found the lack of real intimacy safe. Primarily based on my background

and the defenses I'd developed in order to survive, I had concluded that sex was power, and I needed whatever power I could muster.

Semi-dating several men at the same time became customary, which was social suicide in the bar scene. BJ's saying, "If they aren't paying my bills, feeding my face, or sucking my dick, I really don't care what people think," became my mantra, and I dismissed the effects my behavior was having on me. None the less promiscuity began taking its toll. I began to sense my own mortality, realizing that I would be unable to celebrate my gay youth indefinitely. I was getting older and like an episode in the old series *Logan's Run*, at thirty you start becoming less desirable in the gay world. Already undesirable in my own eyes, I figured that my fate would be, once again, the solo life.

God, however, had other plans for me. My old life was ending and a new one was about to begin, much sweeter than I could imagine. A sex-ridden sinner's prayers were about to be answered and I would find myself on the path of understanding before I knew it, all as a result of God.

The Wonder of Love

A little over a year after Sira came into my life, I was a carefree bachelor and loving every minute of it, or at least that's what I told myself every morning I woke up alone. Even though I was fucking a lot of guys, I never allowed them to sleep over, and when I stayed at their place I left right after sex. To avoid any chance of a relationship forming, I tried to date unavailable guys who were either married or had a boyfriend. Married guys were preferable because they generally want only sex.

I tended to avoid parties, but one night I'd promised a friend that I would go to a party a mutual acquaintance of ours was throwing, figuring it wouldn't end up in an orgy like many after-bar parties did. The freedom that comes with being gay can be taken to extremes, usually by young "twinks" and it was hard to know if you were going to hang out or whether it would end in a free-for-all. Being a one-on-one kind of guy, the group thing panicked me and I'd usually leave at that point. Within walking distance from my apartment, I figured that if anything got jiggy, I would just excuse myself and slip out. However, as I expected, the party turned out to be quite tame, with people hanging out, drinking beer, and talking. My friend flagged me over to a group of people I didn't know so I accepted a beer and sat down and listened to their conversation.

Scanning the crowd to see if I knew anyone else, it was the first time I would lay eyes on Tristan. Like David and Sira, there was something about him that I instantly recognized, though I had no idea what it was or who he was. In his early 20's, his looks were nice – blond, 5'8" and cute – but there was something else, something deeper. Although we stayed in our respective groups, we both caught each other staring at each other, and I couldn't stop thinking that I was going to end up spending the rest of my life with him. When the party came to a close, I positioned myself in such a way that he had to walk past me. With a big smile, he said hello and asked if I would walk him to his car. Introducing himself, he explained that he was starting a new job and was new in town, knowing no one but his roommates, and barely at that. Mesmerized with each other, we made plans to go to the zoo later that week, which in Omaha is quite spectacular, exchanged phone numbers, and said good night.

It is funny how fear operates. I actually stood David up the first time we'd planned to meet. It had been raining the day I was supposed to meet him at a movie theater and I told myself

that I didn't want to get wet taking the bus, so I blew him off, not even bothering to call. Later, he called me and I apologized, at which point we became fast friends. I did basically the same with Tristan. After calling one out of the three phone numbers he'd given me and getting no answer, I decided to stay clear, confused by the emotions I was already experiencing.

This lasted until the next weekend, when I walked into the bar and immediately ran directly into him. Ignoring him at first, I walked around the bar to scope out the dance floor and that night's crowd, but, unable to help myself; found myself at his side moments later. Forgiving me immediately with a beaming smile, he offered to buy me a drink and we spent the whole night talking. Just out of college, he was a new assistant manager at a local music store, struggling to make his way up the retail corporate ladder. He'd never been in a real gay relationship and explained that he didn't want to rush into anything. I emphatically agreed with him, telling him that I was just interested in friendship and nothing more, although I couldn't get past the feeling that I'd known Tristan before, like in another life, as everything about him seemed familiar.

At the end of the night, he offered to drive me home. As we pulled up to my place, I told him that if he wanted to spend the night, he had to park around the corner, which he did immediately. Not exactly sure what the hell I was doing, I led him upstairs and we had a night of incredibly passionate sex. Allowing him to spend the night, from that moment to today (18+ years at this point), he has never left. It was about a month later when he closed out his lease and moved in with me, and we have been together ever since.

So we started our life together like many typical young gay couples who move in together right away, completely, overwhelmingly in love. Knowing that many relationships end

within the first year and that the loving couples often end up hating each other, doing what they can to publically humiliate their once supposed soul mate, I tried to keep some emotional distance. A few months in, I told Tristan not to fall in love with me and tried to downplay how head over heels in love I was with him. Understanding me in a way that I had never been understood before – again like we had known each other in another life and were just resuming where we'd left off – he took it in stride and promised not to fall in love. No blame. That night, we slept in each other's arms. I can't say enough about how beautiful our coming together was.

When I broke it off with one of the five guys I'd been dating before Tristan, he cried and said prophetically, "You're going to live forever with this guy." Of course, I denied it, assuring him that Tristan was just a passing phase, but, in the end, he proved to be right. Tristan and I were experiencing a love-at-first-sight story and though we were actually going very fast we were telling ourselves we were taking it slow. Having spent a lifetime denying that true love existed, there we were, and oftentimes I found the contradiction difficult to contend with emotionally, .

Sira absolutely adored Tristan and they became friends immediately. Noticing how she would gravitate more toward him than toward me sometimes, I became a little jealous at first, but I quickly came to the conclusion that it was just about *who* Tristan was – loved by all, including Sira.

It definitely wasn't all roses and champagne. We often had terrible fights that would end in vicious screaming matches. In fact, the first fight occurred the night he officially moved in. I immediately took out to the trash the Ouija board he'd just recently purchased, declaring I wasn't going to have that crap in my house because you never knew what doors flew open while playing

with it. Yelling that I was being superstitious and unreasonable, not having a clue as to my past, I was not to be swayed, and I was accustomed to getting my way. My place, my rules, and so what I wanted stood. In the beginning, I was a definite Type A and he an undeniable type B, and though opposites may attract, the friction within our union was undeniable.

It was as if we couldn't get enough of each other. Spending every waking moment we possibly could together, we got to know the intricacies of each other's personalities quickly. The more I discovered about Tristan, the more I loved him. His work ethic was like none I had ever seen, given that he'd worked a job since he was 14. Giving, compassionate, and funny, he usually makes friends and rarely enemies, opposite to my experiences. Exactly what he saw in me, I couldn't say, but the fact that I could see in his eyes how much he adored me every time he looked at me became intoxicating and I couldn't get enough of him.

Outside pressure arrived eight months into our relationship. My mother contracted pancreatitis due to her alcoholism and, and though surviving death once more, her kidneys permanently stopped functioning in the process. No longer able to care for herself, she had to choose between living with one of her adult children or going to a nursing home. Forced to decide whether we wanted my mother to live with us, I impressed upon Tristan the thought that if he loved me, then he was going to love my mother, assuring him that she should come live with us. At no time offering an argument, seeking only to please me, we began planning for her, unaware that we'd begun a miraculous journey. A month later, the five of us (including Sira and my mother's cat) began living together with no clue as to how we were going to do it. We just rolled up our sleeves and got busy with the day-to-day process of getting along.

Like everyone else, my mother took to Tristan immediately and became a surrogate for the mother he'd lost when he declared his homosexuality. Only seeing her drunk once, and briefly at that, Tristan had no exposure to my mother's alcoholism, but having the same issues in his childhood, understood her in ways that I was yet unable. Forbidden to drink in our house, mom spent her last five and a half years sober and on dialysis three times a week. Tristan and I took care of her, not foreseeing that it would solidify our relationship in a way that nothing else could have. David was right: everything happens for a reason, and this was no different. What we didn't know was that a family explosion was brewing and that my family's past was once again getting ready to rear its ugly head.

The Dragon Stirs

Around the time Sarah turned forty, she had a nervous breakdown due to triggered memories from the past. When she began talking about events everyone else wanted to stay buried, she broke the family silence in a way that none of us could have seen coming. This was in late 1994 to early 1995.

My father had been trying to reach out to the four of us for some time, first to Cindy and Stephen and eventually to Sarah and me. Having an extremely problematical relationship with him, considering the years of next to nothing but bad memories, I still desired a father at the same time, so I reached out, desperate to have a relationship with him, though expecting the worst. Regardless of the events of the past, I loved my father, and blaming my wicked stepmother solely for much of the abuse I suffered in their household, I did what I was taught and compartmentalized the past.

So, for all intent and purpose, the four of us were all in contact with him when Sarah began dredging up the past and talking about it. For years, we four had been at each other's throats, setting each other up, sacrificing each other in order to survive while listening to our father criticize everyone in my family as if he and his third family were some sort of prize. His divide-and-conquer strategy demanded silence or suffering the consequences of making waves, so we set up each other to take the hits, deflecting his disapproval, thus earning a reprieve as his "chosen one." It was a game no one could win for very long, and it succeeded in driving all of us apart.

Accustomed to being the ugly duckling that everyone picked on, Sarah finally earned our father's good graces for the first time in her life when she began attending college to obtain a degree in social work in order to become a therapist. Proud that one among his offspring was actually going to college and getting a degree, my father constantly impressed upon us how Sarah was making something of her life and the rest of us weren't. Accustomed to being at the top of my father's game, Cindy and Stephen refused to praise my older sister for her hard work, instead waiting for her to make a mistake so they could pounce on her and knock her from her pedestal.

They didn't have to wait long. It was in her late thirties and early forties that she began having problems. Plagued with nightmares and childhood memories she had repressed for years, she began losing sleep. Combined with the stress of raising a family, going to school, and being unable to come to terms with what she was remembering, she began speaking about her abuse for the first time, creating a ripple that soon became a tidal wave that inundated the entire family. Recalling Hummel Park, a city park on the northern outskirts of town where many of the satanic rituals took place, she began to speak about our father's practices as high priest, and the human

sacrifices and terrible abuse that took place at the hands of both our parents and their friends. Obsessing over the past, unable to escape the memories flooding in, she constantly talked about our past abuse, I guess to try and process what had happened.

Waiting until a day they knew she was visiting our father, Cindy and Stephen conspired to tell dad what Sarah was saying in order to destroy her budding relationship with him. A few minutes before she was to walk in the door, my brother called and told our father what Sarah had been saying. Confronting her and her husband at his front door, dad asked Sarah if there was truth in my brother had just told him and, probably figuring that there was nothing to lose at this point, she simply looked him in the face and told him that she was finally breaking the silence.

As this was happening in the living room, my stepmother was on the phone with Cindy in Florida insisting she wasn't married to our father at that time (although she most definitely was), trying to use her claims to shield herself from Sarah's accusations.. Growing pale and repeating over and over that he was the "best father he knew how to be," our father finally asked Sarah and her husband to leave, saying he never wanted to talk to her again. Shutting and locking the door almost symbolically as they left, he subsequently declared Sarah disinherited and declared that we were never to mention her name again, or risk suffering the same fate.

I later heard different versions of the event from Cindy, Sarah, and my father, similar in that they all saw themselves as the victim, and they were all angry and defensive,. Left to rage with an intense anger that the past was coming up again; I had naively felt that it was all over, and, believing it was better left in the past, was livid with Sarah for not keeping her mouth shut. Cindy campaigned to convince me that Sarah was a crazy liar while at the same time offering details about our father wearing the red robes symbolizing blood sacrifice. Neither my estranged

brother nor I bothered talking, as he was a constant mess, becoming a strange combination of all that was bad about our parents. Our father defended himself by saying he wasn't perfect but had been the best dad he knew how to be, half-heartedly calling Sarah a liar; although on one level or another we all knew the truth. I couldn't admit to myself that our parents were responsible and that I should be blaming *them* so, instead, I focused my rage on Sarah and catered to my parents.

The whistleblower position is never easy. In many ways, everyone abandoned Sarah: we - her birth family, plus her husband, children, and in-laws. No one believed the bizarre devil-worshipping stories she told about our childhood and everyone pretty much considered her a crazy liar, dismissing her memories as mentally ill fantasies. Needless to say, both my father and mother avoided talking about it, and we all did our best to forget Sarah, telling each other that she had always been a "trouble maker." Once, while Sarah was visiting us, I asked my mother if she had sacrificed any babies in Hummel Park lately, my poor attempt to camouflage the situation with humor. Resulting in a fight, Sarah declared she had no interest in listening to our mother's denials, and calling me a coward as she left, slammed the door behind her. Doing what we always did, like many dysfunctional families do: we didn't speak for months, dismissing each other from each other's lives. Along her journey she had to be hospitalized a few times, emotionally crippled by the injustices of our past, and forced to deal with our childhood alone, she found herself disbelieved by everyone, and shunned.

Mother Dearest

Tristan and I rented a sunny house with light in every room and moved my mother into the brightest room. Complaining at first, she grew to enjoy the sunshine and looking out the

windows when there was nothing on television. Surrounded by our friends, her social workers and visiting nurses, she began to enjoy company *without* Gordon's gin chilled no ice. She would sit in the kitchen smoking cigarettes and tell stories about her youth, still able to bewitch a room with tales of the Great Depression and her father, a renowned artist, who had helped support nine families when times were the roughest. Working as a graphic designer for Coca Cola years ago, she explained that he had created some of the famous female caricatures associated with the drink, as well as helping with the graphics of many of their drinks. It was often hard to get a word in edgewise.

Now I see that my mother had not recovered from the reality of the past she *didn't* spin stories about. Now that alcohol was disallowed and all her drinking buddies were either dead or off in bars someplace, she was left with just Tristan and me and a whole new lifestyle. Veering between being a loving, gracious individual to a version of the "Princess and the Pea" bitch accustomed to people doing her bidding, she found some old habits hard to break. Neither Tristan nor I were willing to play the servant role although dialysis was a crapshoot. Sometimes handling it fine, others she would come home sick and exhausted convinced that she was eventually going to die during her treatments, leaving us no choice but to attend to her needs.

It all hit home the day her bath lady couldn't make it and I had to bathe her. Seeing how *emaciated* she was, it began to set in that I was going to lose my mother and that there was nothing I could do about it. Each time she left, I wondered if she would return and what condition she would be if she did but although the years of watching her die took something from me; it also gave me something in return, as I have learned the undeniable truth to how life changing it can be taking care of someone who is dying.

Tristan and my mother loved each other, and she often referred to us as "her boys."

Rising to the challenge of taking care of an elderly sick person, Tristan broke the bar on what was expected of boyfriends, and I loved him more and more every day I watched him patiently interact with my mother. Often telling me that Tristan was my lifesaver, my mother loved the fact that we were together. Involving herself in our relationship, if we would happen to fight she would often intercede on Tristan's behalf. At one point I pouted that she cared for Tristan more than she did for me, but she had a way of bringing me to my senses, although usually not without a lot of hemming and hawing on my part.

Being her caregiver was hard on me, and the daily stress it put me under was sometimes unbearable. One night, she fell and broke her hip and had to have a second hip replacement, going from a cane back onto a walker. Considering that many of the people who go through hip replacements don't make it (or so I have heard), it struck me as a miracle that she'd survived a *second* one. However, for my mother more disability meant more inconvenience, which meant battling with more depression, which she battled more the sicker she became.

Emotionally brutal on me, it was the time I helped her take a shower that I remember most. Already humiliated that her son was giving her a shower, she accidentally sliced open her foot, where it blood chunks until I was eventually got it to stop with compression. For obvious reasons, blood triggers me, but there was nothing I could do but try and do what I could. Recognizing her impending death and the indignities that came with it, that night Tristan had to deal with my wracking sobs as we lay down to sleep. Frustrated that I couldn't prevent her deterioration, I despaired over the life she would never have, and the times we would never share.

Mornings were spent at the kitchen table, where we would spend hours talking. Mom would smoke her cigarettes as we our sipped coffee and talked about everything, nothing out of bounds, like when Tristan became uncomfortable after mom complimented him on what a cute butt he had. Many times, our conversations revolved around her bowel movements or news she had read in the morning newspaper before religiously whipping through the crossword puzzle, which she always did, often in minutes it seemed. Liking the sound of her own voice, she'd often read the clues aloud not for help but just to talk. Man how I miss those morning conversations.

The one subject completely off bounds was the death of my oldest brother, who died within 48 hours after being born. My parents first born child, David Christopher, was a topic that no one would discuss- and I could never get my parents to talk about the specifics of his death. Never equating that my brother's death could be associated with my family's past, my interest was more in the fact that I wanted to know more of the brother that shared my first name. The Bob Newhart show was big when I was growing up, and it was the character named Daryl, who had another brother named Daryl, that caused my contention. Having no clue why my parents named me after my dead brother, I found it weird and embarrassing, however, no matter how much I tried, I could never get either of my parents to talk about him.

Tristan was an optimal optimist, spending a great deal of time giving Mom and I pep talks and lightening things up with his sense of humor, while mom turned to her faith to get her through whatever she was suffering at the moment, never allowing herself to wallow in self-pity for very long. In many ways, watching her deal with her deterioration was an inspiration to both Tristan and I. Assuring us that it was God who helped her through the dark times, she

encouraged Tristan and I to seek the same help. Tristan hadn't grown up with much religion and enjoyed listening to us talk about our faith and the fact that we both found proof of God in nature and the world around us. For my mother, God wasn't found in a book but was rather considered a personal friend of hers, who she constantly interacted with.

During the hours we spent discussing the details of her childhood and the experiences that had brought her to where she was, I learned more about my mom as a person. Although I knew she'd been adopted, I wasn't aware that her adoptive father, who was supporting not just their family but several others, had felt justified in molesting her whenever he felt like it. My mother's adoptive mother was a large woman and, like many women whose husbands are abusing their daughters, didn't like her much. With an emotionally and physically abusive mother and a sexually abusive father, she grew up in the grip of a terrifying oppression much like I did. I began to see my mother as a real person instead of blaming her for not being the mother I had always wanted her to be. Still, we continued to skirt what had transpired when I was a child and continued to blame Sarah for bringing it up.

We talked about the world as it was when she was a child and how it is now, about faith and God – moments I will cherish forever. Neither of us was interested in the Bible, and for good reason. Mom hated the Catholic Church after what my father had put her through, and though I didn't hate it, I sure had a hard time stomaching what most people viewed as simple rituals. Traditional services could send me into panic attacks. As a child, you see, I'd been taught that the crucifixion was a grotesque representation of how easy it is to destroy a messiah of the Creator God. Then there was the whole *This is My Body, This is My Blood* emphasis that was always too close to the cannibalism we had practiced at every sacrifice. We'd tried going to a

local Catholic church but after singing a hymn whose refrain was all about *Washing our hands in the blood*, Tristan and I walked out, never to return.

However, Father S. accepted mine and Tristan's dinner invitation to try and convince us to return to the church. Figuring it would be an opportunity to get to know each other better, neither Tristan nor I had any idea what my mom had planned. Though we knew she could definitely speak out and voice her opinion, solicited or not, none of us could have guessed that, as dinner began, she would begin the night's dinner conversation by stating that there would be a lot less babies found in plastic bags in trash containers if the Catholic church would allow abortion. Later she recounted her experiences of "whoring herself" to the local churches, singing in a red dress every Sunday in protest. Such conversation, fueled by my mother's anger, continued throughout dinner until I extricated Father S. by offering to show him the garden I'd planted. Giving the garden a cursory look, he all but ran to his car, at which point he remembered that we'd made dessert for the nuns in the rectory and it occurred to him that he had to go back inside too say goodbye to Tristan and my mother. The next day, I called to thank him for coming to dinner and he told me that he'd just been sharing the dessert with the sisters and describing my mother to them right before my call. Making some comment about my mother having "spirit", I have often wondered what he'd *really* been saying about her to the nuns.

Cantankerous and constantly exerting her independence, Mom spent a great deal of time hiring and firing home visiting aides and nurses, insisting that she hated being treated like she was deaf and stupid just because she was in a wheelchair. She'd quickly grow impatient until she lost patience with them, giving them an earful before ordering them out the door. Even sick, she had presence, and people rarely questioned her when she was angry. Often telling her that I was going to wheel her down the hill and out into traffic, I learned to laugh off some of her over-the-

top intensity when she aimed her frustration at me. I can thank Tristan for showing me how to do this, watching how he was always able to take things in stride.

I take out the photo albums of when she was living with us every once in a while and have discovered that if you look at the photographs as a whole, you can see a peculiar pattern. When she first came to live with us, she looked fairly healthy but her eyes and facial expressions were dark and unhappy as she was always frowning or smirking. As the photos progress, you can see her body deterioration but there is an *inner light* shines in her eyes. The physical decline is unmistakable, however, so is the happiness in her eyes. No longer living in the dark with people dosing her with alcohol, transformed by her impending demise, she found a way to become lighter, helping her to more openly embrace a life of love with Tristan and me. I still get a warm feeling when I look through those albums.

In his 1973 book *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker argues that much of human existence is based on the fear and denial of our own mortality. People live day-to-day by putting death out of their minds, even as the world crashes around them. As a society, we shove death into the shadows, rarely speaking of it in public let alone in the quiet of our own homes where we do our best to insulate ourselves from the mortality all around us.

Death was nothing new to me, however, given that almost every death I'd experienced in my traumatized life was a result of something horrible, I did my best not to think of my mother's, despite the fact that she was wilting away before my very eyes. I avoided contemplating death, finding it frightening and triggering at the same time. Shamanism would eventually change my views, but the practice was still new to me while she was dying and I didn't have the tools to adjust appropriately, trapped as I was in the caregiver syndrome in which I identified with her

and her death while paralyzed by the guilt of not being able to do anything other than watch her wither away. I couldn't leave the house for more than two hours at a time before I'd start to panic, plagued with images of discovering her after she had died alone. Consumed by the drama of my mom's deterioration, I could do nothing but fall back on Tristan.

Mom picked up every virus that lurked around her dialysis treatments and often shared them with me when she came home. Tristan worked during the day and was lucky enough not to get the pink eye that she and I got, but neither Tristan nor I could escape the horror when she got shingles on the right side of her face. The first part of the disease began with her face swelling up like the Elephant man, at which point she was completely out of it. Later, however, because shingles makes the nerves feel like they're on fire, the swelling was replaced with pain so severe that it would make her scream. Excruciatingly painful to watch let alone experience, there was nothing Tristan and I could do other than suffer through it with her for weeks. The attacks were generally worse at night, often scaring us out of a sound sleep and preventing all of us from getting a full nights rest. Looking back, I have often wondered if she used the shingles to wake us up not because of the pain but due to her fear of dying, since she generally desired nothing more than for us to hold her hand. Whatever the case, Tristan and I suffered watching her suffer.

About eight months before she died, we brought in a hospice group. She argued adamantly against having hospice in the house, assuming we were giving up on her, but finally conceded when I explained that her care was becoming too much for us to handle. It was hard to overlook the terror that was often in her eyes with regards to her impending death and how it made her struggle against her fate, sick as she was. As the poet Dylan Thomas put it:

Do not go gentle into that good night,^[1]_[SEP]

Old age should burn and rave at close of day,^[1]_[SEP]

Rage, rage against the dying of the light...^[1]_[SEP]

Hospice was extraordinary, and I came away with a great deal of respect for what I perceive to be the caregiver's calling from God. Treating my mother with dignity and her decline with respect, they sought to make her comfortable in every way possible, while, at the same time, giving Tristan and I a much-needed break. Scheduling nurses, bath ladies, doctors, and social workers in such a way that enabled us to get away for greater periods gave us time to focus on our relationship, as well as giving us a chance to become involved with a gay friendly church that we had been introduced to.

A few months before my mother died, we were sitting at the table one morning when she looked up from her morning newspaper and said, "I want to thank you." Figuring that an insult was next from the queen of backhanded compliments, I braced myself and asked "why", not expecting to be shocked by her answer. Looking me right in the eye, she commented that it was the first time in her life where she had been neither abused nor able to abuse herself, and she just wanted to be sure that Tristan and I knew how grateful she was that we gave her that opportunity. At the time I was uncomfortable, quickly changing the subject, although I will always consider that moment one of the fondest I have of my mom.

By accepting my mother's frailties, I was becoming more patient and understanding, actually becoming the caregiver I never was when younger. Slowly gravitating away from being a selfish child and more towards becoming a genuine caring adult, I began to realize how taking care of a dying individual changes a person within, and how much both Tristan and I had changed, thanks to my mother. In many ways my mother saved us more than the other way around.

Unfortunately I was still lacking with regards to my own recovery. I was unable to sleep for long periods of time due to the stress of taking care of my mother, which was what I figured was fueling my nightmares. Unknown to Tristan, I was still sleeping with men all over town, unable to control my sexual compulsions. Secrets are a killer in a relationship, and I spent much of my time enveloped in guilt, convinced I was a bad person and more like my womanizing father than I cared to admit. Often in an emotional state of turmoil and flying off the handle over nothing, my guilt fueled my paranoia and I often accused Tristan of doing the same things I knew I was doing, provoking fights between the two of us. Both Tristan and my mom pushed me to fill out disability papers in hopes that I could get financial assistance for treatment, both convinced I desperately needed it. Unable to keep a job in order to help support us, Tristan started looking for employment that might support us both, encouraging me to concentrate on getting into therapy instead.

Crashing emotionally, I was acting out in ways I couldn't control. Certain that I would be unable to deal with my mother's death, I did anything I could to escape thinking about it. For a long time, I honestly hoped that I would contract a disease so I could die alongside her. Tristan and I were no longer intimate. Assuming that it was just due to the stress over my mom, he was oblivious of my headlong pursuit of self-destruction, and, not wanting to hurt him, I distanced myself further, unable to be in physical contact with him because of what I was doing away from home. I told no one what was happening, nor about my fight with severe depression, although it wasn't much of a secret. My siblings were pretty much out of the picture, given that they blamed my mother for what had happened in the past and wanted nothing to do with her. Tristan, coming out a year or so after we were together, had been dealing with the repercussions of telling his

family that he was gay, so we basically found ourselves alone, except for our friends who came to visit us and mom, when she was able to entertain.

In some ways the strongest woman I have ever known, my mother, for the most part, kept a positive disposition while demonstrating an undeniable grace throughout her decline. Our friends had no problem listening to her repeat her life stories, as her timing was impeccable and she was as captivating as Betty Davis- smoking her cigarettes and pausing at all the right places to enhance what she was saying. Still a looker, she would tell us of conversations she had with older gentlemen during her treatments, each vying for her attention. Something about her attracted people to her, and the closer we got to her death, the more I found myself missing her company. She could always make me laugh, and it was fun to watch her interact with others, although you could never predict what would come out of her mouth. Yet that was part of her charm; people either loved her or hated her. Those who loved her would go to the ends of the earth for her, and I grew to adore my mom in a way that I had never imagined possible when I was a child.

A Metaphysical Church

In 1999, about a year before my mother died, Tristan and I learned of an up and coming church in town that honored all paths to God, so we decided to check it out in hopes that it would offer us a well-deserved break. Mom was contracting illness after illness due to the dialysis wearing her body down, and we found ourselves overwhelmed by these health crises

This new church seemed more like a Las Vegas nightclub performance or pep rally for God than church, but the Sunday service was a celebration of music and messages of hope and love, and there were no songs about blood and no Eucharist, so at least it wasn't triggering.

The philosophy was simple – through our actions we create our own lives, and spiritual texts, with a touch of quantum physics, were used to explain divine energy. The Bible was considered a collection of stories that, if interpreted in a metaphysical manner, offered secret knowledge that we could then take within in order to bring ourselves closer to God. Similar to what I learned as a child, it drew me like a moth to a flame. In a way, I believed that this new perspective on life to be liberating and thought perhaps that it held the answers to that which I was desperately seeking. Enamored with the message that I, with God's help, was master of my own destiny, Tristan and I not only started attending but sought to get involved in any way we could.

Denied three times, a week after the third denial I received a letter stating that the government considered me disabled and I started receiving a monthly disability check. The Internet had arrived and chat rooms were full of men looking for discreet sex so, while Tristan was at work, I'd begun disappearing at times, hooking up with men I met online, while neither Tristan nor my mother suspected. Excusing my bad behavior by telling myself that I was unable to control myself, I couldn't deny that my compulsions had become a serious albatross around my neck, causing me to distance myself from those I loved in order to live a life of secrets. Just like my father.

My first round of therapy ended badly after I began seeing a psychiatrist who, unbeknownst to me, was known all over town as a drug pusher. The same doctor who was seeing Sarah, he gave me everything he was giving my sister, overmedicating me with pills that didn't relieve anything, probably because I was neither bipolar nor did I suffer from dissociative identity disorder (DID). The 900 milligrams of Depacote he prescribed for me on daily did nothing but make me fat, and, still unable to sleep, I was having worse and worse panic attacks.

Hearing the talk around town about him, I realized he was a quack, but it was only when I was told that his nurse, who was also my therapist, had been talking about me to other patients, I quit everything. Spending the next couple of days sick in bed, I hadn't realized that quitting Depacote cold turkey can cause seizures.

Overwhelmed at home and unable to contain my emotions enough to hold down a job, I signed up for courses at a university in the area but couldn't concentrate on the material and dropped out. Needing something more than taking care of my mother and compulsive liaisons, I thought that volunteering at the church might offer relief from my compulsions and give me something to focus my free time on.

The leader of the church was a charismatic, larger-than-life kind of man whom I will call "Stormy". Stormy was an openly reformed alcoholic who was currently in a married relationship with his gay lover who worked in the church with him. A long time lounge singer and performer, he had spent years in bars getting drunk and making money until he subsequently had an epiphany, after which he had gone to ministerial school, changed his name and reinvented himself as a sort of metaphysical Southern Baptist tent type revivalist. Having grown up in the South as a Baptist, it was an easy transition for him to make and he was remarkably good at it. Upon arriving in Omaha, he and his lover quickly took over a failing church and their efforts seemed to be paying off, drawing greater numbers of congregants each week.

Every Sunday morning, Stormy would shine like a star on stage, pumping out pep talks about how we were all capable of dealing with the problems in our lives and how God loved us all and that the universe would provide for us if we could learn how to act in a way that helped manifest our prayers into reality. The opposite side of the same coin with regards to my

childhood, I agreed with much of what was being said, although it seemed too New Age for Tristan. Stormy already had a following in town, filling more and more seats until it was standing room only, and though he impressed me as somewhat of a snake oil salesman, I still saw an opportunity in the church, figuring it couldn't hurt helping others to focus on God.

Art, usually busy, had always been in the background, and assured me that God was the only way out of my predicament. Befriending Tristan as well, he, however, expressed extreme mistrust for the church we were attending. Seeing right away that Stormy was nothing more than a con man, Art believed that Jesus was my only salvation and urged me to rethink my decision about getting involved with a church that believed in anything and everything. After much discussion, we agreed to disagree and Tristan and I kept going to the church, although in the end, I have to admit that Art was right. Later, I would refer to it as The Cult of Disillusioned, although later Tristan aptly named it The Church of the Misfit Christmas Toys, in reference to the Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer cartoon shown on television every Christmas. Nonetheless, the church would become a factor in our lives for some time to come.

Part of the draw for me was the community that Tristan and I both hungered for. Finally finding a place where we could be ourselves and still fit in, we began reaching out to what we felt was an extended family. The congregation was overflowing with eclectic individuals full of new although sometimes unusual ideas and convictions, and the church seemed a place where everyone could share what they believed without judgment. Feeling as out of place in society as we did, many had gravitated to the church community for the same reasons, and in the beginning it was a very loving, giving place.

Being fairly proficient in the kitchen, Tristan and I volunteered to cook every Sunday morning for when service let out. Although it kept us out of the sanctuary when Stormy was doing his thing, we loved the gratitude everyone expressed for the food we prepared, and working in the kitchen was great fun. Baking the bread that everyone broke with each other after worship was a spiritual experience in itself, and Tristan and I began looking forward to Sunday mornings, figuring cooking was better than listening to Stormy's pep talks, which Tristan had already gotten bored with.

Stormy had big plans for the little church looking for direction as he wanted to take it from a small congregation to a big radio-television *cult* ministry. Assuming control over everything, including the board of Directors, Stormy and his partner revamped everything while everyone eagerly jumped on board with few questions asked, excited by the prospects that Stormy assured everyone was ahead.

Just weeks after our arrival, Tristan and I began hearing rumors that Stormy was sleeping with male members of the congregation. Figuring that a couple of fags running a church might inspire such rumors, we shrugged them off at first, given that we were more interested in the community rather than its leadership, anyway. Given time however, we slowly began to realize it was a bigger issue than we thought when we began witnessing members drifting away or being run out. No one seemed to notice or care, and like the Emperor with no clothes, Stormy constantly surrounded himself with his devout fan base that did anything he asked. A dynamic speaker on Sunday mornings, he was no good when it came to the pastor-parishioner intimacy people crave, not to mention the fact that he was sleeping around all over town and everyone was gossiping about it. Within the year of Tristan and I coming to the church, Stormy and his partner held a divorce ceremony and publicly separated, and although at odds, continued running the

church together. Finding humor in the situation, Tristan first asked if Hallmark made a card for such occasions, then suggested we get a card of congratulations and just rip it in half.

Having been exposed to the gay lifestyle all my adult life, it wasn't the fact that Stormy was gay that bothered me so much as his pretentiousness and the chaos that surrounded him, but with regards this matter Tristan and I were in a small although growing minority. Then an incident furthered our growing rift.

Christmas has always been an especially bad time of year for me, as I could never help but to recall the past, and that year I had found myself overcome by the grief of what had been taken from me as a child regarding the sexual abuse I experienced. Triggered by one of my many trysts, it emotionally began to sink in how violated I have always felt, and the grief surrounding my objectification was devastating. Not knowing what to suggest, Tristan urged me to go and talk to Stormy, as he was our minister. Figuring what the hell, I called and made an appointment for us to go and see Stormy at his home.

The meeting, needless to say, went badly. After listening to me for ten minutes, he declared that he was my spiritual savior and that with his help I could overcome the "drama" I was experiencing. Slightly irritated but not sure why, I responded that I believed I was my own spiritual savior and that what I experienced was more than "drama." Taken back by the tone of my voice, Stormy's demeanor changed instantly, and we shot barbs at each other until Tristan decided we should leave. On the walk home, I ranted at the top of my lungs, infuriated at being talked down to like I was a child. Tristan listened quietly, then demanded that I get a list of therapists from my mother's social workers and find a therapist as soon as possible, explaining he

didn't know what else to suggest. It was the look in his eyes that did it for me, so I began to seriously look for professional help.

A second incident occurred later between Stormy and I at my mother's memorial service when Stormy made a pass at my 17-year-old nephew, humiliating all of us. In the end, I would have very little good will left for the man, but the real *coup d'grâce* was when he went out of his way to bring Alan Baer back into my life, which became the proverbial last straw.

A Time to Talk

I had no one to really talk to other than Tristan and my mother, and I was keeping secrets from them, so you would think that I would have looked forward to seeing a therapist to have someone to talk too, but just the opposite was true. Having no faith in therapy and basically attending the appointment I'd made to placate Tristan, Ms. Smith, (obviously NOT her real name), had been last on the list of about fifteen therapists my mother's social worker had given me, but, liking something about her voice, I left a message on her machine requesting an appointment.

Although my last therapist had been female, the nurse of that drug-pusher doctor, I still felt more comfortable talking with a woman than with a man. Honestly, straight men have always intimidated me. Not the ones I slept with (who I never considered all that straight), but rather it is the butch, womanizing, beer-drinking man's man type that generally encapsulates the straight man persona that generally makes me nervous. Neither overly feminine nor overly masculine, I still get 'noided' out by those who feel compelled to overexert their male sexuality. Of course, I could have chosen a gay therapist, but I couldn't see myself going to any male therapist, even a gay one. Considering my background with Aquino, I am not surprised. He is

probably the reason why I especially wouldn't see a gay male therapist. Not that I am suggesting that gay therapists are inherently bad therapists, but my experience had taught me not to trust many gay men due to their penchant for playing games with those closest to them. Based on my own life experiences, I had found plenty of reason to distrust the gay men in Omaha. Of course, no better at the time as I was just as guilty of having affair after affair and playing plenty of games myself some of my reasoning was no doubt based on projection. Whatever, it was what it was.

Ms. Smith was attractive and professional. Fairly tall, smartly dressed, with styled hair and glasses, she looked like a competent therapist, although I knew I couldn't judge a book by its cover. Her office was small with bookcases filled with psychotherapy books, a desk, a chair for her to sit on during our sessions, and a nice leather couch for clients. Feeling comfortable almost immediately, I decided to put everything on the table figuring she would respond like everyone else I'd told my story to. Giving her a condensed version of my childhood, I offered the basics of my family background and how all of my older siblings and I had been destroyed by what we'd experienced, figuring she would dismiss me.

Prefacing it all by trying to explain that we are all products of our experiences, I told her about being taught to "see into people" in a way that often made them uncomfortable. Describing my relationship with God and the esoteric nature of my spiritual beliefs, I also told her of my fear of waking up and being the Antichrist. She listened intently and asked a few questions for clarification, and in this way we spent the first few sessions getting to know each other. Despite what I was telling her, she still wished to continue seeing me.

When she learned what church I was attending, she suggested that I pick up a book named *The Way of the Shaman* by Michael Harner as a way to approach my spiritual concerns. She commented that my "abilities" sounded shamanic in nature and thought that looking into a Native American way of spirituality might be a way to stave off my fears. Explaining that Shamanism primarily dealt with the practice of dream work, she suggested that it might be a way to help me master the nightmares that were so debilitating. Intrigued, I went home and ordered the book online, unable to find it in any of the bookstores in town.

Declaring that it wasn't her job to confirm or deny my experiences but rather to help me to focus on learning to live everyday life and to face those things I was unwilling to face, she explained that therapy was useless if I wasn't willing to work hard at it. Commenting that it could take years, she warned me not to take therapy lightly and that I should commit the time to be in it for the long haul. Angry at first that she refused to take my side and wouldn't say whether or not she believed me or not; I have come to respect what she taught me throughout my years of therapy.

Everyone has defenses and mine were in full swing the first few months. I began to suffer from images of raping her in her office and as a result almost abandoned our work early on. Terrified of such fantasies, I told her that I no longer wanted to see her again, but after I explained why, she assured me that it was just my defenses at work to keep me from getting healthy, assuring me I would reach a point where I did not need them anymore. It was a miraculous discovery to me when I learned to discern when my mind was fighting the therapy and how talking about it made the negative fantasies and defenses disappear. Designed to help me persevere during the horror of my childhood, the defenses that had saved me when I was

young were now getting in the way of my having a productive and happy life as an adult, and the more I learned about myself, the more aware I became.

One example of one of my defenses was lying. Uncomfortable around people, I learned to lie to safeguard myself by encouraging people to keep their distance. Originally, I lied to try and keep myself from being beaten while, at the same time, using my lies to insulate myself from both the reality of the my abuse and the humiliation I felt at being treated like an animal. As a young adult however, my old defense made for an incredibly lonely, self-isolating life. After my return from Florida, I focused on stopping the behavior, not because I knew it was a defense but rather I was tired of looking like a dumbass. I would learn throughout therapy that once you realize a defense exists, you can change the behavior, but the key to this was gaining enough perspective to recognize the problem. Believing in the adage that an unexamined life was not worth living, Ms. Smith would spend years helping me to face what I wouldn't alone.

I learned a lot about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and even reached a point where I could recognize when a panic attack was on the way. The attacks had always been bad, but lately had been getting worse; once even causing me to pass out in department store. Helping me to become aware of the "triggers" that would begin the attack – which could be caused by an event, someone saying something in a certain way, or even smells – Ms. Smith helped me with coping techniques. I even started becoming capable of identifying situations I didn't want to be in, as well as learning how to control the behavior that generally got me there. Assuring me that I was a normal person who had gone through some abnormal events, Ms. Smith often remarked that it was a miracle that I hadn't ended up as my dad had predicted, either dead or in jail, given that most people gravitate to what they know, and chaos and abuse was pretty much the norm during my formative years.

I have often been asked what I talk about in therapy and my reply is that I think of all the things I don't want to talk about and that's what I bring up in my sessions. Following Carl Jung, Ms. Smith often concentrated on drawing out my shadow side, my darkness, so I could examine it. Throughout the years I have been with her, she has helped me bring my shadow into the light, thus, in a way, re-parenting me. Helping me to get my emotions under control, she gave me the guidance and support I never received as a child.

At one point, my agoraphobia threatened our sessions. Often not wanting to leave the house or drive the car, I would cancel our appointments at the last minute, further hindering my treatment. It wasn't like Sigourney Weaver in the movie *Copycat* where she was paralyzed by the fear of her front door, but rather a case of me not wanting to feel exposed in public. Crowds stressed me, but not as much as driving- and many days the thought of getting out on the road was enough to make me stay in bed. When Ms. Smith demanded that I honor my appointments or she would drop me as a patient, explaining that boundaries were exceedingly important to the therapeutic process and that she had a business to maintain, I began to discipline myself by forcing myself to attend therapy on a regular basis. Most people see a therapist once or twice a month, but due to the abuse I had suffered and its uncontrollable effects, at one point I was seeing her three times a week. Given the amount of grounding, *deprogramming*, and *reprogramming* I needed, I have realized what a lifesaver Ms. Smith has been.

Helping me to face the anger I felt towards my mother for drinking herself to death as well as the guilt I felt because of it by walking me through my emotions, Ms. Smith helped me to become a more complete person, sharing those tools necessary to not only to identify and understand my thoughts and feelings, but also those that enabled me with the ability to articulate them as well. Having had spent a lifetime learning how to stay silent, being able to talk about

the things that scared me the most helped lessen my fears, allowing me to understand myself more fully.

Explaining the caregiver syndrome from which I was suffering, she helped me focus on coming to terms with my mother's impending death while, at the same time encouraging me to think of my future afterwards. Compassionate and patient, she didn't shy away from my intensity like most people did and I respected her strength.

Finally, by pointing out how I was re-abusing myself every time I sought sexual gratification outside of love, an insight that had never dawned on me, she helped me to stop sexually acting out. Pointing out that my actions were not only hurting those around me, but myself as well, and in terrible ways, she helped me face that the guilt I felt about sleeping around on Tristan had become an albatross that I could hardly bare. Often remarking that I had no idea how to stop myself, it wasn't until I heard it said out loud that I realized the truth was , regardless of what had happened to me in my past, I was still responsible for my choices as an adult, and that my choices did indeed have consequences.

It is my contention that therapy is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. Finding a person who can help you truly examine what really think and why, helping you to become more conscious of yourself, can be invaluable asset, and I suggest everyone treat themselves to a few years of therapy at some point in your lives. However, Ms. Smith was about to have her hands full, as my past was about to grab me by the balls once again. Wonderland was winding back up, only this time I wouldn't be running from the darkness, and what I would discover about myself would border on the miraculous.

Shamanism

My first real experience with Shamanism was with a woman named Kathy Burgess, a talented and gifted shaman in Omaha. A practicing nurse who had researched the subject thoroughly, she was an incredibly intelligent and gifted woman who eventually received a full scholarship to study for four years in Ireland and write about ancient Celtic shamanism.

Generally associated with Native American medicine men and women, shamanism is the first spiritual practice of humankind and is found in most cultures from Europe to Asia to Africa. Like the old *mythos-logos* paradigm, shamans perceive in a spirit world as well as our consensual reality; they know that *mythos* continuously plays out in our lives through guides, angels, demons, spirits, and ghosts. By contacting the Kingdom of Heaven within, every individual has the capacity to interact with “the other side” through what I like to call active prayer. Instead of quieting the mind through meditation, the shamanic practitioner listens to a drumbeat in a darkened room with eyes closed and encourages the mind to go where it will. Experiencing a waking dream in which the shaman receives guidance and information from guides on the other side, this work is often symbolic and takes practice to master.

When I met Kathy, it was to seek her guidance in retrieving parts of my soul that I’d lost during the trauma and fear I’d undergone as a child. I lay on a blanket on the floor while she walked around me burning sage, blowing the smoke on me, while she shook a rattle, explaining that she was cleansing the area and asking for guidance and protection from her guides on the other side. Though I felt uncomfortable and a bit silly, I also felt that I *had* lost parts of my soul. Scared and having no idea what to do while she went on her “journey,” I closed my eyes and allowed my mind to wander as she lay down beside me, shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, ankle to ankle.

To an onlooker, it would only have looked like two people lying together on the floor listening to a beat of a drum. Inside the mind is another matter altogether, as the drumbeat changes the brainwaves from beta to delta, tricking the mind into thinking it is asleep. In what is referred to as a waking dream, the shaman then can go anywhere he wants mentally- “astral projecting” himself any place he wishes to go, (be that geographically or forward or backward in time), all the while remaining in a dream state mentally.

Not recognizing it at the time, I now understand how similar these beliefs were in comparison to what I was raised with and why I found the interest in it that I did.

Allowing my brain to wander while Kathy did her thing, I suddenly saw myself in front of a small dark-haired woman who was walking towards me. Having no idea who it was that I was looking at, I was taken at how well she could walk, although I had no idea to why. She put her hand to my face and stroked my cheek, telling me how proud of me she was. Telling myself that I was only imagining this encounter, I was nonetheless in constant awareness of how upright she was moving, and with such agility.

Kathy completed her journey and sat me up. Cupping her hands on my head, she blew onto the crown of my head three times to symbolize the three aspects she had brought back from the upper world (a place that has little to do with the Christian sense of Heaven), the lower world (which has nothing to do with Hell), and the middle world, the world in which is the level on which we exist. Relighting the sage and beating her drum, she walked around me singing, thanking her spirit guides for helping her and protecting us.

This ceremony, called a soul retrieval, enables the shaman to see a person for who he or she really is, as well as aspects of their life they may be hiding, even from themselves. Finding

the parts of the soul that have been lost throughout life, a Shaman is oftentimes given an overview of the person's life, and such was the case with Kathy, whose perspective regarding me had obviously changed. With pure admiration in her eyes, she told me that she had never met anyone who had gone as far spiritually as I had, and she was convinced that I had an important role to perform here in this world. Not once giving her any details of my past or my belief that I was going to become the Antichrist, she was convinced regardless that I was some sort of gift from God and sent here to do something important.

Marie showed me a reverence that I was no longer used to, and it frightened me. Years later, Kathy was a guest speaker at one of Sarah's classes on spirituality when my sister was getting her masters. After listening to Kathy's lecture on Shamanism, Sarah introduced herself as my sister and asked if she had any tips on how we might further our spiritual growth. In front of the entire class, Kathy declared that our family should be teaching others about God and not the other way around. Sarah, caught off guard, complained to me that her class had later become uncomfortable for her as everyone looked at her as some sort of wise sage.

Kathy's conviction that I was connected to God gave me hope that I might be able to thwart my fate as the antichrist, and I decided to further explore what Shamanism might have to offer. Power animals are guides found in the lower world who help guide and heal. Dependent on the shaman, these guides work on a very personal level, and I would later find myself doing quite a bit of work with the energies of Bear, Wolf, and Dragon, each of whom stood as symbols for attributes lending power to me. For example, when I feel weak or scared, I focus on Bear energy, bears being fearless, protective, and beautiful. I focus my mind on what it is to be a bear, and then try to emulate the feeling, visualizing the same attributes within myself. When Kathy had set out to retrieve the parts of my soul I had lost in my first soul retrieval, Bear had

immediately presented himself to her on the other side in order to help, and she assured me that this was significant in and of itself.

The day after my soul retrieval, I was talking on the phone with Cindy, detailing the event for her, but not until after she mentioned my dad's paternal grandmother who had died before I was born. The woman Cindy described made me immediately recall the woman I had "seen" during my soul retrieval the day before. Explaining that she'd been horribly crippled with osteoarthritis and could barely walk, I dawned on me that this could have been the reason why I was so impressed with how upright and agile my "apparition" was. Believing that it was my great grandmother who had first greeted me from the other side- it was the first time ever, when someone in my family was actually proud of me.

Considering my past, it was easy for me to embrace Shamanism. In a way, Shamanism and Satanism are opposite sides of the same coin, which was exactly what worried Art. Both believe in God and the spirit world. Like Satanic high priests, shamans deal with the spirit world and the archetypes within human psyches, but the primary focus is to create psychological and spiritual balance, not power- with nature providing an example of good balance. One thing that Shamanism and Satanism have in common is that they both perceive the existence of psychic realms and the influence of angels and demons, though their interactions with these realms are as different as night and day.

Satanic power grows by taking energy from others, while shamans gain a sense of place by helping others heal. Both utilize rituals, although their practices are polar opposites. Instead of primarily focusing on daggers and blood, Shamans use drums and rattles. While Satanists like to chant, Shamans like to sing, and though both use candles and incense to help focus the mind

into helping the spirit commune with the other side of existence, Satanists are much more aggressive than shamans, doing what they can to defile and separate themselves from the light, whereas shamans honor the light and do what they can to live within it as planetary light bearers. Satanists prefer chaos, shamans balance. Satanists seek to derive power by invoking demons; shamans seek balance between light and dark, believing that both are *God experiencing God*.

For Satanists, the experience of life is one based on a life-and-death contest, while for shamans it is more a dance. It is a complex interaction between light and dark that sparks the creative friction we call life. Contradicting Satanists insistence that power is derived by breaking children through trauma, controlling them by encouraging them to feel abandoned and alone, Shamanism encourages group journeying and group healing, believing that there is power in *Two or more gathered in My Name*.

Most different, however, is how shamans and Satanists look upon death. Satanists achieve power by absorbing others' life force at their moment of death, whereas shamans believe that true power is the ability to experience one's own personal death at will. By separating themselves from physical existence over and over again in shamanic practice, shamans learn to release the worries and bonds of life for the final separation. Learning how to move in and out of the energy of God and the universe improves one's "map" for when the time comes to achieve a truly worthy personal death.

In *Quantum Mind: The Edge Between Physics and Psychology*, Arnold Mindell connects physics and psychology through Shamanism, explaining that much occurring on the other side can be understood through quantum physics. For example, the law of thermodynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but only travels in levels of greater to lesser

intensity, constantly striving for a state of balance, at which point it transforms from one state to another. Wanting transformation, we seek to experience everything life has to offer in order to once again grow closer to God the knowing. The realm of Heaven can only be experienced within, where both Angels and Demons reside.

I have come to believe that all prophets of God were shamans in their own way, especially since all of them worked with visions and dreams and that is the realm in which I have found God connects with us and offers guidance. I have found that the grace of God can only be felt, and often is not always easy to articulate afterwards, as anyone who has felt the presence of God will tell you. However, the feeling is as transformative as it is undeniable. As Jesus himself said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within," thus it can only be perceived through *inner* senses.

Shamanism for me has been a gift. Most importantly, it gave me the ability and strength to explore the shadow side of my personality as well as the part of me that lives in the light. In comparison, I have found shamanisms gentle and nurturing approach to be much more effective than the horrific experiences Satanists subjected me to, believing they would strengthen me. Having the advantage of starting with a shaman-like belief structure early in life through the practice of Satanism, I have now garnered a much better understanding of the world in which I live and of myself.

Still, I would still have to go head to head with the demons of my past and people would once again have to die.

The Death of an Icon

A week before my mother died, the flu had put me in bed for five days, making me sicker than I could ever remember. Tristan helped when he was off work, and Hospice was in the house, but I felt as if I still had to attend to my mother and so I did what I could. However, in the process, she ended up catching whatever I had. Fulfilling an old wish of hers, in the end I would be the cause of her death but instead of being horrible, her death was the first death I'd ever experience as a beautiful transition.

The morning that she got out of bed for the last time, we all realized that something was wrong. Having false alarm after false alarm throughout my mother's life, I was used to hearing that she wouldn't make it, but this time Tristan and I knew it was serious. Surviving diabetic coma after diabetic coma, pancreatitis, and a myriad of other ailments, we now sensed that it would be a common case of the flu that would bring her down. As I carried her back to bed from her chair, looking me in the eye, she told me how sorry she was, as if it were her fault that she was dying. I called our hospice service, who came immediately after, the nurse confirming what we already knew: that her organs were shutting down and she was in the dying process.

Having experienced more death in my life than anyone should have to, it was for the first time that I was able to experience a *normal* death, and it would have a major influence on Tristan and I. Calling Sarah and telling her, she came straight away with her children, all of them now adults, and all of whom loved their grandmother dearly. Arriving before mom slipped into her last coma, she and Sarah were able to make amends, each forgiving the other, while expressing how much they loved each other. Surrounded by her grandchildren, children, and friends, mom slipped into the coma knowing that she was loved, her death bringing us all together in a way we hadn't been able to manage on our own. Death has a way of putting things in perspective, and

for a moment, we were able to put away our differences long enough to realize how much we really loved each other.

Playing her favorite show, “The Sound of Music,” on the television and taking turns sitting with her, holding her hand and swabbing her mouth with water, I spent a lot of time sobbing, distraught that I was losing such an important person in my life. I had only slept for twenty minutes when she died on Tristan's watch. Peaceful and quiet, the moment has remained sacred to Tristan who experienced her death not as the terrible, scary experience he had imagined but rather as a natural and beautiful experience. Strangely enough, her body had a glow about it, which we all saw, and though commenting on its luminous beauty, we all instinctively knew that a camera could never catch what we were seeing. As beautiful in death as she had been in life, her features had found a peaceful repose and she went out as she had lived in the end, with dignity and grace.

Although we knew she was against churches and religion, Tristan and I nonetheless chose to have the funeral at our church, being the most convenient given the circumstances. Stormy agreed to perform the service, and we made the date far enough ahead so that Cindy could make the drive from Florida. The funeral itself was beautiful. Stormy, miffed that he never got a chance to give his eulogy, complained that he had never been to a funeral where so many people wanted to stand up to praise the past loved one. Focusing on the love people were sharing as they recounted their memories of my mother, I found myself amused as this was probably the first time many of them had ever gotten the chance to get a word in edgewise. Finally unable to dominate the conversation, my mother nonetheless captivated the room. It was a wonderful experience, although we all sensed the great loss.

The occasion, however, was not without its dysfunction. Arriving twenty minutes late, Cindy had grown agitated during the service, determined that "the truth" be told about our mother, and finally sent her son up in front of the group to talk dirt about her. Making some unintelligible remarks that no one understood about my mother and her drinking, my nephew made a fool of himself, infuriating Cindy even more. During the reception after the service, Stormy widened the rift between us even more by making a pass at Sarah's son, who was a teenager at the time, while Cindy's adult children proceeded to go outside and have a snowball fight, returning awhile later completely soaked.

Later, Tristan and I would learn that her adult children – pill-popping, gun-toting maniacs who seemed out for chaos – had brought guns to sell in Omaha. Calling Cindy and telling her what I was told by Sarah's kids a couple weeks later, I assured her how lucky she was, as we all knew that had I had any idea of this, I would have called the police.

It was right after the funeral that I, having had enough of my family to last a lifetime, made the decision to break contact with my older siblings. Now that our mother was dead, considering as much water as there was under the bridge, I figured it was a healthy thing to do. Tired of the past, I was ready for new beginnings, and I thought escaping my family would be a good start. Out of the pan and into the fire, little did I know that I was about to run head on once again into the very people guilty for many of the atrocities of my past. Blundering right into their labyrinth and entangling both Tristan and myself, the carnival was starting back up and this time, the two of us were part of the main attraction.

The Show Comes to Town

Months before my mom's death, Stormy and The Cult of the Disillusioned began their campaign to become a power in the Omaha spiritual community, stepping up their efforts by moving into a nearby school while selling our current property in order to look for another more appropriate for the growing congregation. Stormy's sermons were attracting dozens of new people every Sunday, causing the church to grow exponentially, as well as the financial contributions. Tristan and I were promoted to "spirit singers", singing up on stage every Sunday morning to cheerlead for Stormy at the beginning and end of every service. At that time, we still believed in the church, and our new exposure gave us the opportunity to get to know more of the congregation. Tristan and I had both been in theater during high school and took to our stage-front exposure like fish to water.

A few months after Mom's death, Stormy introduced me to a woman named Susan and asked if I was interested in forming a fundraiser group for the upcoming land campaign. Head of the volunteer services at the church, I was told that Susan would be my boss and oversee what my group did. Enthusiastically accepting, I thus began my relationship with Susan, a road that would lead to my downfall in the church. Susan was both a practicing shaman as well as a Reiki master adept at manipulating energy, and I fashioned her as some kind of a fairy princess who was able to touch everyone with her magic personality. Gracious, caring, and outgoing, Tristan and I found Susan to be a pleasure to work with, and we grew to love her as much as the rest of the congregation.

Tristan and I developed a group called "Gifts from the Heart" and petitioned the congregation to offer their services, time, and money in a way that demonstrated their dedication to the land campaign. Working splendidly, we were able to garner over \$90,000 in cash during

the first eight months, as churchgoers couldn't seem to give enough for the new church. The more involved we became, however, the more we heard about Stormy, and many of the stories were quite disturbing. Obtaining a certification through the church that allowed me to pray with people as a prayer counselor, I was often placed in the position of "last resort," in which I heard about the troubles firsthand, being one of the few who was willing to listen.

All smiles and light on stage every Sunday morning, Stormy's dark side represented a perfect example of a non-drinking alcoholic or dry drunk. Although he was no longer getting drunk, his actions were that of a typical dry alcoholic – lying, lashing out, and blaming others – while he dismissed his bad behavior as mere eccentricities. Common of many cult leaders, he surrounded himself with people who insulated him from many of the issues on which he needed to face. Members objecting to the direction the church was taking were being run out by Stormy and his followers with tactics that isolated people until they felt they had no recourse but to leave.

Susan, hearing the same things we were, convinced us that dealing with people like Stormy were a necessary evil when it came to building a church, and assured us that the good he was doing far outweighed the impact he was having on a select group who "probably couldn't be pleased anyway." Unconvinced, we nonetheless did our best to look past the problems, focusing on ourselves and what we were trying to do for the church.

The Bible speaks about the greatest spiritual crime being one of "standing in the light of God and claiming it as your own,". Attempting to do just that, Stormy belittled anyone he felt was beneath him or threatening in any way, trashing those who had, at one point, considered him their spiritual advisor. His charlatan behavior had caused chaos in the spiritual lives of many of

his followers, and many felt rage at being so violated. Hitting them deep in their spirit, those run out found themselves uncertain and suspicious of not only the church, but of God as well. Unconcerned with the effects he was having on people and unable to escape his narcissistic ego worship, Stormy sought more and more power making it only a matter of time before he attracted the attention of like-minded individuals like Alan Baer.

By this time, Tristan and I had been befriended by one of Alan Baer's best friends (and the godfather of one of Alan's grandchildren), an ex-priest who had been involved with the founding of the Metropolitan Community Church here in town. I call this man "Brutus" because he was the first of my "friends" to turn on me when I later began investigating my family. Brutus and his lover had come up to Tristan and I after the service one morning and invited us to dinner, which we were glad to accept. Explaining that they were breaking away from the Catholic Church, Brutus and his lover had just newly joined the church and were looking for information on ways to become more involved. One of the beauties of The Cult of the Disillusioned was that you could be of any denomination, even a member of another church, and still become a member of The Cult of the Disillusioned, as it prided itself in celebrating all pathways to God.

Standing 6'7" and weighing well over 300 pounds, Brutus was an extremely large man in his late 60's to early 70's. Gregarious to the point of almost being overbearing, he was in complete opposite to his lover, who looked frail and often stood quietly in the shadow of Brutus's personality. Often Brutus would laugh, commenting that he was going to leave his lover for four 15-year-old boys, although they'd been together for more than thirty years.

Suspecting nothing sinister other than the fact that Brutus had an appetite for young boys, Tristan and I befriended the two men, disregarding their relationship to Alan Baer. Omaha was small, and the gay community even smaller, so encountering someone connected in some fashion to Alan wasn't all that unusual. Never considering the possibility that Brutus was also somehow connected to the events of my childhood, we began developing a friendship. Both men were teachers by profession and we enjoyed their intelligent conversation, as well as the fact that Brutus often expressed dislike for Stormy and his ex-lover, giving us something in common in discussing the gossip going around the church.

A couple of years ago, while reading *Ritual Abuse in the Twenty-first Century: Psychological, Forensic, Social, and Political Considerations* by Randy Noblitt and Pamela Perskin Noblitt, one of the things I learned is that people associated with cults often seek out their childhood victims when those children become adults. The intent is to reestablish a connection with them in order to keep an eye on them. Standing where I do now, I realize that is exactly what Brutus was doing, and it was no coincidence that he was intimately connected with Alan.

By seeking us out and befriending us, Brutus went out of his way to become accessible to both Tristan and I, encouraging us to seek him out when we needed anything. Never considering that he always tried to steer me away from therapy, while at the same time discrediting my budding Shamanic practice, Brutus constantly encouraged me to let go of the past and forget about what happened when I was a child. Foolishly, I never once thought to consider why he would be so invested in how I dealt with my past.

A few years after the whole Franklin Credit Union scandal calmed down, my father had

moved back to Omaha with my stepmother and their two children. He'd come to visit my mother and I a few times before her death and, being his usual hypocritical jerk-head self, we spent much of the time arguing about my choices in life and the disrespect I felt he showed everyone, especially my ailing mother. Making it clear that he had a new family now, he disregarded my siblings and me as nothing more than a past mistake, and since I had no desire to have anything to do with Broom-Hilda and her two children, I shied away. Although a part of me wanted him to be part of my life, being in my father's life was never easy, and as he generally acted like an asshole, I decided to keep my usual distance from him.

The devil never far away, my past was getting ready to come a calling again as Alan Baer was about to come back into my life for a third time, although this time his focus would be on Tristan.

Family Boundaries

About a year after my mother's death, Tristan and I ran into Sarah's son working in the same business mall as Tristan. Greeting us with hugs, he demanded to know where we had been, explaining that the family gossip was that we had duped an insurance company and left the country on the run. Shocked by my family's stupid conclusion as to why I'd stopped talking to them after our mother's death, I also found their conclusions funny. Assuring my nephew that we hadn't left town, we made plans to get together with him later that week and continued on our way to lunch. Later, unable to help myself, I called both of my sisters to laugh at them, thus reestablishing a connection without even bothering to consider doing so would bring chaos back onto my doorstep.

No one in my family holds the truth in high regard, and finding history to be fluid, can manipulate virtually any situation to fit the delusion or fiction of the day-- like the latest one about my absconding with insurance money. When confronted about it, each of my family members denied believing the rumor and blamed the others for saying it. Despite all of the dysfunction, however, having my sisters back in my life was a comfort. Whoever said that it's better to be alone than in bad company obviously had never been as lonely as I've been throughout my life. Hearing it said that you can pick your friends but not your family, I resigned myself to once again having them in my life, basically because existence without them was just too lonely.

Along with Sarah, I've always been the family scapegoat, especially for Cindy and her family in Florida. Never having come to terms with the damage done to her during her childhood she, as a result, had raised a family out of control. Embittered, she spent an inordinate amount of time creating misery for others. (Recall the 13-year-old serial killer theory she fabricated for her crazy, gay younger brother.) On the other hand, I *did* believe her rumor that our dad was not the father of my stepmother's children but rather they were part of my *brother's* offspring. Inappropriate relationships abounding in our family, my stepmother was much closer in age to my brother than my father, and considering how touchy-feely she was with my brother, I found it impossible to rule it out.

After my father and stepmother moved back to Omaha, Cindy began telling everyone that our stepmother had been molesting her young son in the shower. Talking with my father about it, I concluded my oldest sister was right and reported my parents to Child Protective Services (CPS). Discovering that Cindy had made a similar complaint to CPS three years before, I became enraged when, in order to protect our father, she called the local office and recanted,

claiming that I was crazy and that the abuse wasn't true. In a family like mine, one could never tell for sure what was true and what wasn't; and all that I could be sure about was that the involved parties would bare-faced lie if confronted.

Sarah , a bigger family scapegoat than even I, was considered to be nothing but a crazy troublemaker whom both Cindy and our father tried to divide me against, although years later I would see through their bias, at which point we were able to compare notes about our childhoods. As for my brother, he had become another version of my father. Molesting his wife's children throughout their marriage, he never strayed far from his use of alcohol and needles and often found himself in trouble with local authorities. His now ex-wife ended up on the national watch list of sexual predators and my brother eventually died, in 2008, of Hepatitis C, in Ocean City, Maryland. Years later, when I began to investigate my family, I discovered that he was more like our father than I had ever considered, intricately involved in our past in a way that I could never have suspected.

It was only a matter of time before the family gossip began flowing with regards to me, but I dealt with the talk head on, even confronting my father about my physical abuse, figuring the only way to heal was to confront the issues head on. Ms. Smith was concerned that I was once again in a detrimental relationship with my family simply for the sake of having them in my life, and often questioned my motives, getting me to dissect my behavior. Once I learned that most of our behavior is unconscious, I committed myself to explore and articulate my intentions in order to try and avoid setting myself up by clinging to unreasonable expectations. Growing stronger, I was beginning to accept what had happened to me and how I felt about it, enabling me to write the following letter to my father the year after my mother died.

Dad,

It is Christmas and all day I have been thinking of you. In fact, I've been thinking about you for a lot longer than that, but today I finally picked up pen and paper to share with you my thoughts. Cindy told me recently that you were suffering from prostate cancer, so I figured I shouldn't waste any more time, as so much of it has already been wasted.

Many things have been coming together for me, mainly due to conversations between the two of us right before I concluded that I needed to distance myself from you. Several issues have come up for me, things that have struck me as odd, and though I wasn't sure why at the time, I have reached a point of understanding that leaves no doubt in my mind.

Most of my life, I have blamed your third wife for the things that happened to me. Most of the abuse I can remember rotated around her, and I looked upon you as a weak and ineffective man who was too browbeaten to stand and defend his children. This began to change, however, after you and I got into the conversation regarding the time when you took me into the garage and beat me. You laughed when I said that you had beaten me with a 2x4, correcting me that it "wasn't a 2x4 but a 1x6, but it probably felt like a 2x4." Not realizing it at the time, I later realized that not only did you find humor in beating a 13-year-old child, but that you derived a sense of pride from it as well. Had the roles been reversed, and had it been me beating you, I seriously doubt humor would have been your response, and I found it incredibly painful and difficult to accept that my father could have such a callous disregard for my feelings regarding an event I found incredibly traumatic. Let me just say, before you begin defining my sense of trauma, anyone who

gets beaten, regardless of the circumstances, experiences trauma. However, I did not recognize the full extent of the abuse, as you well know.

It was in one of our last conversations that I found the key to why I felt so strange telling you that it was neither natural nor right for a grown woman to be taking showers with an eight-year-old boy and having you respond that it was okay because she was making sure his back was clean. It is incomprehensible how a man could be willing to allow a child to be molested without feeling compelled to do something about it. Hearing you say this clarified for me that not only did you know what was happening, but you also condoned it. You found it acceptable that your wife was molesting your youngest son.

I am finally remembering what you did to me, dad. I remember you, your third wife, and me, all of us naked while I was forced to lie on your third wife while she held my butt so you could rape me. I don't need you to validate this for me, and I have had more than enough of your lies. It defines why I have had many of the problems I have with my life, why sex and intimacy are almost an impossible combination for me, and why I feel so alienated from the world, although I have a plethora of love in my life. The explanation is unfortunately simple: I had monsters for parents.

You know, dad, I can't even fathom what it must be like for the two of you to look in the mirror and realize that you are nothing more than a couple of perverted child rapists, monsters, who are not only capable of but guilty of incredibly sick sex crimes against children. Your very own children.

I never wanted to see it, dad. Children have an almost impossible time comprehending and admitting that their parents could be capable of such atrocities. This is why I could

not believe Sarah, why I was so vehement in calling her a liar. But the time comes when one has to turn and face the demons and stop running. After I finally looked at it, it finally made sense – not just about me, but about us all.

What it must be like for you to know that you have created such pain in your life, that you are the kind of people other parents warn their children about. The hatred I feel for you at this moment is incredible. What you stole from me was something incredibly precious and sacred. Then to realize that you have gone out of your way to convince me that it was all my fault, that I was nothing more than a piece of shit who deserved everything I got. As you did with us all.

In writing this, I am finding it virtually impossible to remove the image of you reading this and becoming sexually aroused by the memories of what you have done, what you are probably still doing with your youngest child. I hate what you have done, I hate what you stand for, I hate who you are, and most of all, I hate what you've done to me. I hate feeling so violated, and I am in incredible mourning for what you willingly, selfishly, and brutally took from me. From all of us.

One of the hardest aspects of all of this for me, dad, is that even though I hate you beyond belief, I also love you. You are my father, and boys need their fathers. So knowing myself, I realize I will reach a point of forgiveness, although I am far from that now, and I find it heartbreakingly frustrating that you and I will not be able to work this through in order to heal. Obviously you and your third wife suffered severe abuse as children, but you had no right to inflict the same devastation on us. There just isn't enough time to heal from this.

So where do we go from here? I'm sure by now you are probably freaking out, not because what I am saying is wrong but because you know what I am saying is the truth. In no way am I threatening violence against you, although I can't say I haven't entertained fantasies of inflicting extreme physical pain on you both for what you have done to me. It is not in my nature. The two of you have enacted violence and rage on us all, and I am little to nothing like you. Violence would only add more pain to the situation and it is already full of so much pain I can barely stand it as it is. Besides, exposure offers much more satisfaction and perhaps in time will allow us all to heal. I am no longer going to protect your secrets, and there is no reason I should. I have no guarantee that you won't just continue with your youngest, and I feel compelled to honor my responsibility to protect children when I can, unlike you who use them to get off by raping them.

Sarah warned me not to send you this letter, that it would stir things up and that you would get a lawyer and take me to court. Although you will rant and rave and blow smoke up everyone's ass, taking me to court is not something you will want to do. In fact, you will do anything you can to dismiss me and avoid exposure. You know I am telling the truth, and you know, given the opportunity, it will not be that hard to show that you both are child rapists. Although courts can't heal the wounds, exposure will bring out the truth. Your secrets have done nothing but serve you and hurt everyone else involved, and I for one have had enough. What I want is not validation, for I know what happened. Nor do I need you to say you believe me. What I want is vindication, and if there is anyone in this family who can accomplish that, it is me. I'm not scared of you because I know two things: One, it is already too late for you to stop the truth from coming out because too

many people are already aware of the situation; and two, I am comfortable knowing that both you and your third wife have always been somewhat intimidated by me because you know that I am not afraid of you and you can't control me. I am going to publicly expose what you did to me, what kind of people you are, and prove to you and my brothers and sisters that it is you, not us, who should feel shame at what you did to us.

Dad, I didn't understand how I could sit in your house and you could come to mine, knowing that I had turned you both into CPS for your third wife taking showers with your son, and yet my older sister wasn't allowed near your house after you confronted her for saying you were involved in a cult. Now I understand, though. You were hoping I would never remember what you did to me. Why is that, dad? Why is it that you have always tried to make me out to be an unstable liar and generally an all-around bad person? I think you've been hoping and praying I wouldn't remember because you knew that if I did remember what you had done, I wouldn't take it lightly and I certainly wouldn't take it lying down. You raped me, dad. I know this now without a shadow of a doubt, so stop trying to kid me or yourself. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and sexually, you have been nothing less than a monster.

One last thing, dad. You are a good one to preach Christianity and what you believe to be Jesus' will. Knowing this, I can pretty much guess that you believe in hell, and further, I can guess you believe you are going to burn there for the horrible atrocities you have committed. My belief is that your salvation is in your own hands. Until you admit what you have done and honestly face it, you will never be able to ask for forgiveness and thus never be able to forgive yourself, making it virtually impossible for any of us to forgive you. Haven't we all been living in hell for too long? Don't wait until you are on your

death bed with prostate cancer before you face yourself, for forgiveness given out of pity is worthless. The time has come. Neither of you are going to be victorious in hiding from the world for much longer who you are and what your true faces are.

For once in your life, dad, be strong and do the right thing before you run out of time. Do you really want to face God with this on your shoulders and in your heart?

Sincerely,

Your Son

Empowered by finally telling the truth, I sent the letter not only to my father but to all of my siblings, as well as taking it to my stepmother's church and their son's school. Although nothing came from any of it other than alienating me further from my father and stepmother, telling the truth was liberating for me, and I relished the feeling despite the fact that it caused so much chaos in the family. I could never have foreseen the changes that my correspondence would have on my father, or, as we got the closer to his death, how important the concept of salvation would become to him. Lying to Cindy at the time and telling her that he burned my letter before reading it, I would eventually learn just how important my letter became to him in the end.

More Metaphysical Thoughts

Beginning to grasp what I had been taught as a child, I delved into my spiritual practice, trying to come to terms with my place in the Universe. The following is a collection of some of the things I learned along my way.

I believe that, in the beginning, there was an energy I will call God the Knowing. Being pure awareness of Itself, the essence of this energy desired to experience itself, so God the Knowing divided into two parts, Itself and God the Experiencing, both of which are connected by the life force of creation flowing between the two states of being. The law of thermodynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but instead moves to higher and lower intensities, ultimately seeking balance- where, without the friction or tension between the two forces, a kind of death occurs. Knowing this, I began to view death as natural as it is inevitable. However, given there is nothing in existence that isn't part of God, and believing God never dies- I have come to view death as an illusion. Believing that we simply graduate to a new form of consciousness spiritually, I refer to this process of transformation simply as the breath of God.

The Satanists I knew believed that the concept of an all-powerful God is more theory than fact, and that bad behavior doesn't have to lead to consequences if one is smart and powerful enough to avoid them. Understanding that Satanism celebrates the ego and hedonism in such a way that is hopefully abhorrent to God, I, on the other hand, believe in the karma Jesus taught when he declared that we reap what we sow. Chaos theory helps clarify the particulars in a way, for if it is true that a butterfly flapping its wings can be causally connected to a storm on the other side of the world, consider what can human moral or immoral acts do? Simply put, we are responsible for the energy that we share with the world, whether we choose to be aware of what we are doing or not. Learning that what we believe affects what we say and do; I have determined that the energy of those beliefs goes out from us into the world through our actions and words, then returns to us stronger than what we originally sent out, in order to help us manifest our lives. Our perceptions, shaped by our life's interactions, focus us for better or worse with concerns to this process.

The law of cause and effect states that when something happens, it causes something else to happen, which causes something else to happen, and so on. In real life, it works like this: imagine me getting into my car all pissed off at the world. Driving like an ass, cutting people off and going slow when I could just as well get out of the way— all this is an attempt to escape the bad mood I am allowing to control me, my anger and aggression dominating and controlling how I impact the world. While allowing my sense of responsibility to care to be nullified by my bad mood, I can only helplessly observe how my behavior negatively influences others. Most of us know what it is like to be behind such an idiot, and the feelings that can arise because of it.

Now imagine that I cut off a woman who has just had a fight with her mother. Seeing the smirk I wear that helps me feel that what I am doing is strong even if it is wrong, it adds to the rage she's already struggling with. She goes home and gets into a fight with her husband, not realizing that he has been putting out fires all day at work. Her attack makes him angry, so he, in turn, proceeds to jump on their son, unaware that he just spent the whole day being bullied in school and is hanging on by a thread. The son ends up kicking the dog, and though I am obviously not responsible for another's actions, I am still the butterfly that helped set it all in motion. As for how I will reap what I've sown, life will decide how to make me more responsible for having knowingly or unknowingly encouraged storms in others' realities.

Looking at chaos and cause and effect from another angle, the law of attraction reigns supreme, helping to explain that if one puts out negative, they will get negative back. Put out positive, you will get positive back. Whatever you want, plant the seed and watch it manifest. You want love? Then offer love. You want respect? Then offer respect. You want compassion? Offer it! Act negatively and see how you like yourself and the world around you. Feed rage and watch your relationships spiral downward. Gandhi was correct when he said that we must first

become the change we wish to see in the world. In doing so, we help us attract to us what we need.

Reaping what we sow, we are all responsible for the energy we send out. As Socrates preached, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Living an angry, lonely, isolated existence drains the soul, effectively giving it to the devil, and considering that evil is nothing more than the word live spelled backwards, squelching the joy in your heart is about as backwards as you can get

One of the fundamental problems I have with Satanism, other than dismissing the divine presence of God, is that it *lies* when it negates or laughs off the law of karma. There is simply no way to stop the cyclic cause-and-effect of energy. Working as self-fulfilling prophecies, thoughts in the mind reproduce after their kind and you will find yourself acting in ways that reflect your beliefs. For the most part, all of us will end up becoming the people we believe ourselves to be, worth of only as much as we allow. There is strength in conviction, whether we choose to accept that or not, and it is in the details of our beliefs that our true powers to manifest lie.

Focused on control, I believe Satanists are committed to convincing human beings to turn away from God, believing that karma can be gotten around, while promoting fear and isolation to help subjugate people to their will. Idolizing Adolph Hitler as the historical example of how well subjugation to hatred and fear work once the world is painted as godless and bereft of spiritual laws was one of Aquino's favorite topics when I was a child. Involved with very powerful people, he obviously has not acted alone, and considering that history is cyclic and prone to repeat itself, since what I and others experienced historically originated out of the concentration camps, I believe it would behooves us all to understand propaganda and how it

distorts the truth. Once it was the church that programed and controlled how we view life; today, it's the corporate media. Focused on fear and destruction, our media keeps citizens in a constant state of agitation.. Satanism, however, taught me the following; that negativity is simply negativity, and it cannot serve as a viable philosophy for life.

It isn't difficult to understand that narcissism is the enemy of self-awareness, as are ignorance and self-complacency, all of which are promoted by our media. Does this mean that the one percent of the population that owns 98 percent of the wealth is conspiring to keep people hopeless and vulnerable? A question better posed to the Rupert Murdoch's of the world, I can offer no answer, but my experience are that the rich and powerful can and do whatever it is they want to do. Aquino and his friends taught me that the world was theirs, the proof being that Satan wouldn't have been able to offer the world to Jesus had it not been his to offer in the first place.

Chaos theory, karma, cause and effect, attraction –all exchanges of energy that can be influenced by our conscious choice, whatever the media says to the contrary, that, combined together, govern and dictate our experiences. David was right when he told us that the key to life was mastering the ability to “know yourself, control yourself, and give freely of your time and energy." The older I grow, the more I realize that true living comes from celebrating life, not exploiting it. True power is not dominance and control; it's love. The more you love, the more love you have; the more love you have, the greater power you have over your life.

And the Band Played On

Back at The Cult of the Disillusioned, Susan and I thought that a cookbook would be just the thing to bring the congregation closer together. It was at a pretty chaotic time, due in part to the church's growing pains and pressures of fundraising for the building campaign, although

money was pouring in from everywhere and Stormy was filling the seats every Sunday. In public, Brutus expressed that a cookbook was a great idea and suggested that we look for someone to back the printing, but privately he questioned my ability to undertake such a task. Looking to him as a kind of father figure, his constantly mixed signals bothered me, and helped to undermine any faith I had in myself. I also found it perplexing that he seemed to have little to no faith in God whatsoever, and he often criticized my faith, trying to equate it with believing in alien abductions. Later, when I discovered that he had probably been involved in things of my past years before, his antagonism toward a God who could exact justice made sense. At the time, however, I just found it peculiar that a "man of God" had so little faith, both in God and me.

A few months into the Gifts from the Heart fundraising project, Alan Baer's assistant Chris called our home (having gotten our number from Brutus), in order to schedule a time for Alan to discuss with us the fundraising campaign and a financial contribution he was considering donating. Suddenly, Alan jumped on the phone, and though neither of us referred to what had transpired years before, I agreed to meet with him, figuring that any contribution was good, regardless of who was making it. Never in a position to say no to the man, I was not happy about seeing him again.

How I could have anything to do with him after what had transpired between us is not an easy issue for me. First, it was with good reason that I believed nothing could be done to stop the man. Skirting the Franklin Credit scandal, his power in Omaha was visibly incontestable. Never once held accountable for the crimes he was guilty of, other than paying a nominal fine for soliciting sex with minors, he was untouchable until the day he died. Secondly, the old adage "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer" was made for Alan, as those who fell on his bad side usually paid a horrible price. It was a matter of self-preservation that dictated that it

was best to keep him on your good side. Now that he had become involved with The Cult of the Disillusioned, I really had no choice but to interact with him, considering that he had become one of our biggest and most steady financial contributors.

One of the most self-satisfied, egocentric game players I have ever known, Alan had a way of subtly reminding a person that he was the one in control. One example among many, Alan once owned a theater I performed in, and as a birthday gift, he presented me with a marionette puppet that had \$100 bills taped to its hands and feet, as well as one taped to the crotch. Reminding the director that he basically owned him, this was what one could expect from Alan, always the snake in the grass ready to strike at any moment, and he never wanted you to forget it. His money and criminal position made him a formidable force to be reckoned with, and many in town rightly feared him.

Brutus assured me that there was nothing to fear from Alan and encouraged me to allow Alan to help me with the cookbook Susan and I were organizing. Agreeing to work with him on the church campaign, I had no intention of involving him in anything personal as; needless to say, Alan made me nervous given that he was capable of anything.

Stormy had relieved Tristan and I of spirit singer duty, though neither of us minded, as we both had strong concerns over what we had kept hearing about Stormy. Susan, having her own history with Alan, had become concerned about Stormy and Alan bedding down together as well, and the fact that we lacked a proper tracking system of the money that was pouring in from everywhere worried her, especially when the church decided to go for a loan. When stressed, Susan became distant and quiet, and due to her high position in the church, she didn't feel it was her place to gossip. Believing we were doing what was best for the church, and having no idea

how to solve the problems that existed, the three of us just found it easier to just look away. As the parliamentarian Edmund Burke once said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” and we were about to learn personally the bitter truth of his words.

The meeting with Alan was not easy, and I had taken Tristan to the restaurant with me for moral support. Not able to fully grasp the history between us, or that with Alan what you saw was never even close to what you received, Tristan found Alan’s reputation fascinating, and was eager to meet the man behind the legend. Unable to get the image out of my head of the last gift I received from Alan: I vowed that this time I would keep Alan as far away from me as I could.

The meeting with Alan was strange as always. He spent a great deal of time staring at me while asking Tristan questions regarding me as if I wasn't there. Asking how we met, probing to see how much Tristan knew of my past, it was almost as if Alan was trying to ascertain whether or not I was talking about things I had previously been warned to keep silent about. The only questions posed to me concerned my relationship with Stormy and the problems I had with him, unnerving me that he knew so much about our conflict. (Of course, now I know that Brutus was talking to Alan about me, but I didn’t realize that then.) . Feeling like I was being set up, I did my best to respond vaguely, assuring him that the church was solid as was my commitment to it, despite any misgivings I might have about Stormy. Finally, turning to Tristan, I expressed that we needed to get going, as I looked for an exit, anxious to escape the encounter. Inquiring as to what he was interested in doing for the campaign, Alan preceded to hand me a check for five hundred dollars, already made out to Stormy. Smiling, he wished me luck, then got up and walked out.

This was the first of many experiences with Alan during our stay at The Cult of the Disillusioned. Each time would be equally strange, building up to a breaking point that would eventually cause Tristan and I to break from the church. Fixated on Tristan, Alan would follow us, that was later.

The cookbook was working as expected, bringing members together as they talked about old family recipes and their loved ones. We had solicited the help of two artists in town, who'd designed a collection of pictures symbolizing several spiritual practices that we planned to use as page breakers to separate the categories, and I was relishing all the organizing and planning that came with editing a book. Burying myself in work didn't safeguard me from all the chaos going on at the church, however, and there was a lot of it.

A dry drunk, Stormy couldn't escape his past profession, and the bigger we got, the more Stormy turned Sunday's services into a lounge act. All that was missing was an open bar. In hopes of getting on television, Stormy's sermons became more and more obscure, finally ending up as a "let's all feel good" philosophy. Stormy and his posse dominated the church, and those voicing any dissent were quickly silenced and run out. One parishioner painted a particularly dark picture of Stormy, coming to me in tears, and explaining how Stormy had come to her mother's bedside right before her death. Whatever he said resulted in her mother refusing to talk to her afterwards, dying a short time later. Later telling the woman – who was a somewhat slow but loving person often treated poorly by head members of the church – that her mother had never loved her (but had loved her brothers), Stormy explained that was why her mother had refused to see her before dying. Infuriated that a minister could be so heartless, I held the woman in my arms while she cried for a good thirty minutes, emotionally crushed.

Ms. Smith often listened in disbelief to the things I told her were happening, concerned that I was once again placing myself in chaotic situations in order to repeat behaviors I was in therapy trying to correct. Unwilling to walk away, relinquishing the sense of community that I felt within the church, I spent hours sorting through my emotions, often trying to reassure myself it wasn't all bad.

Once, thanks to the Church of the Disillusioned, Tristan and I had housed two Tibetan Buddhist monks for a weekend, both of whom had come with a larger group that was in Omaha to share their spiritual experiences with the local churches. Our neighbors got a kick out of watching them in their traditional robes and sandals walking around the front of our apartment with our dogs, inspecting the trees, bushes, and flowers with a reverent appreciation you don't often see. The younger of the two was fluent in English and related to Tristan and I stories about his culture and its struggles. Sharing meals together, both Tristan and I were inspired by the monks reverence for life, as every moment seemed a blessing to them, despite the adversity that they had experienced. Had we not been involved with The Cult of the Disillusioned, we would have never gotten the chance to have such a wonderful experience.

I believe that nothing happens by accident, and I found working with Susan to also be a blessing that I couldn't deny. Because of what I'd gone through as a child, I've always been a little "off," if you know what I mean, but despite my tendency to be hard to deal with, Susan understood me and always seemed to find a way to get around the obstacles that my mind constantly threw out. Allowing me to work on the cookbook at home due to my having difficulties with coming into the church to work on it, she was always smiling, and her gracious and loving energy often calmed me when I was facing particularly hard situations in the church. As more members left hurt, she had definite misgivings but, being from a dysfunctional

childhood and good at compartmentalizing her feelings, she kept assuring me that it must be a necessary evil for the progress of the church.

As Stormy's right hand person with regards to the land campaign, Susan had to work with Alan Baer as well, finding the experience as intolerable as I. Sharing our stories about Alan, we discovered that the two of us had more in common than we thought., as she had ran with a group of Baer boys when she was a teenager and knew more about the early gay bar scene than I did.

God works in mysterious ways, as The Cult of the Disillusioned had begun to have a definite effect on my relationship with Tristan. Considering what an asshole Stormy was had brought me around to thinking about my own behavior and the intense guilt I felt regarding my own promiscuity and propensity to sneak around. Realizing that I was judging Stormy for behaviors I was personally guilty of, my observations on how he interacted with others gave me a chance to look at myself, in turn helping me to learn from his mistakes. Although not in the way he probably wanted, Stormy actually had become for me some sort of reverse spiritual guide in the end.

Finally unable to endure it anymore, I went to Tristan and told him that I was sick of walking all over him and if he didn't start holding me responsible for my bad behavior, I was going to end the relationship. We both knew I was sleeping around, but not knowing how to broach the subject with me, he had remained silent. My greatest terror being that I was becoming like my father, the issues I had with Stormy, Alan, and the church paled next to the consuming fear that I was destined to become my dad due to his blood flowing in my veins. I desperately needed Tristan to help me set boundaries in order to prevent that from happening.

The blatant disregard my father showed for those closest to him had always been tolerated, with no one ever saying anything. I believed that if Tristan started holding me responsible for the pain I was causing him, it would help me to hold myself responsible. As Ms. Smith had suggested, I saw my sexual acting out as a re-victimization of myself. Growing up in a family with no boundaries, I concluded that I had to find a way to re-condition myself so that I could take responsibility for my actions without beating myself down in the process. Enlisting the help of those closest to me (namely Tristan) seemed like the logical place to start.

I don't think that anyone foresaw what was coming next for *The Cult of the Disillusioned*, but I think it is safe to say that it caught everyone off guard. The first time I'd ever seen Alan take it up the butt himself, Stormy was about to show just how strong his propensity to create chaos was, and, in the end, we would all find ourselves spinning in the winds he loosed.

Further Journeys

To Brutus' dismay, I was furthering my studies in Shamanism while being healed in the process. Working with my inner consciousness, I was beginning to expand my worldview and how I looked at life, and it was having a calming effect on me. Always working within the context of what I understood, my journeys, in the beginning, were very frightening. My first attempt with practicing Shamanism was the worst, though the journeys I would experience after my father's death would be even more frightening.

Immediately after my soul retrieval with Kathy, I decided not to wait for the upcoming introductory class to see if I could actually journey myself. Alone in my apartment, I lit some incense, said some prayers for protection and guidance, and as my stereo drummed I laid down, closed my eyes, and waited to see what would happen. The drumming had a calming effect and,

drifting away on the incense, I let my mind go, allowing myself to daydream. As my imagination swept me away, I became a bystander much like I would have if I were actually dreaming.

Practicing shamanism is like a form of self-hypnosis, with a strong emphasis on self-help and strengthening the psyche.

Understanding little about the process other than what I had read in *Way of the Shaman*, I began by visualizing a safe place in my mind to begin my journey. Suggesting it helpful to begin in a field, beach, or some retreat where I was comfortable and safe, Harner explained that to get to the upper world, one simply had to picture themselves going through a hole in the sky. It is in this realm that one is able to meet ancestors, guides, and angels, all of whom offer guidance and support. To access the lower world, which primarily deals with healing, one would do the opposite, finding a hole they could go *down* into, like the rabbit hole described in *Alice in Wonderland*. Using the imagery of following down the roots of a tree, or swimming to the bottom of the ocean or a lake, it was explained that one should imagine going down and coming out into the lower world on the other side.

For me, the lower world is always forested and shadowy, not in a bad way but rather like when the vegetation blocks out the sun. Full of lakes and forests, I have found the lower world to be peaceful and serene. It is in the lower world that shamans believe you can connect with spirit guides who are represented as animals. Shamans focusing on the spirits don't *become* the animal they imagine so much as they try to take on the animal's attributes, trying to derive a personal sense of awareness in the process. For example, Bear energy heals me, Wolf energy commands, Spider energy captivates, and so on. As a result, Shamans believe that the lessons of the universe can always be found in nature.

The middle world is the most dangerous and the hardest to navigate because it is connected to the material plane in a way the other two aren't. It is the realm within which we all live, connected to the power of both Heaven and Hell. Containing pockets of concentrated negative energy, some of the dead are trapped in the middle world, particularly those who, while alive, lacked clear concepts of right and wrong, thus getting caught up in experiences they were unable to release at death. One of the most important tools of the shamanic trade is the ability to help such spirits cross over into the light. Only an adept Shaman is able to safely navigate these invisible perils of the middle world.

Perhaps because of my past, I ended up in the middle world during my first journey, (coincidentally happening, unbeknownst to me at the time, on a night we also had a record meteor shower.) Standing beside an angel, we were in the midst of the Great Bang. Entire planets flew past us out into the universe like they were nothing, and, as it is in dreams, the angel informed me that I was part of the stardust making up all the life in the universe. Terrified by what I was experiencing, I ended the journey as soon as I started it, ripping off the blindfold that I was over my eyes. Confronted by a sight I will never forget, I found myself surrounded by a crowd of beings that I could only surmise as ghosts. Never having seen a ghost before, I could see their iridescent outlines in the darkened room, crowding around me, and although I vaguely believed in ghosts, I had never seen one, let alone a group of them. I let out a scream and dodged for the lights, freaked out in a way hard to explain. Finding myself alone in the room, I found the experience frightening.

I reached for the phone and immediately called Kathy. Believing every word, amazed at the intensity of my first journey given that many people are generally unsuccessful with the first few tries, she believed I had seen the universe reaching a point of rebirth. Having been a shaman

for years, she found me surrounded by spirits significant and asked me if I knew why they were there. Intuiting it was because they were proud of what I was doing, or at least that's how it felt, Kathy encouraged me further myself in the practice.

The stories in the Bible, such as Noah boarding every species two-by-two on the ark, the cloud and pillar of fire Moses followed for forty years, Jonah living in a whale until he was rescued days later, along with most of its stories, are symbolic of greater knowledge and are not real history. Nor am I certain that Jesus died on the cross, and if so, what special significance it had for mankind. Coupled with the whole Antichrist scenario that kept me from believing that the likes of me could be saved, I certainly didn't view the world through Christian lenses. Art passionately argued that my only salvation was through Jesus Christ and that the only way that I would save myself from the turmoil of my past was to spurn the occult and return to church (a real one and not The Cult of the Disillusioned), praying instead of journeying.

The truth, however, is that I've never wanted to be "saved from my sins." It is by my mistakes that I have learned the most, and, believing karma is one of the greatest of divine gifts offered in life, I have come to appreciate its mentoring role in my life. I believe our souls are tempered in the flames of experience. Do unto others as they would do unto you, or maybe, considering our narcissistic culture, it should read do unto others as they would do unto themselves, because everything we do returns to us many times over. In the end- we get what we give, and every one of our choices has consequences.

I had grown tired of "washing my hands in the blood" and equated fundamental Christianity as an egocentric celebration of death. For me, Jesus Christ's importance was not that he died, thus saving me, but that he lived and what he preached while alive; that the greatest

commandment was love, that the Kingdom of Heaven was within, and how important it was for us to be consciously aware! Finding Christian fundamentalism devoid of any real logic or compassion, I tried to explain to Art why I was going to go with my interpretation rather than his more fundamentalist interpretation but with no real luck.

Journeying for me was a natural transition away from Satanism, although vastly different in practice. An interesting contrast between Shamanism and Satanism concerns a practice shaman's call the *dismemberment journey*. My family's satanic friends took the ritual of dismemberment of others very seriously, but Shamans derive a much different sense of power in their own dismemberment. In a visionary state, I was once eaten by a swarm of piranhas in a journey, another time I was ripped apart by crows. Ancient myths are filled with the theme of hero dismemberment, stories in which the soul is "ripped apart" so it can be rebuilt and transformed. For centuries, Satanists have distorted this psychic transformation into something literal and pernicious. However, each time I underwent a shamanic dismemberment journey, something from my past would fall away and transform into something better than before, strengthening me in the process.

Attending a weekend class on Celtic shamanism, I was introduced to the archetype energies of the Irish Goddess Brighit and her son Lough. Brighit, as the Mother of Creation, stands within the power of the dark feminine, whereas Lough is a prankster spirit likes to stir things up. Identifying with both, I, in the same way as I have described with power animals, imagined these energies within myself, which helped me to explore my strong feminine qualities as well as my playful masculine ones. Visualizing each state of being, I attempted to mold my intentions with these archetypes, trying to emulate the energy, so that I could incorporate it into my life. Although I wouldn't realize it at the time, in many respects, I was just applying what

Aquino taught me as a child, but taking it much further than the communing with demons he had interest in, although I wouldn't realize it at the time.

Psychoanalyst C.G. Jung explains archetypal energies as symbolic aspects of the psyche that every human, in some way, aspires to. The Hero, the Trickster, the Mother, the Father, the Son, the Daughter, the Old Man – all are psychic states of being that humanity has an innate connection with. Symbolizing both good and bad, they signify desires and fears. Remarkably, each of us is born with archetypes in what Dr. Jung called the *collective unconscious*. When myths and legends were our teachers, we honored the sacredness of each state of being in ways we have now forgotten and are unable to comprehend. Thus our myths have sunk into the unconscious, along with the sacredness they once inspired, leaving us yearning for the secrets buried with our myths. Shamanism is a way I can honor the collective unconscious (which, of course, teems with archetypes,) and reconnect with my spirituality in a way that no fundamentalism, Christian or Satanic, could ever offer. Ms. Smith, a Jungian, was interested whether a shamanic respect for the dream could help me with my chronic nightmares that often robbed me of restful sleep.

A Great Unveiling

When someone asks me if I truly believe Shamanism works, I like to relate the story of when Susan and I attended a weekend seminar on death and dying. Being a marvelous visionary in her own right, she was rapidly finding strength in her spirituality and had begun to blossom in the church, graduating from the friendly but shy fly on the wall to the confident, intelligent, involved woman I always knew she was. The land campaign had been going splendidly and she

was proud of the fact that she alone had brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars to help purchase the new land for the new church.

She arrived at the seminar distraught. Having spent weeks preparing the paperwork for the bank loan to finance the land, she had gone to the church at six the previous morning, feeling quite nervous about the meeting with the bank later that day. To her surprise, she found Stormy in her office changing numbers on the loan request by hundreds of thousands of dollars. The piece of land we were looking at was prime real estate, and the million and a half we were buying it for was a steal. Caught off guard, Susan explained that Stormy told her that he was making some last minute changes that they needed to keep to themselves. During the meeting with the bank, Stormy dominated the proceedings, not allowing Susan to say a word, and end result, the numbers failed to meet the bank's expectations and the loan was denied. Susan had finally experienced Stormy's corruption first hand and was beside herself.

The universe drew both of us together the next day as we both were taking the same weekend class on the shamanic practice of "psycho-pumping". Learning the practice of communing with the dead in the middle world, the one in which we all live and call reality, and helping them to the other side, by this time, I'd taken basic and advanced classes in Shamanism and was pretty knowledgeable as to how it worked.

That first day, we were asked to go to a place in our minds where someone had died and see what would happen. Thinking of David, I went (mentally) to the apartment where he was murdered and found him standing in the kitchen. Sensing my presence, he turned and demanded to know what I was doing there. Then, a light appeared and standing within it was David's old lover who had died of AIDS a few years before. Recognizing his partner, David walked into the

light, leaving me standing alone in the apartment. Ending the journey feeling rejected and disheartened, wishing that David had been happier to see me and given that I was still struggling with having never gotten the chance to apologize to him, I figured my mind was playing out a scenario that I believed *would* have happened, had it happened for “real.”

The next morning, as I was preparing to return to the next seminar, I walked into my sewing room and saw the nametag from David’s military jacket sitting in my trash basket. BJ had given me the jacket after David’s death and I’d removed the nametag when the jacket didn’t fit me anymore, storing it in a box in my upstairs closet, yet, somehow there was the nametag’ with me having absolutely no idea of how it got there. I reached down to retrieve it and was suddenly struck by an image of in my mind that I was, or had, pulled our friendship out of the trash. Tears sprang to my eyes as I realized that it was a message from David, telling me in a way that my apology had been accepted.

Events, however, didn't end there. The day before, we had divided the room in half, planning to try to psycho-pump the next day as a group. Susan choose the group who decided to focus mentally on an airplane crash that had personally affected a woman in the class to see if they could find any spirits needing help in crossing over. Looking back, in a way, the airplane crash would become symbolic of The Cult of the Disillusioned and a sign of things to come for Susan. My group chose to mentally go to the apartment Tristan and I had rented after my mother's death, which was near the Gerald Ford Memorial. We’d been having a lot of ‘paranormal’ activity in our apartment – lights going on and off, hearing people walk around at night, watching our dogs become agitated and bark at empty rooms – and it was starting to scare our friends. Even Tristan, a nonbeliever, was having a hard time explaining what was happening. So our two groups planned our journeys for the next day.

That night, I told Tristan about my group's plan to journey to our apartment. Laughing it off, he told me to "knock myself out." Having grown up without any real religious or spiritual beliefs, Tristan was a no-nonsense, practical businessman who, although never disrespecting me, regarded my practice of Shamanism as definitely being off the beaten path. Although never once criticizing my beliefs, having seen how they have helped me, he admits as to being unable to profess a true understanding of exactly *how* they helped me.

The next afternoon, after my group journeyed to our apartment, I decided to just sit and listen to what everyone had to say, figuring since it was my apartment that it would be best for me to listen rather than share what I'd experienced. I wanted to hear others experiences without influencing them in any way. Remarkably, each contributor described correctly the layout of the apartment, as well as discerning a problem with spirits, viewing our apartment as a sort of Grand Central Station of spirits. More interesting, each who spoke also saw Tristan.

Immediately during the next break, I went to the phone to call Tristan and see if he was he was, at that very moment, lying in his underwear on the couch in the living room, watching television and talking on the phone, figuring it to be near impossible, given how modest Tristan was and how he hated both watching television and talking on the phone. Demanding to know why, I repeated my question, asking that he just answer me. Embarrassed, Tristan confirmed that he was indeed doing all those things and demanded to know how I knew. When I told him that the entire group had seen him in the apartment, we were *both* taken back, but when he came to pick me up, he was further taken back when people in my group recognized him and complimented him on his cute, hairy legs. Having no idea how it was possible they could have seen him, he couldn't deny the fact that it happened, and the experience gave both of us a better appreciation of Shamanism.

Travel in the middle world or to any of the three realms of the spiritual world is also known as *astral projection* or directing the spirit out of the body in order to explore what the spiritual world has to offer. Through the mind, journeys require faith in oneself and in God. As the death and dying seminar proved, God has a way of offering the universe's own sense of "proof" that some prefer to call coincidence. In my experience, coincidence after coincidence is called a pattern, and throughout my practice I've begun to see definite patterns.

There is no doubt that Shamanism works within with mental framework of the practitioner, as visions within dream states are the primary focus of our practice. Eventually, I learned how to travel back into my dreams once awake in order to psychically change them, helping to take the fear out of my nightmares. Mentally changing the outcome of the dreams meant emotionally and mentally changing the energy associated with them, helping me to garner more stability, and I worked at freeing myself from the psychological shackles I found so disturbing when I was awake.

Practicing Shamanism has a way of calming the soul, and after a few journeys Susan began to feel more at peace, helping her to better articulate her experience with Stormy. Going from distraught to livid through the weekend, she began to realize how betrayed and angry she felt. A week after the seminar, Stormy ran her out of the church, assaulting her with some outrageous statements when he had her alone in his office, like that the church thought she was "bad news" and everyone wished she would quit. Referring to her as "evil," he blamed his actions with the loan papers on her "ineffectiveness," despite the fact that the money we had was largely a result of her diligence. His right hand person one day and his public enemy the next, Susan gave up and left the church.

Stormy's ex, a demanding perfectionist who fashioned himself a sort of Vampire Lestat in overly laced blouses, had already taken over the music and the band. With Alan's help, Stormy and Sunday services hit cable access. Rumors were circulating about Brutus having inappropriate contact with minors in the church and though I did not want to believe them, Brutus' jokes about 15-year-old boys made them sound sadly plausible. A special town hall meeting was called to discuss how to deal with the allegations, at which Brutus was glaringly absent. Many felt it was inappropriate for the church to be discussing such things in public, but it was a sign of things to come.

Bent on impressing Tristan, Alan invited us to dine with him and his wife at their home in Fairacres. Impeccably decorated with rooms of Asian art, both his wife and their house were beautiful and Marsha, as his wife, was incredibly charming. Her mannerisms and way of speaking reminded both Tristan and I of my mother in a way, and we found her endearing. A powerhouse in her own right, she was a Brandeis, from a very old money family, and having brought a fortune into their marriage, had the same grace as my mother. A devout Jew, she was definitely not ignorant of Alan's true nature, but according to Brutus, their marriage was very convenient. She didn't care for Stormy and considered him a snake oil salesman, entertaining us with her views on not just Stormy but on The Cult of the Disillusioned in general, never once concerning herself with the fact that both Tristan and I were members. Marsha Baer was brutally honest like my mother, and we found her refreshing and wondered what the hell she saw in Alan.

Once, on a dinner "date" with Alan and Marsha at an exclusive restaurant in one of the casinos in town, who should arrive but Stormy with a current tryst, who had been previously invited by Alan who had neglected to mention it to us. Stormy had recently objected to my request to keep track of how many cookbooks were sold and Alan watched us uncomfortably

sneer at each other, smiling. Angry that the monkey man had once again set me up, I fought back with passive aggression. After the hosts ordered, Alan a salad and his wife a sandwich, I convinced Tristan and Stormy's date to join me in ordering the expensive steak Dianne with lobster tail, spending the rest of the evening carrying on forced pleasant conversation with Alan's wife while angrily staring at Alan and Stormy. Offended by my not so subtle rudeness, Alan's wife refused to dine with us again, and I hoped that Alan would follow suit, but with no such luck.

At a Christmas party one year, Stormy stood up and exclaimed that our church was the loosest church in town and since everyone had been drinking, we'd all better stay never knowing what could happen. I stared at my plate while Alan sat at our table, bragging about how he'd gotten out of the Franklin thing years before by manipulating the money from his foundation in Omaha. Laughing about his invincibility, he alluded to killing people by bragging how easy it was to dispose of problems if you had the knowhow. Tristan and I left immediately after dinner and I ended up vomiting the rest of the night, unable to get Alan's smirk out of my mind.

After Susan left the church, it was my turn, given that I knew the real story as to why the loan had failed. First, Stormy made an executive decision to replace me as head of Gifts from the Heart, effectively removing me from the cookbook sales. Tristan, by this time, had had enough and started talking about how it was time to let The Cult of the Disillusioned go, along with the cookbook I'd spent so much time producing. Then Stormy disbanded Gifts from the Heart all together and I walked away from the community I'd once felt so passionate about, feeling beaten once again. Six months later, Stormy left the church to return to Hawaii to begin another divide-and-conquer ministry in another cheated church, leaving Alan high and dry. Never knowing the whole story between the two, judging from what he said around town, it was obvious that Alan

felt slighted. I vowed never to return to the church, even with Stormy gone, choosing instead to let go and let God.

Then out of the blue Alan offered Tristan a job. Unhappy with his current employment, Tristan was intrigued by Alan's offer, but wanted to know more before making any decisions. Unaware of what the job entailed, all I knew for sure was that Tristan was going to turn Alan down. Never once interfering with Tristan's career choices, this time I put my foot down and told Tristan that he was going to say thank you but no thank you. No debate. Fighting the entire weekend before he was to meet Alan, Tristan was a realist and believed that all wealthy men were dangerous but wanted a shot at having the kind of power to which Alan had access regardless. Tired of barely scraping by, he felt that Alan could offer opportunities he didn't have at the time, but, knowing just how dangerous Alan could be, I was not to be swayed. In the end, Tristan relented, his only request being that I go with him to the meeting.

That Monday, both of us arrived at the restaurant to meet Alan, who was visibly less than thrilled to see me. After asking how long Tristan and I had been together, he looked me straight in the face and made the comment: "Yeah, I had one of those once, too." Having enough experience with him to realize that referring to Tristan's and my relationship in the past tense was a direct threat; I knew it was now or never. Alan was, at this time, dying of prostate cancer, but even though he was distracted by his roller coaster ride of doctors and recommendations as he fought for more life, and though he was starting to look frail, I knew he was as evil as ever.

Tristan excused himself to go the restroom, which was when I turned to Alan and commented how sorry I felt for him. Taken back, he demanded to know what I was talking about, so I explained how all he had around him were people who wanted something from him,

and had he been a clerk at a grocery store, no one would have looked twice at him. Expressing sympathy for his plight, I reflected on how lonely it must have been to realize that people only loved what he could do for them, never truly knowing whether or not people actually loved him or just loved the things he could give them. Enraged, as we stared at each other, I saw that he was about to reply but then seemed to catch himself before saying anything. Not saying a word, he got up from the table and left, not even bothering to say goodbye to Tristan. It was the last time we would hear from Alan; he would die in November 2002, eaten alive by his own anus – a fitting death for a man who had screwed so many.

Years later, after everything, I thought back on that moment and understood what it was that Alan almost said to me that day. Always proud that I had gotten the last word, I have come to understand how close Alan was to giving up the ghost that day. Later discovering that he and his friends had always been in control, he would have only had to utter one word; ditto.

On the very day that my mother died, BJ returned to Omaha. We didn't see each other until later when he would express how broken, lost, and confused he was, having found nothing on the East Coast after his mother died, who had died about a year before mine. Released from his mother's spell, he seemed to be experiencing his own version of the caregiver syndrome, left to figure out what was left for him, now that his mother was dead.

I have found that those who have grown up with neglect and abuse generally have codependent bonds with their parents, and BJ struggled for a relationship with his mother as I did with my father, both of us constantly trying to win the approval neither gave. Demanding both self-sacrifice and self-deprecation, that abuse kept both of us captive well into adulthood.

The Jaycee Dugards and Shawn Hornbecks of the world have shown how a perpetrator can keep a victim silent and complacent, asserting an almost mind control over their victims. That Stockholm Effect exemplifies when your main perps are your parents. Coming to understand myself, I was beginning to look at the world differently.

Understanding BJ like a brother, I knew that I could not trust him. Alan was still alive and slithering around when he came back to town, and I resented BJ for getting us into the mess years before that ended in David's death. However, I also understood that he'd been inducted into Alan's world at a very early age and was yet another of Alan's victims, which made me want to forgive his transgressions. Even then I knew that Omaha criminals had a way of involving defenseless kids who couldn't protect themselves. Still, BJ and I avoided each other for years.

A Major Faux Pas

Although laborious and painful, therapy was going well. I could now identify and change the behaviors I was unhappy with, but it took an inordinate amount of work and time. Still, I kept at it, figuring that the only way to curb my acting out unconsciously was to plod onward, exploring my thoughts and feelings as to why I saw life the way I did, thus strengthening my sense of consciousness and self-awareness. Tristan was growing sick of hearing about my infidelities with strangers and at last had begun holding me accountable, confronting me when he was angry or unhappy. Having grown up in a family that did not welcome his opinions, he was starting to stand up for himself and became skilled at it remarkably fast. Realizing that anyone else would have left me long ago, I knew Tristan loved me in a way I wasn't used to.

Even as he was beginning to hold me responsible, he was still expert at loving me unconditionally, often forgiving me before confronting me.

As for the Antichrist obsession, a friend of mine cut me down to size when she remarked: "You're the Antichrist? You? What are you going to do, insult people on their clothing choices? The minute they cry, you will too, so you won't make much of an Antichrist." Still worried that I would become like my father, her comment helped to ease my fears, and now whenever I think back on her comment, I laugh. Ms. Smith was convinced that the Antichrist conviction came from my family doing their best to pigeonhole me into playing the bad guy. Often reminding me that I wasn't as crazy as I thought, she hoped I could overcome the effects of the trauma through mental exploration of memories and reliving the feelings associated with those memories. She would do this in a safe place where she could guide me in letting the past go. In other words, to get to Heaven you sometimes have to go through Hell. Even Jesus Christ had to do this during his transition to Heaven. Never knowing whether she believed me or not, she once told me that she found me to be neither crazy nor a liar, and suggested that I take that for what it was worth.

Shamanic seminars were few and far between, and *The Cult of the Disillusioned* was history, so I once again found myself alone. My faith wasn't any less, but I was putting it on the back burner, as faith takes work, and I was tired of worrying about God. I was disabled and out of work, with an abundance of time on my hands, which resulted in the perfect conditions for the idle mind to become the devil's playground. It was a late winter's night when I finally got busted in the park, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

It was a January night after the Christmas I wrote the letter to my father and Tristan and I had just had a fight. I had driven to a park after midnight so that I could smoke my last joint.

Tristan was vehemently against drugs, so I kept my occasional marijuana use to myself, and, as it was below zero that night, I figured I'd have a chance to be alone, calm down, and zone out enough to go back home. I had begun trying to convince myself that the child sexual abuse I remembered had either not been so bad, or never happened. Unable to face the emotional consequences of my de-masculinization, I found myself in constant limbo, and often thinking about my father and our past, all I wanted to do was get high and escape. Denial is strong in those who've experienced great trauma, and it was especially true of me. I found it more comfortable to tell myself that I was crazy rather than to consider the implications of what had happened to me, spending inordinate amounts of time trying to escape the memories that constantly intruded on me. Desperately lonely, my mother and the church gone, I spiraled down into the hands of the law.

An undercover policeman pulled up in a big blue pickup exactly like the one my father drove when he worked for a propane company. In a ball cap, clean-shaven with a mustache, he was the spitting image of my father when he was younger. Rolling down his window, he asked what I was up to and if I wanted to go for a ride. Uncomfortable, I agreed to meet him on the darker side of the park closer to the road. Long story short, I got in and out of his truck twice, unable to escape him for reasons I couldn't understand. Adamant about sex, he kept asking me if I wanted to blow him or if I wanted him to blow me. Wanting neither, but not wanting to hurt his feelings, I ended up suggesting to him we meet later in the parking lot of a nearby grocery store, which is what got me busted.

I had had more sex than I could remember in the parks, but on this particular night I was neither looking for nor wanting sex, but I felt captivated by the cop who reminded me of my father, and feeling like a child, I was unable to remove myself from a situation I knew was

wrong. Like a deer in headlights, although free to leave at any time, I was nonetheless unable to extricate myself from the situation.

Feeling, in the end, like I'd been set up, I became angry and I argued with the man while he wrote me a ticket for soliciting sex. He responded by telling me that men only came to the parks for one reason, and though I knew that wasn't always true, I couldn't escape the feeling that karma had come to bite me in the ass. I accepted the ticket; left the park, lit my joint, drove home, and immediately told Tristan about the whole episode.

The next day while talking with Ms. Smith, I had an especially hard time dealing with the fact that even though I had wanted to escape the situation several times during, I had felt *frozen*, unable to do anything other than what I was told. I had had plenty of opportunities to leave but, feeling trapped; I ended up responding to the situation much as I would have as a child. She explained that it was common for victims of abuse to find their selves creating situations loosely based on their original trauma, causing them to feel as immobilized as they did as children. Although inappropriate, my behavior was understandable considering what I had experienced as a child, and she felt that much could be derived from the experience if I was willing to honestly explore it.

Tristan took it in stride like everything else, supporting me as I tried, in court, to challenge what I considered to be entrapment. Believing that what had happened to me was happening to men all over town, perhaps as a backlash against the gay-dominated days of the 1980's, Omaha had begun a no tolerance for homosexuality campaign and the police were busting up to 400 men a summer in the parks around town. Publishing their names in the media,

even proposing to put the names up on a billboard, several men committed suicide as a result, after their lives were publically destroyed.

Everyone in my life knew about the charges I was facing as I was living a policy of forthrightness and told everyone, and although I was guilty of having sex in the parks in the past, knowing on that night I had no such intention, I started out fighting the charges. My public defender discovered the cop had been caught lying in court before, trying to set people up, but that was never introduced in court. In and out of his truck twice, there was simply no way to prove that what the cop said didn't happen, so I ended up changing my plea to no contest after being told there was no way out of the charges. Avoiding court costs, I was told to pay a \$98 fine which at least kept my name out of the news. Preventing my family from finding out, it is one of the most humiliating experiences of my life, although I have to say that I am glad for two reasons that it happened:

First, it forced a desperately needed clarification for me. Projecting my dad onto the policeman, thus putting me back into the mindset of a child, reminded me of how *powerless* I had felt at the time. The shame of my vulnerability became viable, and the experience helped remind me that the fear I felt for my father had been real and not something I had made up in my child mind. As a result, I was able to explore buried feelings associated with my father, and the trauma associated with our relationship.

The second reason, although it wouldn't be until years later, is that the experience gave me the chance to reach out and get closer to Art. Abducted and held hostage for three days by an escaped rapist (who had tricked his guards with a *papier-mâché* gun made from the cardboard middle of a toilet paper roll.) , the convict met Art as he was walking into his

apartment after returning home from the gym. Having stolen a realistic toy gun by this point, he tricked Art into his apartment and tied him up to his bed. Three days later, while the guy was out of the house, Art was able to phone the police by dialing the phone with a pencil held in his teeth. The police apprehended the escaped convict after a shootout a few blocks from Art's apartment, then later broke into his apartment and untied Art.

Never having really understood my trouble with PTSD, Art gained a whole new appreciation for my plight in life, and we often spoke of his experience and how it had emotionally affected him. Boldly declaring that I would never have let anyone tie me up as an adult, I later looked back on my situation in the park and realized how wrong I probably was. Calling Art and apologizing, I told him that had the cop in the park been a murderer instead, I would most likely have ended up dead, considering as paralyzed as I had been. Had I not experienced such entrapment, I might never have known such an important aspect about myself, and I certainly wouldn't have been able to share Art's suffering regarding his own vulnerability. I regret having wasted so much of my life in the parks, but I do not regret being busted. It was the wakeup call I had needed; an undeniable demonstration of the fact that I was losing control and seeking refuge in denial.

If we allow ourselves, I believe there is much to be learned by our mistakes. The key to this however is keeping yourself from being shamed into thinking that one event or situation defines you as a person. Within the context of therapy, Ms. Smith showed me the value of thinking in such a way. Together, we examined each nuance that caused me to fill the void inside with strangers. Reminding me that the only thing we are able to truly control is ourselves, and that the only constant in life is change, by delving deep into my psyche, I came to see that my

life needed serious change that could only be achieved by intensely focusing on my behavior and the reasons behind it.

The World Around Me

In retrospect, I see how Brutus toyed with me. Reporting to Alan about me, he once went so far as posing online as an older woman interested in The Church of the Disillusioned , but discovering that all she was interested in was talking dirt about the church and its leadership, it was something she said when I realized she was Brutus. You'd think that I would have ended the friendship there and then, but maybe due to the fact that I was desperate for a father figure, I didn't. Considering my past, it was safe to say that I didn't have the best judgment when it came to picking real friends.

A month before Tristan bought a house; Brutus became in need of a traveling companion to accompany him to Seattle after his scheduled attendant had to cancel unexpectedly, so I agreed to go with him. The three-week trip began normally enough as we adjusted to being in a car together for hours at a time, although his cigarette smoking was enough to gag me. Catching up on The Cult of the Disillusioned, Stormy and his ex, our prospective partners, the scenery, etc., the one topic Brutus was adamant about avoiding was my past, to which he would tersely respond, "Get over it."

Things took a drastic turn a couple weeks later after the night he had a nightmare and woke everyone up in the house screaming, "Shut the fuck up!" Scared out of a dead sleep, we all found ourselves in the hallway so I decided to check on him. Sound asleep, I brought it up with him the next day where he, while assuring me that he didn't remember anything, surmised that he must have been dreaming about Stormy and the problems between them. Accrediting it to left

over feelings from the town hall meeting Stormy had held to embarrass Brutus; I dismissed it. It was not long after, however, when I could no longer deny that things had definitely changed between us. Brutus suddenly became critical to the point of being mean, chiding me about my therapy and my spiritual practice. On the two day trip back to Omaha, we didn't speak any more than necessary with each other, and it continued after our return.

I've come to the conclusion that there are three types of dreams:

(1) *The brain symbolically processing everyday events.* A good example might be dreaming of driving in a red truck on a deserted road with fields of sunflowers on each side of the road. Every aspect of the dream – the red truck, the deserted road, fields of sunflowers – symbolize parts of you, including the observer part of yourself that is experiencing the dream. Contemplating on the aspects of the dream, realizing that it is the brain's way of processing, can offer dreamers a new perspective on what is happening in their lives.

(2) *The memory dream.* Consciously repressing my past, I constantly relived the trauma of my past over and over in nightmares. Although obviously unable to change the past, Shamanism gave me the tools to go back and change my *psychological outlook* on each traumatic event, changing my conscious perspective instead. Exploring my nightmares while awake allowed me to explore my memories while, at the same time, helping me to understand and control the intensity of the emotions that had been such a hindrance previously. Able to remind myself that I was safe, Shamanism is, as I mentioned before, a kind of self-hypnosis that can be an effective tool in consciously lowering trauma intensity while, at the same time, empowering one with the strength to bring such trauma into the light, demystifying it by allowing one to consciously explore it.

(3) *The journey dream.* Having dreams where your soul leaves your body, moving without the hindrance of body awareness, may seem more like astral projected visions than dreams, but waking tired in the morning feeling like you had a busy night may mean you've been journeying. The soul goes where it will when we are asleep; and sometimes, when waking with an unusual *longing* to return to the previous night's dream, it is hard to ignore feeling that it was more than a dream.

Looking back, I see now that people like Brutus, my father, and oldest sister didn't want me exploring my past or giving it a great deal of thought because they didn't want me digging around in my own head. My quest for discovery made them uncomfortable, and although they watched over me and constantly encouraged me to forget my past and walk away, they couldn't explain to me why. Having grown used to keeping silent, not wanting to weird anyone out with the horror stories of my past, I never assumed an ulterior motive behind anyone's actions other than my story made them uncomfortable, but because I considered Brutus to be one of my closest friends and depended on his counsel, it hurt me when he was so unsupportive. Sooner than expected, my luxury of denial would end; I would discover that he had his reasons, as did they all.

Other than Tristan, Sarah was the only one who supported my therapy and commented on how much it seemed to be helping. She and I had come to terms regarding our estrangement from our father, and finding comfort in each other's company as the two black sheep of the family, we began enjoying spending time together. Coming to terms with our family's past had broken her marriage, but she was optimistic and proud of getting her master's degree. Graduating at the top of her class in both her undergraduate as well as masters programs, her future seemed bright, and for the first time she started believing she had something to offer.

Cindy was another story. Though we'd gotten closer after our mother died, she still played games, especially between Dad and me. Often catching herself in her own lies, she would then backtrack, trying to explain away all the inconsistencies in her stories. The "chosen one" until my father's third wife's first child, she had been displaced in a way that had broken her heart, and even though our father had broken her nose when she was a teenager and she'd run off to Florida after he and his wife tried to steal her children, she still spent her life trying to win back our father's affections. As a result, she became a perfect example of "miserable people loving miserable company". In a loveless marriage with a clan of unruly and chaotic children, she found herself alienated and alone, spending much of her time living in a fantasy world of lies and delusions, angrily lashing out at those closest to her

The more Tristan called me on my bad behavior, the closer we became. The park incident had opened my eyes, and with Ms. Smith constantly remarking how my sexual acting out was indicative of me re-abusing myself, I slowed my promiscuity. In order to change behaviors, you often must change your playground, as well as playmates, so I stopped going to parks and bookstores, and started focusing on my relationship. Grateful that Tristan hadn't dumped me during this self-destructive time, I began to allow myself to care for him in a way that, although I found threatening, I also couldn't get enough of. All I knew is that I didn't want to keep hurting him.

Much like BJ, I had been searching for family all my life. When my mother was alive, she, Tristan, and I had that, and though it bonded us under the harshest of circumstances, that *grace* lasted in Tristan's and my relationship even after my mother died. Patient and understanding, he has always wanted me grow past the scars of my childhood in a way that would allow me to be happy, one of his greatest concerns being my unhappiness. Always doing

whatever he could to cheer me up whenever he could, regardless of what I was guilty of, his was the first bond of human unconditional love that I had ever experienced. In so many ways, he has saved me in every way a person can save another.

I began to explore my artistic side, after discovering I had proficiency with a sewing machine. Setting up a studio in our home, having nothing better to do, I started making wall hangings. I had grown tired of my endless summer vacation lifestyle, and felt that I needed something to occupy my time or I would end up going back to my pursuit of sexual encounters.

I have never made much money with my hobby but still, I found it gratifying that everyone I knew wanted me to make something for them. Spending my time sewing away in my studio, the machine had its own beat, which I found comforting. Fashioning my work area as a place of prayer where I could meditate and be active, I used sewing as a tool to help me once again explore my spiritual side, finding myself often thinking about God and contemplating love while I worked.

So when Cindy called to say that our father's health was poor and that he was wanting to reach out to me but didn't know how, I decided to make a piece of artwork for him as physical proof that I loved him.

I was practicing Shamanism on and off during this time, and so I thought I would journey to enquire what it was exactly that I should do when I was told to offer the gift, not to my father, but rather, to his wife- my step mother. Indignantly ignoring the request at first, God was persuasive, and it was when the thought began to invade my dreams that I finally decided to make the project with her in mind. Being the only "mother" I'd known growing up, I despised this woman beyond words and found the request difficult to say the least. My mother's

alcoholism and her fear of my father kept my mother away so I had always been forced to call my evil stepmother “mom.” Struggling with forgiveness, I spent months resentfully working on the project, until, finished at last, I left it at her work with the following letter:

Mom,

When I first embarked on making this Celtic cross, my intention was to make it and hang it up as a talisman to remind me of my spiritual path. Before I had even begun to trace it out, I had given it a name: Faith in Descent, it being my belief that to ascend into heaven one must first descend into hell in order to face darkness and come to terms with demons within. This wall hanging symbolizes the light that would comfort me during my journey. Hanging on the wall, it would remind me that no matter how dark or ugly or scary things seem, it's okay and I am safe because God is within me showering me with love, assuring me that no matter what happens, no matter how dark it becomes or how long and hard the road seems, eventually storms will pass and balance will be regained.

When I create artwork, I do so with intent, for I believe that doing something with conscious intent is much like casting a spell – that the focus of your energy shifts and opens a space, allowing the universe to bring you what you need. Prayer is another name for it, but in a way that you believe and realize that the Great Spirit has already answered you before you even finish speaking the words out loud. Of course, the true power of prayer is not that it changes the will of God, but that it softens our hearts and opens our mind and spirit to the infinite possibilities, changing us instead.

Throughout the months it took to make this, I spent a great deal of time contemplating our relationship and past history. It is funny the things art brings out of

the soul if you allow it. So many intense emotions poured forth, compounded by the fact that I am where I am at this moment in my life. I feel as if my eyes were opened and I have reached some point of enlightenment. You see, I realized if this project was truly to symbolize my spiritual beliefs, it should not hang on my wall but on the wall of someone who needs to be assured that regardless, they are loved by God and the Universe. My heart tells me that person is you.

I have thought quite a bit about recent conversations that you and I have had and discovered two important things. First, in spite of everything in the past, I still have deep, strong feelings for you as my mother. Second, and perhaps more compelling, I realized that you see yourself as unredeemable. I always felt you hated or at least despised me a great deal, and always blamed myself. Now, however, I am not so sure that it all hasn't been a projection for the feelings you hold for yourself. I know well how this works, for it has only been by seeing it in myself that has allowed me to see it in others. Having to learn how to forgive myself has given me the opportunity to see past my own baggage to get at what I feel is the most important thing: finding compassion and understanding for both myself and those around me.

A core belief of mine is that there are no coincidences or accidents. Rather, life is a dance instrumented by God and played out by the Universe, and no one is capable of thwarting the will of God. There is no separation between God and man. God is everything and everyone, everywhere. So that which happens does so because it is supposed to for whatever reason. This in no way negates our responsibility for our choices, for we are definitely responsible for the things we do and the energy we share with others. In the end, we always reap what we sow. If everything is the handiwork of

God – and I don't believe there is anything that is not the handiwork of God – then those things that we are terrified to view in the darkness of our own hearts and actions are also instruments of God. I believe God is found even in the darkest, most shameful parts of our being, and even though it is unbearably painful to honestly stand fully conscious, if one does it long enough – regardless of how painful, heart wrenching, or traumatic it may be – you can feel an undeniable sense of God's love, for it is in the shelter of this port that made weathering those storms possible in the first place.

I am concerned you have hard days ahead of you, especially after dad passes, and I just wanted you to know that regardless of the past, regardless of things that have happened and the things you have done, have hope and try not to despair because God and the Universe love you, and in the end when we pass over, the only hell awaiting us is the true and undeniable knowledge of the love we denied ourselves and others while we were here. For me, the only way to avoid this fate is to open my heart, be honest with myself, and try to be brave enough to take the chance to cultivate love whenever I can, amending grievances, both mine and others', regardless of the cost to my ego. If your focus is one of holding onto and controlling life and others, you will see devils ripping from you all that you hold dear. But if you take responsibility for yourself and realize you must first BE the change you wish to see in the world, suddenly the devils transform into angels and help you release yourself from the chains that bind you so that you may become who you were always meant to be.

Please accept this wall hanging and perhaps hang it on your stairwell to serve as a talisman offering comfort and protection for you and your home, reminding you that no

matter how dark the days ahead may appear, all will work out because God and the Universe love you, as do I.

Wishing you the Best,

Your Son

Dropping it off at her office, I once again allowed my hopes to rise, only to have them dashed five days later when Cindy called to tell me that she had sold the art piece. I have heard it said that one should give freely with an open heart, and figuring that the gift I created carried so much resentment, I have to admit I wasn't surprised. Simply obeying what I was asked to do by God in a shamanic journey. I was relieved that she didn't keep it. I was, however, perplexed when I realized that my stepmother had most likely not shared my letter to her with my father. Given the fact that it was more directed at him than his third wife, I needn't have worried, as it so happened that he had something to say to me as well, and what he would have to say would move mountains.

Skeletons in the Closet

Cindy became enraged when she discovered that our stepmother was taking the phone off the hook downstairs, knowing that my father was unable to get to it, in order to prevent him having contact with his older kids, convinced that our stepmother was in hopes that he would die and we wouldn't know. My brother and step-mother had suddenly gone on a weird crusade to convince people that our father was crazy, which my older sisters argued against, assuring me that although he was sick, which made him cantankerous, he was still completely rational. Still, my brother and stepmother went to great lengths to discredit him. Death brings out funny things

in people, and having no question about the greed in my family, I figured it had something to do with the money. My father's father had come from a wealthy family, some of which my dad inherited when his parents died, and if there was one thing that my stepmother valued, it was wealth. Assuming that it was about the money; I stayed out of it, figuring it would all eventually come out in the wash. Neither integrity nor honesty running very deep in my family, I had no idea that my father had started to come clean about his past. In fact, thanks to Tristan's urgings, I stayed uninvolved and kept my distance.

Tristan disliked the effect that my family always had on me, and preferring peace and balance, generally found me impossible to deal with me afterwards. Once Tristan, I, and a friend of ours had gone on vacation to Chicago for a week, and for some reason, Cindy decided to visit us at the hotel. Driving five hours from Michigan in a small sports car with her incredibly obese husband, her oldest daughter and her daughter's two small children, needless to say, they were a bit wound up when they arrived. While all of us were sitting in the hotel lobby, my brother-in-law began to go on and on about the abuse I'd endured from my stepmother, laughing about how awful it must have been to have sex with her. Paralyzed, neither I nor anyone else, had any idea what to say. After an hour of relentless abuse, Cindy decided it was time to leave and had everyone load back up in the car for the five hour trek back. Later, immediately after my sister's departure, Tristan and I ended up in a screaming match in the hotel room. Completely triggered and livid with the fact that he hadn't said or done anything to protect me, I ranted at him at the top of my lungs for longer than I would care to remember. Of course, none of it was his fault; it was about my own helplessness, and I apologized later, but it ruined our vacation regardless. Returning home the next day, none of us spoke a word to each other, remaining uncomfortably silent the whole trip back.

That's always how it went with my family. Although I believe that blood is thicker than water, Tristan thought it had more to do with what he referred to as my "messiah complex." Seeing a need in me to save everyone around me, he suggested I channel my energy into my art rather than my family, in order to avoid getting caught up in the constant chaos he equated with them. Knowing he was right, I began delving deeper into my artwork, Shamanic practices, and sessions with Ms. Smith. Helping me to understand the confusion I felt at being pulled in so many directions with regards to my family, our sessions exposed the raw anger I felt towards my mother, as well as the anger I felt with myself. Patiently, Ms. Smith explained again and again that my parents' choices were not my fault while suggesting the idea that I had choices as an adult that I didn't have as a child. Scared that I'd end up like them, figuring the nut doesn't fall far from the tree, Ms. Smith assured me that I was nothing like my parents. Often massaging this recurrent fear, she explained that although the nut may not fall far from the tree, it is often picked up by birds, squirrels, and the wind and carried further than the little nut could ever imagine. This simple analogy made sense to me, helping me to accept that it was not my fate to become like my father.

I would further realize the truth of this when my father paid for Cindy and Stephen to come to Omaha to see him before he died. At the time, no one was really speaking to Sarah and I wasn't speaking to Stephen. None of us close; we spent most of our lives estranged from each other, this time no different. As for our father, I made it quite clear to Cindy that it was not my intention to rekindle our relationship. Making her promise to refrain from making any peacemaking gestures, Cindy and I made plans to see each other when she came up. Our stepmother, making all of the travel arrangements, planned to be off work the entire week of my brother's and sister's stay, and Cindy surmised it was probably so she could watch over

everything. However, during a visit with Tristan and I, Cindy collapsed and ended up in the hospital, forcing her to stay several weeks more to recuperate before she could fly home, obviously thwarting our stepmother's plans. My brother, a homeless alcoholic, seized the opportunity and extended his stay, too. Realizing now that my brother and stepmother were concerned with what my father was saying on his deathbed, I understand their incessant need to discredit him, as they tried to prevent anyone from listening to him expound on revealing family secrets.

The night my stepmother took my brother to the airport, I coincidentally called my father's house at the same time to talk to Cindy in order to make plans to see her before she left. Suddenly, our father grabbed the phone from her and tearfully begged me to come and see him, declaring that he had something to tell me. Refusing to give my sister back the phone until after I swore that I would come immediately, my sister was as surprised as I. She assured me that neither my brother nor stepmother was there, so Tristan and I drove the twenty minutes to my father's house. The sight of him sitting on the couch in the living room took me aback. No longer the oppressive, domineering man I remembered as a child, he had now become a frail, sad individual who looked deeply troubled. Asking me to sit down, he began the conversation by telling me how he had read my letter more times than he could count and that it had made him do a lot of thinking, at which point he looked me straight in the eye and made the declaration, "I have skeletons in my closet." Cindy instantly went pale, but remained sitting beside him silently. I would later discover that she had turned white due to the fact that she knew what he was trying to tell me, but all Tristan and I could do was stare at him. Concerned with the direction that the conversation was headed, and seeing the effect it was having on Cindy, who had basically just gotten out of the hospital, I tried to placate him by responding, "I know, dad."

Growing visibly agitated, he tried to rise from his chair, and finding himself unable, proceeded to lean forward and loudly proclaimed: “You don’t understand. I have SKELETONS in my closet.”

I assured him that I understood but, pressing him to change the subject for Cindy’s sake, I explained that I didn’t want to talk about it right now. Later, broaching the subject with Sarah, she commented how he’d said the same thing to her when she’d dropped by with a friend a week before, using the exact phraseology. Figuring that he was talking about all the stuff from our childhood, she’d shut him down the same way I did, declaring that she didn’t want to discuss the past and that, as far as she was concerned, all was forgiven.

After Tristan and I left, I did my best to put it all out of my mind, content that my father had acknowledged my letter and admitted his guilt, although I have often regretted not letting him explain exactly what he was talking about. If I had one moment of my life to live over again, changing the outcome, it would be that one. His words would plague me after he died. In fact, they still do.

The Archangel Uriel

After his admission, my father and I spoke off and on for a few weeks, but when he told me he had multiple sclerosis and I asked Cindy about it, the next day all hell broke loose. Calling our father and stepmother, she demanded to know if it was true and my stepmother was infuriated. Not realizing that admitting to having MS could effectively give us reason to contest his will; my father denied the conversation, which made me feel crazy, although his own wife was asserting the same thing about him.

Angry that my father was trying to once again rewrite my reality for whatever reason, I distanced myself again. I don't know nor will I ever know whether he had MS, given that my stepmother had his medical records sealed after his death, probably to prevent us from contesting the will. Later I would wonder if she sealed the records because our father was coming clean about his past and she needed to keep us from his records to effectively keep us from contacting any of the people he might have talked to during his time with hospice. Whatever the case, the only thing that I knew for certain was that she would do anything her greedy mind could think of keep hold of what she considered hers, and I figured she was afraid that, if the records made any mention of him being incompetent, it would have given us cause to contest the will.

I saw my father one last time, a week before he died. Wanting to assure him that when he died, I would come find him and help him cross over, I hoped to comfort him so that he wouldn't be so scared to face his mortality. Despite everything, I loved my father, and had grown to feel sorry for his life much like I had with my mom.

Stopping at his house out of the blue one day, his delight was palatable. Despite my stepmother's constant prodding that I leave, my father seemed almost desperate for me to stay. My stepmother never left his side, even when he told me that although he hadn't been much of a father, he'd left insurance policies for the four of us older children though it was not written in his will. Knowing my father to lie, I blew it off, knowing that if there were any such policies; my stepmother would have already done everything possible to get her claws into them. Angered by his admission, she moved closer to him, dominating him as she used to dominate me. Although it was a fitting karma for a man who cared so little for so many, still, seeing his suffering firsthand brought me no satisfaction. Walking out after telling him goodbye, it was the last time I would see my father on this side.

Three days before he died, I began having nightmares about a demon. Finding myself standing in the kitchen of our old apartment, all the doors leading to the living room and dining room were shut tight, and I could hear something slithering around on the other side of the door, making a sound like nails scratching on glass. Suddenly, there was a knock at the front door and I could hear a woman entering the apartment. Attacked by the demon, her screams and those of the demon awakened me in a panic. The next several nights, the nightmare repeated itself over and over, always the same except that it was always a different woman at the door. Having plenty of nightmares, this one was different in that it felt so *real*, and its constant repetition felt like the universe trying to tell me something. Ms. Smith suggested that I use my shamanic practice to go into the dream while awake to see if there was anything I could do, as I was becoming afraid to close my eyes and was losing sleep. Unaware that my father was dying, I didn't equate the dream with my past, nor could I ever have imagined what was about to happen.

On the third morning, after two nights of nightmares, Cindy phoned and told me that our father had died. Suffering for years from prostate cancer, he had surprised us all by finally succumbing, and Cindy was devastated. Unable to speak on the phone for more than a few minutes before breaking down, she took his death the hardest. After hanging up the phone, I spent the rest of the day trying to make sense of my feelings, as I seemed to feel nothing. An enigma, I loved my father as much as I despised everything he stood for. His satanic past aside, he'd grown to be a narcissistic, selfish, deceitful person who had done immense harm in his life, and it was difficult to dismiss the pain he'd caused just because he had passed. True to my word, I still had every intention of finding him on the other side and helping him cross over.

Shamans believe that after physical death the soul goes through a process of letting go of the ties that bound it to its previous life. Although space and time are irrelevant on the other

side, the soul is believed to still be bound within the confines of common reality during this transition, thus the process requires at least three days to complete. Considering that Jesus Christ himself took three days to ascend, shamans give the soul that time to deal with its loss while reacquainting itself with the other side. I decided to give my father ten days, considering how my father was the angry, spiteful, and bitter man he was, hiding “skeletons in his closet.” Figuring it would be best to give him some extra time to try and make amends on the other side, I had no idea that my own soul would be on the line before I would ever get a chance to help him.

The morning after he died, I found myself possessed by the very demon we had believed resided in my father. Unlike anything I had ever experienced, I heard a terrible voice in my head say; *you're not like the others*. Shamans, like Satanists, believe in possession, which is the whole reason behind praying for protection before journeying. Leaving the body unprotected can open it to possession by spirits, but I had never experienced it, and even with my background as it was, I didn't really understand how it was possible. Just the week before, I had laughed at a friend of ours, a staunch Catholic, after he commented on how scary he found the film *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* to be. Terrified by the concept of how the devil can possess the bodies of mere mortals, I scoffed at him, explaining that the true story ended with the girl's parents and priest going to jail for starving the girl to death. Going further, I assured him that possession was silly, surmising that demons had better things to do than possess humans, yet now ,here I was, facing the very thing I had mocked.

Assured that this would happen as a child, nothing could have prepared me for the actual experience, and I spent my time trying to deny the experience even while it was happening.

In my mind all I could sense was a being that seemed all eyes and tongues. Desperate, angry, and extremely powerful, I began having flashes of life memories as the thing searched my mind, looking for something to entice me with. As it looked into me, I could see into him, and I sensed that he was both incredibly old and incredibly sad. Never encountering such a hopeless being in all my journeys, I wasn't so much scared as intrigued, as this seemed to be the moment I'd been prepared for as a child. Telling me that I could do anything in this life now and never face a day's consequence for what I did, I felt an incredible surge of power from him, though with it also came an overwhelming sense of *corruption*. Instinctively, I knew that the thing inside of me was offering more of the same darkness I had been trying to escape for decades. Afterwards, perhaps exhausted by the transition from my father to me, I felt it curl up like a snake, much like it was asleep, still inside me but silent.

I called Susan immediately, and after waking her up, detailed for her what I had just experienced. Calming me, she explained a shamanic process called "extractment," which, in many ways, sounded a lot like exorcism. Though not common, it was also not impossible, and Susan, telling me of a practicing shaman in town who specialized in extractment, suggested I call him and ask for his help. Talking to Ms. Smith about it first, she was a bit taken back that morning, unsure as to what to suggest, but she did her best to help me explore the demonic experience in our session that day. Suggesting that it could just be some sort of programming playing out, or maybe due to the fact I had always been told it would happen when my father died, she assured me that didn't believe I was crazy. Explaining that schizophrenics hear voices *outside* their heads, not inside, she did her best to convince me that I wasn't having a psychotic break, which was what I was convinced was happening. Believing there would be no harm in

letting it play out, she suggested that I take Susan's advice and undergo the extractment to see what would happen.

That afternoon, I called Cindy and told her what was happening and what I intended to do. Remember: we were all raised to believe that something indwelled my father, and although I was the only one who had any form of spiritual training by way of Shamanism, each of us possessed our own abilities. Cindy was convinced that if I released the demon inside of me we would lose our "powers." Both of my sisters were adept with the occult, at times experiencing visions of the future along with their own versions of psychic powers. Cindy could look into people's lives and see what troubled them, as could Sarah, who was also a fantastic card reader, and although we had all denied our abilities at certain points in our lives, all of us had been shaped by our experiences as children and, as such, believed in the powers of magic and the spiritual world, as well as in the demon that had gone out of my father and into me.

Arguing with Cindy that our abilities came from God and not from demons, I promptly dismissed her claims that we would lose anything, at which point she warned that it would just come to into her. However, as it scanned me earlier that morning, I had felt the vicious, seething hatred it had of women, so I knew that what my sister proposed was impossible. Unable to change my mind, Cindy called Sarah and implored her to try and convince me not to go through with the extractment.

That night before bed, I prayed for an answer to my dilemma, awaking the next morning knowing what I had to do. Back in my studio, I began talking out loud, feeling stupid but not caring. Having no dreams or nightmares that I remembered, I nonetheless woke with the knowledge of who I was dealing with, where he had come from, and why he was here.

"Your name is Uriel, is it not? The one we worshiped when I was a child?" I asked.

Answering, "*That I am,*" I went further and asked:

"And you have to do anything I ask of you, no matter what it is?"

Replying "*You need only to command me,*" I could taste his anticipation, sensing that his humility was a trick.

"Since you have to do anything I want you to do, no matter what it is, then what I want is for you to go to God and ask what it is God wants you to do, and then I want you to do that instead."

Caught off guard, he was bound nonetheless by my request, and having no other option than to honor it, he became silent and we didn't speak further.

Not quite understanding exactly what was happening, I realized that, real or not, I had no interest in using this being. Having awoke that morning aware of his overwhelming sense of hopelessness based on his belief that he would never be able to return to the light, I knew that the being within me was willing to burn the world down in order to force the hand of God in hopes of ending his suffering. Understanding that the Revelations image of an eternal lake of fire is nothing but a fairytale used to scare the masses into submission, it was my impression that he had forgotten that God is all forgiving.

Think about it. Jesus preached that God is love, commanding us to forgive and love our enemies, all the while God plans to throw his into an eternal fire pit. Does that make sense? Knowing that no one can thwart the will of God, and believing that God will wait until the end of time for all of the flock to return, I felt it was time for this being to see the truth.

Not comprehending at the time how this experience was connected to my past, I did what I could to get through it while trying to keep both my sanity and soul intact.

I called the local shaman, planning to set up an extractment for the next weekend. Speaking with his wife, who was a practicing shaman herself, I explained my predicament and we discussed our particular practices, as she and her husband favored Native American Shamanism while I gravitated towards the Celtic. Making plans to get together on the weekend, we hung up the phone and I went about my business.

Later that morning, my dear friend Shelly, a strict Catholic who happened to believe in possession, called from the East Coast. I told her about my father's death and what happened after, detailing the conversation I'd had with the demon, my therapist, and the local shaman's wife. Having no problem grasping what I was saying and concerned I could quickly find myself over my head, she made me promise to call back and reschedule the extractment immediately. Making the call, I was informed that the shaman's wife had already called her husband at work about the "shamanic emergency" and that they expected me that evening.

The sense that Uriel was inside me was undeniable. Crazy or not, I felt I had to play it out, no matter how weird it was. In the book *Cult and Ritual Abuse: Its History, Anthropology, and Recent Discovery in Contemporary America*, Noblitt and Perskin talk about the connection between possession, ritual abuse, and dissociation. Quoting Father Jeffery Steffon from his 1992 book *Satanism: Is it Real*, they give the Catholic Church's official position regarding the reality of Satan, evil spirits, and demonic possession. Citing Father Richard McAlear and Betty Brennan, experts on demonic possession, Father Steffon explains how the church believes it occurs:

First, a demonic spirit can attach itself to someone through a wound or trauma. Fr. McAlear calls this a ministering spirit. Secondly, a spirit can attach itself to a person through a repeated sinful action or sinful tendencies. This is a cardinal spirit. One way to remember some cardinal spirits is to remember the capital sins – that is lust, pride, gluttony, sloth, envy, covetousness, and anger. These sins are against the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. These virtues are the hinges of other virtues. Just as other virtues are in some way tied to the four cardinal virtues, so some spirits are tied to, or hinge upon, the cardinal spirits. A third way is through a person's generational heritage. People inherit their make-up from their parents – their physical attributes, mental abilities, psychological makeup, and spiritual characteristics. If parents have been involved in the occult, generational openness for the oppression will be passed along to their children. Exodus 20:5-6 states that a father's wickedness is passed on to his children for four generations, but blessings for a thousand generations upon the faithful. Finally, a demonic spirit can attach itself to a person through involvement in the occult.

Given that I fit into every category, it was no wonder that I found myself in the position I was in. Still avoiding delving too far into my past, I figured that I would do the extractment and that would be the end of it, and I was looking forward to reclaiming my life, especially considering the fact that my parents were dead. Unconcerned as to whether this was a true spiritual experience or one that my fractured mind was using to repair itself, I was willing to do what I had to do to get over what I felt was a precipice.

A Shamanic Extractment

The local shaman was nicknamed Bear, and for good reason as his size, dark hair, and beard made him look like a big grizzly. He ushered me into their living room where prayer blankets had been draped over everything, explaining they were hung to keep spirits from attaching themselves to objects during the extractment. Taking a moment to get a feel for me, he informed me that his wife had told him of our conversation and inquired as to how much I knew about the extractment process. Admitting I knew virtually nothing about it and that it all seemed strange to me, he took my ignorance in stride, pointing out that whether I believed in what was happening or not, the fact remained I was still sitting in his house. Laughing, he told me that people who experienced what I was often had a hard time believing what was happening, but assured me that it was very real.

The ceremony itself was simple. Bear lit a candle, burned some incense, and prayed over me and the area of the extractment, not much different than what Kathy had done during my soul extractment. Asking for help from the other side, he prayed and sang as he beat a drum, walking around me in a circle as I sat on the floor. Finally, sitting down in front of me, he told me to stare into his eyes. I had felt myself already beginning to drift when Bear asked me to mentally move to the side and allow Uriel to take over my body. His wife, sitting beside him, quietly said prayers as Bear provoked the demon into talking.

The experience of listening to myself talk was strange in that the words weren't coming from me. There was no speaking in tongues, projectile green vomit, nor any other theatric generally associated with exorcism, but instead a kind of grace fell upon the room, making the air almost glow around us. I could feel Uriel's hesitation and fear, but because he was bound to my request, he had no choice but to cross over. Anxious to be rid of him, I still found myself

tearing up, feeling a sense of loss but not a clue as to why, although I was soon to learn the answer.

Bear helped Uriel to the other side but how he did it I still don't understand. Physically feeling Uriel leave me, I breathed a sigh of relief as Bear looked at his wife, asking her if we were done. Somehow working in conjunction with her husband, she was visibly surprised when she answered "no". It was at this point that I felt the presence of someone I realized had been with me since childhood. Telling him that there was a woman inside of me, Bear's wife then looked at me and told me that I had to let her go.

Suddenly feeling overwhelmed with love from the female presence inside me, I realized that my tears had been for her. Ms. Smith had often asked me how I had overcome my childhood and I told her about the voice I heard as a child, constantly assuring me that everything was okay and it was the people around me who were crazy, not me. Believing all those years that the voice was a part of me, I now realize that I had help in getting me through the hell of my childhood. Dwelling within me, it had been her voice that I had heard in my head all those years. Knowing it was time for her to leave and cross over, I felt an overwhelming gratitude toward her for the love she had shared with me through my loveless childhood. Envisioning her gently brushing her hand against my cheek, I felt her leave me and cross over. Then it was over.

Bear finished with another prayer ceremony, and while beating his drum and thanking God and the universe for its help, he sang praise and thanks as his wife continued to quietly pray. Explaining afterwards that it was customary for the shaman to send the "patient" home with gifts, he sent me home with some wood from a Joshua tree he'd come across in his travels, a packet with corn and tree shavings in it, and a crystal that, in a way, looked like a village. Informing me

that Native Americans believe you are never poor as long as you have a couple of grains of corn in the cupboard, he told me that the packet was for my sister Cindy, who he sensed was having the hardest time with our father's death. He too was amazed by how easy Uriel's transition had gone, and confirmed that Uriel was not only ancient and probably on the Earth since before the days of Mesopotamia, he was also the most powerful being Bear had ever encountered. He was amazed that the whole process had gone as easy as it did and that the demon didn't fight, (which was generally the case), but knowing that Uriel was bound by my request, I understood. Exhausted and sad, feeling like I'd lost a piece of me and emotionally confused by the whole experience, I thanked Bear and his wife and bid farewell.

Later that night, lying in bed, I felt as if I had just passed a crucial test. No longer inside of me, I wondered what might have happened had I ignored his presence and gone about my daily affairs. Never once wanting to covet his power, I did contemplate what it might have been like to have his power, but believing in the verse, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26), I have never regretted my decision. Still, I couldn't help imagining what it might have been like to have such power, and I let the scenario play out in my mind until I thought of my father and what it must have been like for him. One of the most evil and misguided men I have ever known, he never paid a day's consequence for his misdeeds, although it didn't prevent him from suffering intensely at the end. His virtue less life had left him utterly alone, surrounded by vultures that had been all too eager for his demise. Though never publicly exposed, I knew that, in the end, he had still paid for his crimes. A lifetime of regrets being an awful thing to take with you to the other side, my father was the epitome of someone who despaired in the end.

That night, I dreamt of a celebration. One of the most joyful dreams I've ever experienced, the next morning I found it difficult wake for a new day. My past was complete and life was beginning anew, better than before. I was soon to find that no good deed goes unpunished however, and as it turned out, I had still more to do in hell.

A Funeral and a Death

My father's funeral gave my stepmother her moment to shine, although it was obvious that she did not understand the concept of "guilt by association." Posing as both victim and savior, she had the pastor refer to my father as a liar during his eulogy, and it got worse from there. Making the comment that he was "as much of a cheat in life as he was in cards", he finished by saying that, while some might "consider him a piece of art", most just "considered him a piece of work." It was not that he was wrong, for my father was indeed all these things; what bothered me was that I knew the pastor was reading something my step mother, his wife of 36 years, had written, and as much as she would have liked to disassociate herself from him, she and my father were two peas in a pod – violent, vindictive, self-serving, manipulative pedophiles. Not once considering that those who attended would be left with two nagging questions: the first being *Who did my father cheat?* and the second being *Where was she the three decades they were married?* Adhering to the old adage "birds of a feather flock together", she publically admitted that my father cheated people as she, guilty by association, accepted his behavior, benefiting right along with him. As a practicing CPA and the fact that her cousin was their attorney, to claim ignorance of my father's moral improprieties was impossible, although it must have never dawned on her how people might look at her afterwards for saying such half-truths about the dead given the chance to consider the facts of the matter afterwards. My father's

death and funeral were in stark contrast to my mother's, and the fact that he had been surrounded by ghouls at the end of his life made me sad in a way.

Dancing around like Rumpelstilskin, she had the pastor talk about the plane my father used to have and how he flew back and forth between some “mines” they owned at the time in Dyre, Nevada. Knowing their past, I have always wondered what they may have left behind in those mines. I’ll probably never know for sure, but at the time I found it strange how she talked about events that were so far in the past, as he hadn’t flown since we left Omaha when I was a child. Understanding later, I am thankful that that she felt inclined to put this bit of info about my dad in his eulogy, as it reminded me of events in that plane I had done my best to forget. Shoving the past in our face was something she enjoyed, and she took the opportunity of my father’s death to dance around triumphantly, believing she had won at last

At his memorial, Sarah and I were the only two members of my mother's family at attendance, being the only two in town. During the eulogy, I reached over and touched her hand to calm her agitation at one point, whispering to her to cheer up because we were finally free of his terrible family. Just happy that Cindy wasn’t there to witness our step mother’s circus, Tristan and I left before the last song ended due to my fantasies of punching the “bereaved” widow in the face. Not wanting to give her the satisfaction of seeing that she’d gotten to me, I was furious for some time after.

Assuming, since my father was dead, that all the surprises were over and we were free, I couldn't have been more wrong, given our stepmother’s obsessive need to taunt us with the skeletons our father assured us was in their closet.

Within days of his funeral, Cindy began asking Tristan and I to let her live with us, claiming she feared her husband and oldest daughter were planning to kill her. When she wouldn't tell us why they would do such a thing, Tristan and I dismissed her insistence as just more of her penchant for drama. However, when she told her doctor and nurse about her fear, and they reported it to Adult Protective Services (APS), an investigation into her claims had just begun when she was found dead. Due to her history of heart disease, no questions of foul play were asked, even though she'd been alone with her oldest daughter and husband, the two she were convinced wanted to kill her, the morning she died.

A favorite story of our mother's was one about Cindy when she was six or seven. Coming home from school one day, she told our mother she'd seen an ambulance crash into a school bus, causing both to explode, strewing bodies all over the road. Horrified, my mother asked my sister as to whether or not the story was true, to which my sister replied, "No, but it's interesting, huh?" Warning her about the little boy who cried wolf, my mother couldn't have been more on the mark.

The day before her death, she had received the prayer blanket I had made for her along with the packet Bear gave me after the extractment. Her oldest daughter claimed at first that I'd used it to poison her mother, but recanted after the police officer went through the prayer bag and found nothing but corn and wood shavings. Wondering why my niece, the one my sister accused of wanting to murder her – tried to blame me right off the bat wouldn't occur to me until afterwards.

Neither my niece nor my brother-in-law, who was the local city manager, had a consistent, cohesive alibi regarding the morning my sister died. The only two alone with her,

their first story was that she'd been half in and half out of bed when he left early that morning for work and he hadn't bothered to check to see if she was all right. My niece and brother in law's stories kept changing however, which made both Tristan and I suspicious. If she had died of natural causes, then why were all the changes concerning the story of her death necessary? Refusing to allow an autopsy, the family asked the doctor to sign off on her death, claiming heart problems, completely disregarding her claim that she was going to be murdered. After her death, APS made one phone call to the family and, after meeting with strong resistance, immediately dropped their investigation. Judging by the state's history, it seems that is how things work in Florida.

I was devastated by Cindy's death. She as the oldest and I the youngest; and the fact that she was born on 6-12 and I was born on 12-6, bonded us in a strange way. It was true that we often fought like cats and dogs, but we also shared a special bond as siblings. Having literally saved my life more than once, I felt awful that I had denied her in her time of need, unable to forget the sound of desperation in her voice. We had spoken for hours every day right after dad died, leading right up to her death less than three weeks later, and I have always regretting not having taken her seriously. Soon after, when I became involved in an investigation regarding my family and their past activities, I would wonder what exactly she and Dad had discussed with regards to his skeletons in the closet. Eventually becoming to believe that her death was connected to our past, she did, after all, remember everything that had transpired during our childhoods.

Tristan and I flew down to Florida to help with the arrangements, much to the dismay of her family. Pretty much avoiding us until I started to demand an autopsy, Cindy's family claimed that she never wanted to be cut open again after her heart surgery. Reminding them that

she was dead and therefore unable to care about an autopsy, I decided to journey two days after her death, choosing to not wait until the third day, desperate to ask her what I should do. Lying on the hotel bed, I connected with her immediately after going into a trance. Regarding the autopsy, she told me that it would turn her family upside down and cause chaos, warning me that a storm was coming and that I should "prepare my house." Then she smiled and said, "Okay little brother, now do your stuff." The next thing I know, she and I are standing on a road between two fields full of wild flowers. Members of our extended family are standing in a group down the road, gesturing to her. Joining them, she then turned back to me and waved, and then they all disappeared, once again leaving me alone.

Afterwards, I chose to drop the push for an autopsy and focused on just getting through the rest of our time in Florida. Tristan referred later to our experience in Florida as National Lampoon's American Funeral, referencing the constant party, and the funeral no exception. Her children popped pills, drank, and though they they didn't drag my sister's body out to dance, someone did schedule a viewing without telling anyone, causing her to lie out alone for three hours. After my nephew almost killed Tristan and I by getting behind the wheel high on pain killers and Xanax, Tristan became angry, and declared on our flight home that he would never again subject himself to that side of my family.

Again, I assumed the past was finally over. No more connections other than Sarah and her family, Tristan was incredibly grounding for me, although even he couldn't foresee what was coming. The ride was speeding up as, unable to leave well enough alone, my father's widow was just warming up.

Lest We Forget

Ten days after my father's death, I did a journey to help him cross to the other side – (this was right before Cindy's death.) As angry as I was with him, and as much as I despised his life and the things he was guilty of, I still loved him and couldn't leave him in the dark. Praying for him throughout that time, I was hoping that he would have found his own way, but I found him in a place I had never been before. Though no lake of fire, I was wrong in my belief that there was no hell, for it was in this place that I found my father- naked, despairing, and alone. Huddled in the dark, two phantoms flew above his head, tormenting him. Enveloped with guilt and shame, it was looking into his vacant eyes that I could see that he was trapped in a hell that he had constructed for himself, unaware of anything else. Reliving a never ending loop of a version of hell he'd constructed in his own mind, unable to communicate with him, I had no idea what to do, so I prayed for God's assistance. Before I had even finished my prayer, a gash developed in the darkness and two angels walked through it. Each taking a side of my father, they gently lifted him up and carried him into the light, disappearing instantly. Awakening, I performed a celebratory drumming and thanked God, the angels, and universe for helping to save my father.

My experience with Uriel had given me a new perspective. Realizing that if God could forgive Uriel, whose crimes far exceeded my father's, and draw him back into heaven, I believed God would forgive my father. Taking it a step further, I discovered that if God could forgive, so could I. He was my father and it was my place to honor him, not judge him. Besides, considering the condition in which I found him in, he seemed to be punishing himself enough for the two of us. All of life being energy, we all carry both the love we share and the evil we do to the other side, where we become our own judge, and he had obviously sentenced himself harshly.

I once told a friend that this lifetime doesn't make any difference, and yet it makes all the difference in the world. Honestly, I have always believed in reincarnation, and that it is through reincarnation that we are given a chance to make right our previous wrongs, helping us to experience our mistakes in a way that we are able to learn and grow from them. Part of spiritual evolution, reincarnation is what is commonly referred to as a "world without end". Discussed not only in the Bible but in most every other older spiritual text- God is everywhere and everything but is most concentrated within us, which implies that our souls never die. Through our consciousness, our perceptions focus our awareness, giving life experiences the opportunity to give us the chance, each time around; to choose which direction we wish to go. Understanding we are God experiencing God, we can either choose to experience the negative, as my father and his friends chose, or chose to focus on the light. Designed to help us become more aware, God helps us become more aware by offering us the consequences of our own behavior. The true power in this is that fact that if you don't like how your life has turned out, you are able to choose again. Following spiritual laws assist one in drawing closer to the light; whereas ignoring the laws helps one gravitate towards the dark. It's as simple, and painful, as that.

I believe that reincarnation is part of the process the Universe uses to help us spiritually evolve, and when I look back in my life and compare myself at different times in life, I am aware that we reincarnate in this life as well. Different now than I was just a few years ago, it is easy to look back upon my childhood and young adult life as another life, and see that it was often something dying and transforming into something else within me that has helped me to become more aware. I have reincarnated so many times in this one life, I just don't see how that wouldn't continue in death.

Perhaps due to their own unorthodox pasts, neither my father nor stepmother appreciated my take on life and God. Sarah, researching info on the FBI's take on cults during her graduate studies, told me that members involved with Satanic cults often become Jesus freaks when they break away, which certainly fit my father and stepmother. As fundamentalist zealots, they used their religious convictions to condemn others while excusing themselves. Acting on the belief that Jesus only loves those they deemed acceptable, they told me that my sexuality was going to land me in hell, even though they were former practicing Satanists, among their long list of crimes. Their hypocrisy was nauseating and often more than I could endure.

Right before her death, Cindy called and told me that our father's widow had called her to inquire if I'd done my journey to help our father cross over. Knowing that my spiritual practice made my stepmother uncomfortable, I called my sister a liar and chastised her- angry that she would involve herself in things she had no business sticking her nose into while trying to mock me at the same time, although later that night, returning home from work, Tristan told me that he'd also received an email from my stepmother that day, asking the same thing. Calling Cindy back and apologizing to her, I was uncertain of the widow's motives, but I didn't have to wait to figure them out. Not even a week after Cindy's funeral, she sent Sarah and I both an atrociously written letter discussing our father and mother, detailing how she saw herself in our family. Barely comprehensible, she babbled incoherently about how awful my dad and mom were when alive, asserting that she was the savior of our family and how she deserved all the money, setting herself above my family, and exposing how competitive she'd always felt with both of our parents in the process.

Despite how self-destructive both my father and mother were, my stepmother had been the other woman who pushed for the destruction of their relationship in the end. From the wrong

side of the tracks, her father had died when I was in my early teens, and I remember driving up to his burial site with my father laughing how glad we were that the old man was dead. A violent, drink-addicted man with absolutely no education, he'd done nothing with his life but create misery. My stepmother's mother was no better. A vicious drunk who had zero in the way of morals, I refused to go visit her when I got older, considering her the epitome of white trash. My father often complained that the woman constantly came onto him, and he although he claimed to do his best to avoid her, Sarah and I later discovered that he and our stepmother eventually bought the woman's trailer in Okoboji, IA, enabling them to collect Section 8 payments while she lived there, so it must not have gotten to him that much.

Along with her letter was an unsigned personal note from her to me stating that my father wanted me to have his hat, \$100, and his best wishes, sending my older siblings \$1,000 each. Picturing afterwards how pleased with herself she must have been when she sent me my father's "old hat", her slap in the face nonetheless backfired, for, as a shaman, I couldn't have been a sent a more powerful gift. On his head the whole time he was dying, I found the energy the hat held to be sacred.

After receiving our step mother's letter, Sarah and I joined forces, finally reaching a point of enough, and decided to take our step mother to court. Having physically seen the insurance policies of which my dad spoke, she convinced me that it was time to take a stand against her. Had I realized what I was in for personally I probably wouldn't have agreed so readily, but how could I have known just what the skeletons really were that lived in my father's closet, or the effect they would have on me when I came face to face to how evil my family really was.

A Case of Road Rage

The summer of the lawsuit, the same year my father died and my sister was murdered, I was, coincidentally, attacked and almost murdered on the road. Believing at the time that it was just some weird case of road rage, later I would often wonder if it was something more. Sarah and I had been going to garage sales one day, and, finding ourselves in the area, had parked across from our father's house for about thirty minutes, while we reminisced about Dad and the some of the *good* times we'd had with him (and there were some). I then drove to a local Arbys, in which we eat and talked about our plans to spend the rest of the afternoon searching for treasures in people's junk. Immediately after leaving the restaurant, a car pulled behind us and began following us. Driving the speed limit, traveling east on Center Street, the car behind us sped up and got beside me, then, getting ahead of me, pulled right in front of my car, slowing us down until we were both stopped right where the road broke into three lanes, a hundred feet before the stop light. Able to either turn left on 120th or go straight down Center, where the onramp to the interstate lay a half a mile down, he essentially trapped me behind him, unable to drive away, when he jumped out of his car and headed for me.

Panicked, Sarah screamed, "Oh my God, he is coming to kill you!", and I was barely able to unbuckle my seatbelt and opened my car door slightly before he was upon me. Reaching in my open window, he began to grab for my face and head, and I yelled, fighting back his hands until I was able to reach through my open window and grab the fat on his stomach and twist. Backing him away enough to get myself out of the car, he towered over me by three or four inches, and he instantly resumed his attack on me. Cupping the back of my head with one hand, he used the other like a spider, constantly moving his fingers across my face, trying to get a grip on my face and jaw. Knowing that he was intending to try and break my neck, trapped between

my car and my attacker, I began to panic, yelling at him to get the fuck off me while I attempted to knock his hands away from my face.

I suddenly felt the presence of Cindy overcome me. Feeling her put her hand on the base of my neck, I found myself instantly relaxed, at which point she told me to calm down and become still. Sensing something, the man increased his aggression, and I felt the knuckle of his forefinger brush against my teeth when I heard Cindy say, *not yet*. It was as if time had slowed to a stop, and while everything moved in slow motion, what I remember next was the meat of his huge hand that was between his thumb and forefinger in my mouth and Cindy yelling, *Now! Lean forward and bite the fuck out of him!*

Working like magic, he snatched his hand from my mouth, immediately abandoning his attack. Needing braces when I was a child, I had ground my teeth down to nothing, and getting bitten by my sharp, irregularly sized teeth was probably like having a piranha chomp down. I have always hated my teeth, but I have to admit they, along with my dead sister, probably saved my life that day. The second he backed off and it dawned on me how he had just manhandled me; I went from fear to being consumed with rage. Realizing that I was sizing him up, trying to ascertain if I could throw the both of us into oncoming traffic on the opposite side of the median, he proceeded to run back to his car, but before jumping in, he turned and yelled, "You bite like a little girl!" Angering me even more, I got back into my car and proceeded to chase him onto the interstate, where I, weaving in and out of traffic, sometimes at speeds over 110-mile an hour, tried to catch up to him in hopes of crashing his car.

Meanwhile, Sarah, yelling at me while the same time trying to calm me down, feared that we were going to end up in a crash and begged me to slow down. Finally calming down enough

to regain some semblance of rationality, I slowed down and got off the interstate, satisfied that we had his license plate number. She and I argued about going to the police, as I was convinced it was a waste of time and that the Omaha police would do absolutely nothing, (and rightly so), but she convinced me that it was best to make a report in case the man himself tried to press charges. Even though I had bitten him out of self-defense, with his blood on my shirt, I decided she might be right, so we drove downtown to the police station. No help at all, they at least took a report and copied down the number of his license plate.

Believing it to be an example of extreme but random road rage at the time, it was one of the scariest moments I have ever experienced in my adult life. Later, when I was enmeshed in an investigation into my family, I would wonder why he'd come out of nowhere targeting me, and if it could have been some sort of assassination attempt.

It's Who You Know, Not What You Know

Although angry with my stepmother, I was not all that interested in taking her to court to fight for the blood money Sarah felt was owed us. Lawyers cost money and Tristan and I didn't have any to spare for a legal battle. Sarah was furious that our father's widow had danced on his grave, but since she was as poor as we were, I figured the point was moot. Although interested in whether my father had told me the truth on his deathbed or had instead bold faced lied to me, I refused to journey for the answer, uncomfortable with my father at the time. I had begun to shy away from my spiritual practice as a whole after my experience with Uriel, basically having become weirded out by my experiences and, feeling way out of my depth, was no longer sure that what I was doing was healthy.

Then, magically, for some reason strings were pulled to "help us." Jewish blood in our lineage, Sarah had converted to Judaism at one point and thus was connected to the Jewish community in Omaha. Directing her to a prestigious law firm and a lawyer I'll call "Shady," her temple ended up suggesting we get legal counsel from him. One of the sneakiest narcissists I have ever encountered, he disclosed that, although he also represented our step mother's daughter's parents in law, who had married into a very rich and very prominent Jewish family in town, he saw no conflict of interest. No more than two degrees away from the very person we were attempting to battle, Sarah assured me of his reputation even as he requested a five thousand dollar retainer.

Assured that neither of us could come up with that kind of cash, Sarah and I were about to give up when a man by the name of Kevin Dobson offered to pony up the cash. Omaha's primary drug dealer during the 80's, he had been heavily involved with the coke trade from the Contras and was thus connected to many of the nefarious activities going on then. Often bragging that he was connected to the whole Reagan/ Bush Iran-Contra scandal, he would detail how the Carter Lake/North Omaha chapter of Hell's Angels, along with the Omaha mafia, were able to smuggle kids and drugs out in the open. Considering that he was crippled, I thought he was full of it and dismissed him as an idiot, even though I admitted to Sarah that I could see how someone could see him as being somewhat larger than life, even if it was in a malevolent, seedy kind of way.

Growing up in the same town together, connected not only by the past but also through her husband's relationship with Kevin as his best friend, Sarah had a tumultuous relationship with the man. The man had done nothing but harm Sarah's relationships, and yet, despite their

history together, for some reason , he decided to write my sister a five thousand dollar check out of nowhere, with the only condition that we use Shady and his law firm.

Red flags obviously went up for Tristan and I, and considering Dobson's history and reputation in Omaha, I told Sarah to decline his offer. Although I'd always discredited his stories, I was still wary that he might be connected to our past, but Sarah's husband pressured her into it, and not wanting her to have to go at it alone, I joined her. A month or so into the "lawsuit", Sarah and I argued about the validity of Dobson's claims, so she forced me to Google his name, and what we found scared us both. In reading the Omaha appeal concerning *United States of America v. Gilberto Montoya*, which had been submitted August 26, 1991 and decided December 26, 1991, we both discovered that Kevin had been telling the truth. Gilberto Montoya was Pablo Escobar's nephew, Pablo Escobar being the Contra cocaine dealer from Colombia whom the CIA had colluded with during the Iran Contra scandal. Steven M. Watson argued for Montoya and Donald L. Schense for the U.S. government. I quote:

In June 1989, Florida residents Montoya and Juan Garcia-Escobar drove from Miami to Omaha with two kilograms of cocaine concealed in a cooler. They delivered it to their customer, Kevin Dobson, in the presence of Mike Dillon, Dobson's friend and a cocaine and marijuana user. Montoya and Garcia-Escobar remained in Omaha for several days until Dobson had sold enough of the cocaine to pay them for one kilo. They then returned to Miami where they were arrested some months later.

...Montoya was convicted of a conspiracy to distribute cocaine in Omaha in June 1989. The alleged conspirators were Montoya, Garcia-Escobar, and Dobson. Although the only transaction proved was the transporting from Florida and the distribution in Omaha of

two kilos of cocaine in June 1989, the testimony tended to prove that the conspirators viewed this transaction as the start of a continuing relationship.

...including an almost offhand comment by Dobson during his Direct testimony:

Q. Mr. Dobson, what was that discussion in regards to fronting cocaine to you from Miami from Mr. Montoya and Juancho [Garcia-Escobar]?

A. Juancho had told me that [Montoya] said that he would bring me up six kilos of cocaine and leave them with me, that I could sell it at my leisure along with a couple hundred pounds of pot.. for Mike Dillon to sell at his leisure..

Dobson had always claimed that it was his information that had brought the contra drug cartel down, and that his work with the CIA is what saved his ass. Faced with the irrefutable fact that he was he was telling the truth, it was reading those government papers that I began to realize that we just might be in over our heads. Just beginning to connect the dots, I began to wonder about the connection Kevin had with the people in our past, and why he was so adamant that Shady control our case?

Uriel Revisited

My 40th birthday on December 6, 2006 was a complete game changer for me. No longer plagued by nightmares or the fear that I was the Antichrist, my experience with Uriel, although overwhelming and strange, had healed many parts of me long needing it. I had come to consider

the experience as one where my mind had simply repaired itself rather than some strange spiritual experience, and had succeed in lulling myself into a false sense of security.

The day before my birthday was uneventful. Considering birthdays as occasions for reflection and nothing more, both mine and Tristan's birthday fall so close to Christmas that it was not generally financially feasible to celebrate them, and so he gave me his customary small gift and that was it, until that night when I kept waking up in a panic. Unable to recall my dreams, it was on awakening for the fifth time that night that I realized something unconscious was on the move. Closing my eyes, I went back to sleep with the intention of *waking up in the dream* so I could see what I was so afraid to face.

. I found myself standing in the middle of a pentagram with 12 people standing around me in a circle, chanting. In the dream, unable to ascertain why Uriel hadn't taken me over yet, the group of them had decided to perform a ceremony in order to coax my soul out of my body long enough for Uriel to take control. Desperate to regain the control they'd lost, I realized they were obviously oblivious of Uriel's crossing the March before. Being in the middle of a pentagram as a child had been familiar territory, but being psychologically forced back into it as an adult raised an instant and consuming rage and I demanded that they stop what they were doing immediately. Waking up, in so many more ways than one, I opened my eyes and got out of bed.

Looking at the clock as I do every morning, I saw that it was six in the morning, and I suddenly became resolved as to what I had to do. Most people would have just assumed it was a dream and let it go, but I awoke that morning knowing that what had just transpired was real. No

longer convinced that my experience with Uriel was imagined, I decided to go on a journey to find him and see what was happening on the other side.

Having an appointment with Ms. Smith that day, I decided to ask her help with my perceived task, as I was unsure just exactly who the group was in my dream and had decided not to take any chances, believing I was battling spiritual warfare. There was no part of me that doubted what had just happened, and the thought that I was still spiritually connected to those who had practiced Satanism during my childhood was unnerving. I believed in the magic these people like to wield, and the child part of me was scared, so I decided to ask for Ms. Smith's assistance, as a fellow shaman, in helping to insure a safe journey. Always having adhered to the philosophy of *Two or three gathered in My Name*, I knew that having another person drum and sing prayers of protection was more powerful than doing the journey alone. Able to offer prayers for guidance and protection, the drumming shaman effectively watches over the one journeying, and as my therapist and one who understands my spiritual practice, I felt Ms. Smith was my best bet.

In her office, after I told her about my dream and what had happened, Ms. Smith agreed to help and she lit a candle while offering a prayer for protection. Quietly beating her drum, I went into my trance, and as the wavelengths of my brain began changing from beta to delta, I proceeded inside and began to dream. Finding Uriel alone, he was surrounded by darkness, almost like that in which I found my father. Realizing that things had not gone quite as I'd hoped during the extractment, Uriel had become entangled by the bonds of his own making, trapping him in some sort of limbo or *bardo*, caught between the middle world and the other side. Somehow waking that morning intuitively knowing what I had to do, I proceeded to ask him if he would release those who had been sacrificed to him. Asking him had an immediate and

intense effect, and what transpired next was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen on the other side, and the experience profoundly changed me forever.

The darkness surrounding Uriel disappeared instantly, replaced with a blinding light that exploded from within him, so intense I was forced to look away. Materializing out of thin air, three gigantic ornate gates appeared before me and began opening. Behind the gates, I could see the shoreline of a new world not far away, and it dawned on me that what I was witnessing was the gates of the new Earth opening. Amazingly beautiful, I then noticed a countless number of souls, all of whom had been released from their sacrificial bondage to Uriel, migrating in droves towards the gates. Awakened from a deep slumber, they were singing and celebrating a return to life. The experience was breathtaking.

The sheer numbers of souls told me that Uriel had been on the rampage far longer than I'd realized, and all of Heaven seemed to be celebrating Uriel's release, who was now bathed in light, his chains dissipating as he spread his wings and stretched off the last of the darkness. The high-pitched melodies of the songs I was hearing in my journey had begun to physically affect Ms. Smith's drum, and the combination of the two was exquisite. Right before I ended my journey, I visualized the pentagram from my previous night's dream in the palm of my hand. Symbolically equating it with the coven's power, I blew into my palm and scattered the pentagram like sands on the wind. Thanking Uriel, who was beaming, it was the first time I'd ever seen him smile, and I felt his love wash over me as I returned to myself.

Ms. Smith clamored to know what had happened, remarking that her drum had never sounded so beautiful or powerful, and after I told her what I had experienced, she asked what I made of it all. Stating with certitude that humankind was on the verge of a spiritual awakening,

whether the prophesized “last days” or not, and although I didn’t yet understand the ramifications, I assured her that something big had occurred.

A pragmatist, I think that Ms. Smith was unsure what to make out of what I told her, but even more at a loss, when two weeks later, the Republican Party fell apart in such a way that you needed a scorecard to keep up with the scandals hitting the media. Although I am not trying to suggest that all Republicans are Satanists, as such an assertion would be silly, I do believe the material and spiritual worlds influence each other in their attempt to reach a balance of energies. As it says in the Bible; *As above, so below*, thus the timing between Uriel’s release and the emerging Republican scandals were, for me, more than academically interesting.

Changed by what I had just experienced in my journey in ways I had yet to comprehend, I decided that it was time to explore my family’s past in order to validate childhood experiences I was now remembering. From this point on, things were going to get very, very strange.

Down the Rabbit Hole

It was after my 40th birthday that I began being inundated with memories. Dreaming of the little girl whose father my family murdered when I was ten, I decided to see if I could find any information about them, but had no idea where to even start. Sarah suggested I start with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children site to see if I could pull up any files on missing children in Omaha, but discovering that the files only went to 1984, and I researching cases in the 1970’s, I hit a brick wall. In early January, I decided to call the center and ask for advice, talking with a woman who, having no viable suggestions, still offered to file a verbal report and send it to the proper authorities. Figuring there was nothing to lose, I told her all the

details I could remember, even those that had come through nightmares, expecting that would be the end of it when I hung up the phone.

Relating the experience to Brutus, his response was to angrily demanded to know exactly what I had said. For all intense and purposes, he freaked on the phone, and declared that I was in over my head, making barely veiled threats and loudly insinuating that I might want to reconsider what I was getting into. Bringing up BJ's nephew, he suggested that I'd had inappropriate contact with him when he was fifteen (which wasn't true), verbally exploring on the phone what would happen if such a thing came to light. Completely taken aback, I hadn't known that he even *knew* BJ, let alone anything about his family. Shocked by his reaction and what he was saying, I ended the conversation and hung up, immediately calling Tristan at work and relating the conversation to him. Pointing out that Brutus had been one of Alan Baer's dearest friends, Tristan suggested that notion that Brutus might have been more involved with him than we'd considered.

As I contemplated the situation, I began to consider a whole other tack on my past. Despite living in the same town, BJ and I had very little contact with each other, the primary barrier being our common past. Having gone our separate ways, I considered him part of the past I wanted to get away from. Having no trust for him, I knew him to be capable of anything, but after Brutus alluded to knowing BJ, I had come away perplexed, wondering what else I didn't know.

That February, I received a phone call from a Nebraska State Patrol officer. Incredibly polite, he explained that he wanted to ask me about some of the details in my verbal report, while giving me the impression that he might have something he hoped to flesh out. Only once did he

become agitated with me, when he asked me why I hadn't called the police myself. Explaining that I didn't think anyone would believe me, he demanded to know if I thought what I remembered was "real or not," his demeanor further indication to me that he knew something he wasn't revealing. After assuring him that what I remembered did in fact happen, he then told me he'd be in touch if he needed any more information and we hung up.

For the first time in my life, I had hope that something in my past might be substantiated, and I began trying to figure out what I could do to help, but after waiting two weeks and hearing nothing, I decided to call the Nebraska State Patrol back, speaking with the officer in charge of cold cases. Explaining that I had filed a report with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and had received a phone call from an officer whose name I didn't remember, I wanted was to find out who he was so I could speak with him. After getting the gist of it, the officer said he would be in contact as soon as he discovered anything, and we hung up.

Another week went by with nothing, so I decided to contact a local reporter who had just done a story on one of the abducted children back in the 1970's. Meeting him at a local coffee shop, I paraphrased my story, including the report I'd filed and my conversations with the officers. Before we parted, he asked if I had any objection with his contacting the Nebraska State Patrol, too which I said "no". Unlike the police, he actually called me back the next day, telling me that the Nebraska State Patrol had no evidence that I had even lived in the town where the crime was committed. Frustrated and confused, I called my old elementary school and had them fax my school records to both the reporter and I.

Becoming concerned that I seemed to be facing another cover-up at the hands of Omaha's finest, I decided to jump in with both feet and immerse myself in my own investigation.

Determined, I bought a video camera and began recording videos detailing my situation and uploading them on YouTube, trying to make sense of it. I filmed the first video outside my family's duplex in Fremont, where, in the basement, I was forced to light a man on fire. Bringing up Cindy's death as a possible connection to my family's misdeeds, I implored the public to come forth with any information they might have, posting both the Nebraska State Patrol cold case officer's contact number as well as the reporter's.

When I told our lawyer about my first conversation with the Nebraska State Patrol and briefly described the original crime, Shady was uneasy but assured me that if it came to dropping the case against my stepmother in favor of my investigation, he'd definitely allow it. I figured that a criminal case took precedence over a civil case, and didn't want anything to jeopardize any investigation, to which he agreed, wishing me luck.

Sarah was beside herself with what I was attempting to do, not because of our impending court case but because she'd come to the conclusion a long time ago that there was nothing we could do to achieve any justice for what had happened to us and now wanted only to forget and move on. Detailing her experience, she urged me to stay out of it, warning me that there would only be heartache and no one would listen. In retrospect, I probably should have listened to her because, in the end, she was right, but at the time however, I believed that exposing the crimes my father was guilty of was my duty as his son. I believe in generational karma, and as such, have always felt that the sins of the father fell upon the shoulders of the son. Knowing what I knew and my place in all of it being what it was, I felt that I had to at least try.

Tristan was totally against the videos, and felt that I should distance myself from my father and his family rather than involve myself in their misdeeds. Arguing that I was trying to

“fix the situation” in my typical messiah complex way, he tried to support me and understand my desire to somehow make good of my past, but he distanced himself from my video activities, agreeing with Sarah that no good could come of it. Ms. Smith, although she understood my reasoning, also had concerns, but explaining once again that it wasn’t her place to take sides, and admitting that she didn’t know much about what I was speaking about, we spent our sessions with her trying to help me to focus on coming to terms with the grief I felt over losing three family members in such close succession. Looking back, I can see what a handful I was.

The second video I filmed was more detailed than the first and I wrote it to better detail my position on the Internet and to give Ms. Smith a better idea of what I was up against. Exploring my past and the implications of my experiences, it was this speech that started things spinning so fast that, in the end, not even Ms. Smith would be able to prevent me from the beaten and broken man I would become within the next year and a half.

My drama pretty much started with this speech, which I had entitled, “You Need To Know Why I Still Need Help in Solving a Murder.” Attracting every nut case involved with my past, here is the transcript of that video.

I did a previous video entitled “I Need Help in Solving a Murder” in which I am seeking any information I can find on a man who went missing in 1976 or so after going in search of his missing daughter – a man, most likely a policeman, my family forced me to kill. It is difficult to explain the complexities of the situation in which I find myself, let alone in a 10-minute video, and I have never liked being in front of the camera, so added to the intensity of where I was and what I was saying, needless to say I was nervous. Hopefully, this will be better, although after I am finished, there are those who are going

to think that I'm nuts. Funny enough, I've been where you are, and that was exactly my mindset at the time. However, things change, and now for me it has become a question of whether or not I will do what I believe is the right thing, regardless of the consequences. After a lot of soul searching, I know unequivocally that there are times when one must stand alone if need be to do what he knows is right. Some things must be defended, especially those who cannot defend themselves, regardless of the cost. So with that, I want to explain why I think I have had to go to such extraordinary lengths to get a murder investigated.

As outlandish as this may sound, the real story behind the Franklin Credit Union, the biggest scandal ever to hit Omaha, was that in the 1960's and the 1970's, George H.W. Bush, Sr., head of the CIA during part of that time, was conducting secret experiments on the effects of extreme torture and fear on children in a funeral home in North Omaha – just one of the things happening to children disappearing during a rash of child abductions here in Omaha in the 1970's, abductions that are well known and yet have never been investigated, let alone prosecuted. I believe this is what prosecuting attorney Gary Caradori discovered when he and his 8-year-old son AJ were blown out of the sky. Funny enough, after his death, all of the investigations into what was happening in Omaha stopped abruptly.

It has been hard for me to accept that the very year I try to have this crime investigated, 100 police officers, an unprecedented number for Omaha and unfortunately the very people who could help, all suddenly retire. Two weeks before the police chief himself abruptly retired, President Bush himself was in town. I cannot help but feel that all of this is because they realize the same thing I do: that although hundreds

of reports police received regarding children being abused have disappeared, chances are the victims who made those reports haven't. And neither are they now children.

Chances are, people out there still remember the big white funeral home decorated in over-the-top Victorian décor, every room a parlor. They may even remember the closets leading to passageways and the terrible hide-and-seek game in which if you were found you were killed. The passageways were tunnels from so dark you couldn't see to so bright you were blinded. Children had a hard time thinking because they were so drugged and terrified of the screams of children being tortured somewhere beyond where they were hiding.

Perhaps some people remember the gatherings in Hummel Park where child after child was raped on the grand staircase. Or how the entrances to the north side of the park were blocked and the so-called Devil's Head was not so much a talisman as it was a lookout point on which you could see the traffic for miles in both Directions. Maybe they remember the scary band of drunken, drugged pedophiles and their cult-like behavior.

I remember recurring nightmares that I believed could simply not be real. But I'll bet this is a reoccurring theme in documents that no longer exist, especially considering the people I've spoken to who have had the same recurring nightmares. How is this even possible unless it is not a nightmare but a series of memories?

With as many problems as George W. Bush has in his presidency, to imagine that he wouldn't be concerned with a situation that could shift the debate of whether the Bush Administration tortures people to exactly how long he and his family have been practicing the art, and exactly who they have tortured before we had camps around the

world, seems unlikely. Neither Sr. nor Jr. was born president; they were born like the rest of us, so to speak, and therefore are subject to the laws of man, just like the rest of us, whether or not they ended up in positions of power. And though this may surprise them, they are definitely subject to the laws of God.

And to those who consider me a conspiracy theorist, let me ask you a question. Had I come to you ten years ago and told you that the Catholic Church would be almost bankrupt due to a conspiracy to protect, hide, and reroute hundreds of pedophile priests, what would you have said? More importantly, what do you know now? Interestingly enough, I have discovered that the Catholic Church was involved in Omaha, too, and allowed Boys Town orphans to be used by pedophiles not limited to Catholic priests.

The abduction of Todd Bequette is only one case illustrating the blatant absence of investigations into abductions in the 1970s. Todd was abducted at age 13 in the Old Market, a hunting ground for children at the time. Now an adult, Todd hasn't been able to get anything about his case, no paperwork of any kind, nothing about how the police did nothing, or about Terry Roy Holman never being prosecuted or even charged in Nebraska, or about how private detective Denny Whelan finally found him. It is as though he was never abducted. Todd and I have emailed a few times and he has told me that he does not believe his case has anything to do with the Franklin Credit Union. I believe he is right, but I have a feeling he and the children he was forced to lure have everything to do with the case I am speaking about. If nothing else, the Todd Bequette case is a big shiny red flag leaving me with the question of why – if so many children were being abducted at the time – why was there never any investigations into them, let alone prosecutions?

If the city of Omaha can afford to give such extravagant retirements to their police force, then surely they can afford investigations into such heinous accusations, especially considering how many accusations have been made. And to those Omaha officers receiving such generous pensions: surely you realize that this is unfinished business that happened on your watch, and that it is totally unfair to ask the citizens of Omaha to pay so handsomely for a job that wasn't done; and surely, in all the decades these allegations have been there to pursue, there was ample time to do thorough investigations. Alisha Owen was sent to prison for years after making allegations, so there must be some paperwork that can show what did and did not happen in Omaha involving child abductions and abuse. Whatever the case, I am sure that Omaha's finest will rise to the challenge and do what must be done. After all, for Omaha PD to not protect our children and to not prosecute those who abuse them is a major dereliction of duties and not the legacy anyone honorable would wish to leave.

I believe we as a society must stop this double standard of justice. Our leaders must be held accountable for their actions just as we the people they serve are held accountable for ours. What happened to me at ten has been called the rite of accountability, meaning you are forced to do a crime and can't talk. Otherwise, you'd be held accountable and go to jail. This is the rub. Now as an adult, I am doing this because I am holding myself accountable, and because I believe it's the right thing to do. I will not stop.

So Brutus, dear friend of Alan Baer of 35 years, it makes no difference how many death threats you send my way, I will not stop until I find healing and closure for those who have been hurt by this mess. I feel an obligation to do this. It is like I said in the card

I sent you: do not let old age overcome you before you make this right because if you do, I fear the consequences of your behavior will be Dire. As a man of God, you should realize that in the end God will not be denied. Your behavior pains me because I considered you a very dear friend. But judging by your threats, you are not only involved but have something to hide as well.

Hopefully, my next step is to set up a contest. If the police won't look into this, perhaps amateur investigators would like to try. One way or another, it will be looked at. We live in a different day and age; secrets are not as easily kept as they once were. And these allegations are far from new. What IS new is that they are being made by someone whose family was intimately connected. As strange as it may sound, I believe we are at a turning point in society, and to fight for the darkness is to be owned by the darkness. Like it or not, at one point or another, every one of us is going to face God.

I can't tell you who to call; I wish I knew myself. Maybe just send out the word and we can reach some point of closure in this together as a people. Funny enough, I really feel like God is with me in this, so any prayers you could offer that these people find closure, healing, and peace would be great. Thanks again – and I will most likely be seeing you later. Peace.

The Wonderland Polka

Within two months after posting the video, I was contacted by a woman on YouTube connected with a website devoted to the Franklin Credit Union and all of the conspiracies surrounding the failed bank. Explaining that her father had been a Hell's Angel murdered on an Indian reservation, she had many tales of government conspiracies that included black

helicopters targeting her house and phone lines, but after researching her story and discovering that there was some truth to what she was saying, I decided not to dismiss her. Considering what I was posting, I figured it was best not to judge and so I decided to check out the website she suggested.

Franklinfiles was filled with information that was posted onto a forum and also contained a chat area that encouraged survivors to communicate with each other. Introducing me to the nuances of the Franklin Credit Union case, it was on franklinfiles that I first saw Michael Aquino, an event that would bring my world crashing down.

Learning about the existence of MK-Ultra and its connections to the Franklin scandal, I discovered a plethora of leads, while at the same time, realizing that I wouldn't be able to do any kind of meaningful investigation. I still suffered from PTSD, and the effect that franklinfiles had on me is hard to explain, even now. Realizing that all of the craziness of my past was not only possible but probable, I would later come to see myself as some strange version of the Jason Borne character, as everything I had been taught as a child started to, for the first time ever, make sense. Watching Michael Aquino, the man in my dreams, parade around in his Merlin outfits on talk shows, and discovering how connected he still was to things I had told myself couldn't exist; I was no longer able to placate myself by telling myself that I was crazy.

Needless to say, the website triggered me. Bringing me so close to my past fed the paranoia I already felt on a daily basis, and I started to become irritated that I couldn't get anyone to listen considering there was so much evidence to back me up. Angry that I was having to go to such extremes to have my past investigated, in the beginning, franklinfiles was an outlet for me, allowing me to express myself and helping to relieve some of the stress.

Encouraging me to talk about my experiences, people like “desertfae” and “captain” offered their support as I began relating memories of my past to complete strangers, believing that the truth would somehow set me free.

The more I read about all the issues tangential to the Franklin Credit Union, the less it all made sense. That was until I discovered the Johnny Gosch case. A paperboy who disappeared in 1982 in Des Moines, Iowa, (one of several actually, supposedly with no connections to the paperboys who also disappeared in Omaha, not counting the two for which John Jubert was executed for), his mother had written a book entitled *Why Johnny Can't Come Home* (2000) detailing before and after events, and franklinefiles was aggressively dedicated to her quest.

Posing more questions than it answered, this case started to make me question everything in a new way. First, police had refused to investigate his disappearance from the very beginning, claiming that he was a runaway, despite the fact that he wasn't the only paperboy that had disappeared in the Des Moines area. Second, and probably more important to me at the time, Michael Aquino, the U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who is also the founder of a well-known Satanic church Temple of Set, was said to be connected to this case. Knowing that this man had been involved in (1) MK-Ultra, (2) the Presidio daycare “Satanic panic” scandal, (3) was personally involved with the Bush family, I began to think I might have to battle my nightmare man in real life.

Like everything else that surrounds Aquino and his friends, Johnny Gosch slid into the black hole of American memory. However, almost miraculously, the name Johnny Gosch returned from the dead years later under the pseudonym James Dale Guckert aka Washington, D.C. callboy Jeff Gannon. Discovering that a known prostitute had top clearance as

a Reagan/Bush media correspondent, and that no one knew who this man was or where he came from, (not to mention how he had obtained his clearance), it was during the hype of all this that the media suggested that he was none other than Johnny Gosch himself. After generating a great deal of controversy, it was determined that Gannon was not Johnny, but my question concerned the hype, and the timing of it. Reminding me of the smoke and mirrors the media used with the “famous three” concerning Franklin Credit, I wondered if the Gannon/Gosch story was another attempt to distract people from the truth of what had really happened here years before by associating it with ludicrous people in outrageous situations, making sensationalistic claims.

Taught as a child that if you control the perception of a thing, you control the thing itself, I began to see a pattern with concerns to those most well-known with the controversial events in Omaha. Take Aquino for example. A long career in the psych ops department of the military, with strong enough convictions in Satanism that he founded Temple of Set, along with his sordid history that could logically connect him with the nations “satanic panic” experienced decades before, he seems to have surrounded himself with people who accused him, not of ritualistically abusing children to commune with demons, but rather of being involved with aliens and alien abductions. Bouncing between touting his prestigious military career to defending himself from inane accusations, he promotes a victim like quality about himself, encouraging people to focus on those who persecute him rather than on Aquino himself.

The story of Johnny Gosch was also an example of this. Claiming that her son came back in his twenties, staying only long enough to tell her how he was hiding from the government, whatever the truth, it helped encourage the belief that the abducted children had somehow survived the trafficking ring they had come in contact with, an idea that was reinforced with by the Gannon story, which psychologically did the same thing. Talking about it, Sarah and I knew

one thing for sure: the lives of most of the abducted children were short-lived, as they were used up, murdered, and disposed of soon after. If Johnny Gosch somehow survived, he was one of the few, as the wealthy men involved in the local drug running and human trafficking ring had a history of keeping a strangle hold grip on the situation. Meeting Johnny's mother in person once, she suggested that he had gone to the other side and begun to work for his captors, but that never made any sense to me.

I continued making videos detailing what I'd gone through and posted a longer video on MySpace detailing the events that had happened in a densely wooded area called Hummel Park, which is isolated on the far edge of town, where many of the child sacrifices occurred. Ms. Smith spent hours listening to me relate what I was experiencing in my life, as well as what I was happening on franklinfiles, growing more and more concerned that I was getting involved with strangers whose intentions were unknown. Tristan felt the hours I spent at the computer were a complete waste of time, unconvinced that a bunch of strangers in a chat room could help me, but I was becoming addicted to learning as much as I could about child abuse and abductions in Omaha. Much of what I was hearing made no sense compared to what I knew to be true, and, verbalizing my befuddlement, I began to see the attitudes in the chat room change, not yet realizing that Tristan was right and that internet "relationships" were as manipulative and undependable as my family's mix of truth and lies.

People on franklinfiles encouraged me to contact a retired FBI man by the name of Ted Gunderson, who actually just died in 2011. Explaining that he had taken over the investigation into Franklin Credit Union allegations after Caradori was killed; desertfae gave me his contact information and urged me to call him. One of the first things he told me was that the CIA and

government were infested with Satanists who had attacked him with a microwave weapon. Coming off as a lunatic, Ted was nonetheless a wealth of information, so I befriended him.

Sending me a report he'd written detailing activities of a CIA-sponsored child abduction group known as The Finders, I was introduced to the *scope* of what my family had been involved with. Ted's assertion of a large, secret, and protected group of men who were networking to abduct children for a variety of purposes, from MK-Ultra to Satanic sacrifices, and making an inordinate amount of money from their activities, was believable. Reviewing the Justice Department figures concerning child disappearances on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children website, it was evident that something was devouring our nation's children in the shadows. However, I began to distrust Ted after it started to occur to me that the man was either completely inept, which I determined not to be true, or playing for the other side.

Beginning to realize that no one connected to the mess in Omaha seemed to be who they presented themselves to be, I found my concerns to be unpopular and I was eventually banned from interacting on franklinfiles. People who had expressed a desire to help me now began threatening and ridiculing me and I had no way to respond. Desertfae, in control of the website at the time and actually the one who banned me, often taunted me while encouraging others to talk shit about me, as she and her group did their best to discredit me, knowing I was unable to respond. Later, I would hear franklinfiles referred to as a "sponge site", designed to bring survivors forward, befriending them and encouraging them to talk, until reaching a certain point, at which time they turn on the survivors and do their best to discredit them.

I disbelieved the official version from the famous three, unable to accept that they could have such detailed information concerning their experiences in places like Washington, DC and

in the Bohemian Grove in California, but were completely unable to offer anything in the way of their own hometown. Relating incredible stories about Johnny Gosch, one even admitted to being involved with the kidnapping itself, afterwards becoming Johnny's friend, and hanging out with him on Indian reservations. None of it making any sense, I began to believe that it was no accident as to why all of the stories surrounding Franklin seemed so inundated with bullshit, as it was instead a deliberate attempt to keep anyone from getting too close to the truth.

Feeling angry and discredited, I redoubled my efforts, recording another video for YouTube and entitling it, "A Walking Tour through Pedophile Heaven - Omaha, Nebraska's Real Legacy." Filming a 30-minute walk through the Old Market area, up to the police station, and then over to the Run, I point out many of the places that were connected with the Franklin Credit allegations of child prostitution and abuse, showing how close in proximity everything was while demonstrating that there was no way that Robert Wadman and the local police department were unaware of what was taking place in town. Strongly implying that the whole thing needs to be reinvestigated, it can still be viewed on YouTube today, under "A Walking Tour of Downtown Omaha, NE".

It was on that Sunday morning that it dawned on me how my obsession with the franklinfiles had kept me from any real investigation into the abducted children in the Omaha area, and I decided it was time to confront the publicly involved personalities, like former police chief Robert Wadman and Michael Aquino. Feeling like I had been inducted into a war, I was willing to put myself on the front lines. Confronting Robert Wadman first, the following is a series of emails I had with him one day.

An Email Conversation with Omaha NE's Ex-Chief of Police

Robert,

I was very disappointed not to hear anything from you after sending you an email, so I thought I would try again. You see, my friend, I have tried to get my parents to take me to court about all of this over and over and over to no avail, so when I was told that you were eager to take people to court, I figured we could help each other out. I am willing to bet that I can help to make this happen, so let's just say that both of us have had a prayer answered.

I just wanted to let you know that the videos are definitely NOT the only thing I am guilty of doing. The communications I have had with the media, politicians, and victim advocacy groups have almost been daily, and now that I am involved with this to such a degree, it has pretty much taken over my life. You see, this time I know you don't have the Alan and Marsha Baer foundation money to think about since he's dead and out of the picture. So now, maybe we can get some real discourse about all of this. I mean, did you really think it was fair to send Mark Anderson, one of my dearest friends, and Walt Carlson, the man you all dubbed "The Pied Piper of Porn," to jail for years while not even giving so much as a slap on the hand to Alan and his sex with minors counts?

I have also sent everyone on a similar mission. You see, if they start looking at all that child porn being collected in Europe, we all know that they are not only going to see the eatery Stars (down in the Old Market) but especially in the child porn and snuff films they'll see The Hollywood – you know, the one Omaha tore down when all of these allegations came out. I'll bet you weren't betting on anyone remembering any of this. Funny how Ted Gunderson and his friends didn't know anything about it.

Last of all and probably most importantly, I've told people that the bodies of those children are buried in legitimate graves in Forest Lawn Memorial Park off of 48th street in North Omaha. I know you guys thought you were so clever about that, but let me ask you this (now that people know about it and are looking into it): exactly HOW are you going to retrieve what you left? IF you don't, you realize you're leaving it open for someone else to go and look. And I assure you, everyone is going to want to see.

This is the deal, Robbie: you all better deal with this before you draw your last breath because if you don't, you're going to end up right along with your savior and friend Alan Baer, who, by the way, won't be saving anyone's ass this time. Get your fancy clothes ready because one way or another, we are going to end up in court. Noreen Gosch is the LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES NOW, MY FRIEND. – By the way, you attack her one more time and I'll return the favor. You do have media where you live, don't you? So far, everyone has been really, really interested in this, so I bet the people in your hometown would find it equally so. Better call your lawyer now.

You want to deal with someone, threaten someone, or intimidate someone – well, here I am, Robbie. I'm listed, feel free to call. Just realize that I will be recording the call and sharing it with everyone when we are done. Things aren't going to go well for all of you with all of this, FRIEND.

I look forward to hearing from you. 712- 256-XXXX

P.S.

Also, Noreen Gosch – you remember, the mother you've been intimidating and harassing for trying to get answers for 25 years now about her abducted son – has nothing to do with this. I

am cc'ing her so she can see what I am doing. After I send this, I'll be sending it out to everyone else, but I don't feel you need to know who they are. That will be your surprise.

----- Original Message -----

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 10:55:26 AM

Subject: Re: Hey Robbie- its your old friend from Omaha again

Mr. D. Shur:

I'm sure you are aware that Alisha Owen was found guilty of perjury for the lies she told about Robert Wadman. These same lies are now being spread by Noreen Gosch. If she doesn't want to be sued, all she has to do is delete the lies about Robert Wadman from her web-site. She is a sad case, and the only reason she has not been sued is her pathetic position. Robert Wadman had nothing to do with any of the things she has experienced. If her lies are not removed, she will be filed against. Just ask yourself, why would she put my phone number and e-mail address on her web-page? If she wants nothing to do with this situation, all she has to do is stop spreading lies about me.

Dr. Robert Wadman

Professor

Criminal Justice Department

>>> d shur < 6/25/2008 9:59 AM >>>

Robert-

We are not speaking of Noreen. What I would like is for you to respond to my accusations. You realize that they only need to find *one child* in those graves to credit what I am saying. Whether or not Noreen Gosch is sad is beside the point. But since this was all going on and you were chief of police at the time, are you actually going to tell me that you have no idea what I am talking about? Really?

I'll bet I can prove otherwise or at least give it some help. By the way, when I told her that Sam was my boss and manager at The Stage Door, she was incredibly thankful. So you really think I am the only gay man left alive that remembers that? Really?

I look forward to hearing for you. And more than that, I hope that we can eventually meet in person because I would love to have people interview the two of us together. Doesn't that sound like fun?

D

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 11:13:17 AM

D

My phone number is (xxx)xxx-xxxx. I'm at my office and I would be glad to talk to you about the nonsense you are writing about. I have never been involved with any of the allegations you are making. Your writing appears to be a little nutty and I want you to know Directly from me how hurtful these lies have been to me and my family.

Dr. Robert Wadman

d shur < 6/25/2008 10:18 AM >>>

Robert,

I'll call this afternoon. I need to set some things up, but then I would be more than glad to talk with you. If you have never heard of any of these allegations, then how exactly have they hurt you? Neither Noreen nor most people know what I am talking about, so I have been very solid on sending out daily emails explaining all of this. I know: you all thought that if anyone would say anything about this they would sound nuts. But you know, I was told you were this evil big bad man who attacked at a moment's notice and your emails sound as if you are shaken. I bet I can help increase that.

I'll be talking to you this afternoon.

Look forward to it,

D

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 11:23:21 AM

D:

I won't be in my office this afternoon and you don't need to set anything up. I have been hurt because the lies about me have destroyed my consulting business.

Have a little courage and give me a call.

Dr. Wadman

d shur < 6/25/2008 10:25 AM >>>

Trust me, Robert, I have courage. But I also know that you are a game player. That's okay. I come from a family of game players. I am just not home right now. But trust me, I will be calling you. Have no doubt about that.

D

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 11:30:07 AM

D:

It is obvious that you don't have enough common sense to just call. Are living in a fantasy world with no real people in your life. Call (xxx) xxx-xxxx. I would be glad to answer any of your questions. If you don't have the courage to call, stop bothering me.

Robert Wadman

d shur > 6/25/2008 10:39 AM >>>

It is DEFINITELY not going to be that easy. We both know that I am not going anywhere, nor are the all the people that I have told.

Hmmmm. Babyland. Does this area in Forest Lawn sound familiar? Big joke, huh? Let's see if you keep laughing.

D.

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 11:44:08 AM

Even though your statements appear to be idiotic, I would be glad to talk with you at anytime. I have a search firm looking up your address and I will be in touch.

Robert Wadman

d shur <6/25/2008 10:53 AM >>>

Robert-

We both know that you are desperate to find out what I know. The problem for you is not what I know, but what I have told. I am not just some kid who found himself in this. I grew up with it. I know so much more than you are comfortable with.

I have told about everything, friend. Babyland** means something to you, as it should.

Funny- you don't seem to be full of threats with me. And calling me crazy might work with someone who isn't self-aware, but we all know you are fucked. This is all coming out, and as police chief, especially with your history concerning all of this, I don't think you are going to be able to separate yourself.

I will be calling you today.

D

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 12:42:46 PM

D:

I've tracked from www.xxxxxxxx.com/world/murderous-secret-need-be-uncovered-Omaha. They referred me to "GoDaddy.com" which is apparently your web-master. Give me a little more time, and you will be in contact with my attorney.

Robert Wadman

>>> d shur < 6/25/2008 11:51 AM >>>

You know, it occurred to me that you have my phone number as well. As far as your attorney, send the paperwork because I ain't gonna stop until we are in court. But I think I made that quite clear in my email – you know, the one you read on xxxxxxxxx. Also xxx. and myspace, and Noreen put it on her site at my request and won't take it down until I AM TOLD BY A JUDGE to remove it.

I am not afraid of you, dude. I know who I am. You do, too, I think.

Karma can be a real bitch.

D.

----- Original Message -----

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 12:54:59 PM

D:

I know you are in Council Bluffs and there are four different Shur in the area. I'm trying to get it narrowed down.

Robert Wadman

>>> d shur < 6/25/2008 12:07 PM >>>

Robert,

You have my phone number. Call the Nebraska state patrol guy, I'm sure he will help you.

Of course, I already have given everyone all of your shit, and emailed all of this correspondence to everyone.

You, my friend, are going to deal with me, and not the way you think, either. And if anything should happen to me, I have given everyone enough info to go ahead, as well as made hours of video tapes talking about it all. You do know that the Supreme Court has ruled that type of info can be used in a trial?

We live in a different day and age, dude. Do what you want and I'll make sure I bring it right to your front step.

D

----- *Original Message* -----

From: Robert WADMAN

To: d shur

Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 1:18:14 PM

D:

I've tried (402)333-xxxx. Is this the right number?

Robert Wadman

Robert,

Oh boy, now I can show that you got hold of my stepmother who has been dealing with this for about a year and a half now. She left me a message on my YouTube videos. I am sure you old friends have quite a bit to talk about, you and my dad being in the same child-killing cult.

Thanks. That's what I was looking for.

D

P.S.

By the way, my phone number is 712 256 xxxx, as I PLAINLY TOLD YOU IN MY EMAIL.

By the way, she already knows I'm not afraid of her. Maybe you should try calling your friend Alan. Oh wait, he can't help you.

**Babyland is the area in a cemetery named Forest Lawn where many of the children who were murdered found their final resting place, usually among the legitimate graves of other children. Forest Lawn cemetery is a five minute drive from Hummel Park, and many of the satanic ceremonies that I remember happened in the chapel that is in located on the it's grounds. Interestingly enough, the chapel was built by Freemasons, and much of the cemetery is designed to be a celebratory resting place for the group, complete with a huge statue of an erected Freemason who overlooks the acres of members. Virtually every headstone has one or more of the symbols signifying the practice etched onto it, and though I am not sure how I feel about the group as a whole, I found the Freemasons undeniable presence in a place where unspeakable atrocities occurred to be significant, but despite the controversy on the Freemason issue, Forest Lawn was nonetheless used as an incredibly efficient disposal system, as the dead were often simply cremated and disposed of.

On another note, after Gary Caradori conveniently crashed his plane in Robert Wadman's new jurisdiction in Illinois, (enabling Wadman to be the first one on the scene with no questions asked, even though he was one of the men Caradori was investigating), Wadman eventually sought employment in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he, once again a victim of coincidence, found himself ensnared by the same types of allegations that he experienced in Omaha concerning cult activity and child abuse, proof that a leopard doesn't change its spots. Causing quite uproar from what I understand, Wadman, as the only constant that connected the two situations together, was either a victim of strangers conspiring against him, or he is guilty of the claims against him.

Obamaha

My investigation lasting about a year and a half, it continuously got more intense, but I think I started losing hope of getting anywhere with it around February 2008, when Democratic candidate Barack Obama came to Omaha to solicit votes and I tried to elicit his help, figuring he was my only hope to get anyone to investigate any of this. The experience was so bad that I subsequently did a video for YouTube. This is that speech:

I generally try to stay out of politics but I have a question for Mr. Obama. I contacted your Nebraska campaign office the morning you came to Omaha about helping to get justice for a bunch of murdered kids. In my conversation with your campaign office, I asked that you view my YouTube videos "I Need Help In Solving a Murder" and "You Need To Know Why I Still Need Help in Solving a Murder." I also asked that you look at the BBC documentary "A Conspiracy of Silence," which is related to the situation of which I am speaking.

My question is, where do you get off telling the American people that you care what is happening to them when it took you less than nine hours to sell out getting justice for a bunch of murdered kids in order to further your political career and have Omaha named Obamaha for the day? In my opinion, your sell out denotes your sense of character, and your "change" movement just seems like more of the same, just packaged slightly differently.

You weren't late in getting to the Civic Center, although you took to the stage an hour and a half late. Your caravan arrived before the man got hit by the car and had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. I know this because – oddly enough – I was

standing in the driveway and had to move when your white van and car arrived at the 17th Street exit. So since you weren't late, obviously something delayed you from taking to the stage for an hour and a half. Our mayor knows that it is my opinion that he and his buddies are more interested in their multimillion dollar stadium and their \$55 million trolley system that they want to build than they are in getting justice for a bunch of murdered kids, especially murdered poor kids, ESPECIALLY considering that they were killed by rich pedophiles. In fact, I think that they would like it if this whole situation just went away so that it in no way hindered their \$55 million trolley system and multimillion dollar stadium. I also suspect our mayor knows that I believe that those murdered children deserve more than just having Omaha called Obamaha for the day.

Say what you will about me, I believe that the BBC documentary "A Conspiracy of Silence" should have been enough to at least give you pause. However, a sellout is a sellout. And to say you didn't know, that the Nebraska campaign office failed to tell you, is a bit more like George Bush than anyone should feel comfortable with. He was never informed, didn't know, never knew, wasn't responsible, and worked with an inefficient staff as well.

Mr. Obama, I think you need to understand that the American people can do more than just offer you their money and their vote. Who needs to make a public display of themselves when they are standing on the floor five feet away from the stage on which you are standing when there is the Internet and YouTube?

So my question again, sir, is this: Where do you get off telling the American people that you care what is happening to them when it only took you less than nine hours to sell out a bunch of murdered children in order to further your political career and have Omaha called Obamaha for the day? I know that these children were poor, but let me ask you: Don't you care about justice for a bunch of murdered kids?

The whole experience downtown at the Civic Center was peculiar, and one I will never forget. Tristan has always despised Obama and everything he stands for and he warned me not to waste my time, once again urging me to forego getting involved with my past. Declaring that I was becoming obsessed with my childhood, he complained that it was changing me in ways he didn't care for. Ms. Smith agreed with Tristan, pointing out that I had become increasingly angry, and having abandoned both my artwork and my spiritual practice, she feared I had embraced something she saw as incredibly dark. Disregarding their concerns, I felt I was only doing what I must; completely convinced I was doing the right thing.

So I stood out in the cold for hours, waiting to get into the Civic Center to hear Mr. Obama. Talking to a friend on my cell phone, I loudly complained about a large semi-trailer that kept circling the block with a huge picture of an aborted baby on it while watching a young mother in front of me as she had to keep turning her two children away each time it drove by. Irritated, I said loud enough for the crowd to hear me, "How nice it would be if we actually cared about the children that are here" and "If the men who cared about aborted babies spent time actually caring about those babies after they're born, we wouldn't be in the world we are in today," which elicited applause, the only bright moment for me, especially when the mother turned and thanked me.

After seeing Obama's caravan arrive, and the man who was hit by the car taken away by ambulance, they finally let us inside, giving us the choice to either sit in the stands or stand on the floor by stage. Choosing the latter, it was there when I was given an opportunity to notice how much Nebraska's leaders looked like mafia members. Coincidentally finding myself right in front of an area that they had chosen to take pictures, I saw a group of them talking while they all stared straight at me, giving me the impression that I was the topic of their conversation. None of them bothering to turn away when I was looked at them, I got the impression that their actions were somehow deliberate as we all stared each other down. Starting to realize Tristan was right and that I was wasting my time, I chose to stay anyway to see what Obama would say.

During his speech, Obama never once glanced in my direction, although one of his bodyguards stared me down the whole time from a second floor balcony that was directly across from me, though I actually didn't mind considering the guy was HOT. After listening to Obama promise how he was going to send everyone to school and solve global warming in his first four years, while expounding on other ridiculous promises he couldn't possibly keep, I left angry. Omaha being a small town it is, with the scandals of the past well maintained and hidden, I figured I had gotten the attention I did because my memories were a threat. Assuming that most of them had seen my videos online and, as a result, probably knew who I was, especially considering all the trouble I was trying to create, I began to admit that Nebraskan politicians would do what they could to keep what happened here in Omaha quiet, and that no one was going to help.

Everyday Life in Wonderland

It is easy to forget about God when you find yourself in the middle of hell, and I was no exception. Confused and struggling with who I was in relation to my past, I knew that I was changing, and not for the better. I'd spent a great deal of my life denying everything that had happened to me and had become quite comfortable being considered "crazy," though Ms. Smith argued I was no such thing. However, the more I learned about Omaha and the people connected with its nefarious dealings, the more I realized that what I remembered was not only possible but probable, and worse yet, it hadn't gone away but had instead grown in complexity and scope, and not just in my head.

The issues I was unearthing were so dark that those around me began urging me to get out of all of it, especially after one afternoon when Tristan and I received seventeen death threat calls on our answering machine. Message after of message of nothing but the sound of a heart monitor bleep, the numbers registering on our caller ID showed us that the calls came from a local hospital. At first, Tristan was convinced that our phone had gotten caught in some kind of computer loop, but after calling the hospital and being told that the number was one assigned for outgoing calls from room phones and pay phones, he changed his opinion. Realizing that someone had been calling our house and intentionally leaving the messages, Tristan's pleas to get out became more desperate.

I couldn't help feeling responsible for exposing the evil situations connected to my past, and that fighting this fight was somehow my destiny. This especially rang true when I discovered that one of the three murdered boys in the 1980's here in Omaha, (none of who were connected to John Jubert), vacationed with his family at the same lake in Minnesota on which my family had a trailer. Much of what I knew concerning the case of Ricky Chadek seemed to

point directly to my father and his friends, although, allowing Ricky and the other boys bodies to be found , given the efficient disposal system they had going, appeared to be some sort of message to someone, although what that was I didn't know. Gangs often leave the dead as a message to others, and knowing the collection of men behind what was going on were similar, if not identical, to thugs on the street, separated not in deed but simply by money, I figured that three dead boys was a message to quiet someone.

When I mentioned how Gunderson's report on The Finders indicated a group of people profiting from abducting children, Sarah told me to look up the case of an abducted 11-year-old in St. Joseph, Minnesota on October 22, 1989 named Jacob Wetterling. In two sketches of two different men, one of whom was believed to be the abductor, one of the pictures looked exactly like my father, while the other, although looking nothing like him, had on a hat that was an exact replica of the one my father always wore. Believing our father could be involved, she told me that she'd followed the case from its beginnings, having lived in the area at the time, but never knew who to tell.

The next day, I called the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and filed a report, afterwards calling the foundation the abducted boy's parents had created in his memory, telling them what I suspected. Asking me which picture I believed was the abductor, I told the woman which one, following up suggesting that the boy was abducted in a big blue truck – the utility truck my father drove all over the area as a Northern Propane gas man, which she confirmed was true.

I began sending out daily emails to everyone I could think of – media outlets, victim groups, anyone who might be able to help me. No one willing to help, all I found around me were those people who wanted to silence me.

Descending into a depression the likes of which I hadn't felt since I was a teenager, I was completely isolated in my search; spending most of my time interacting with the very worst society had to offer. Bombarded by chaos, I was becoming insolent and defensive, determined to get my father's activities investigated, while dead animals began appearing out of nowhere in our front yard, our cars were vandalized, and Ted Gunderson began to suggest that I was being intimidated with microwave weapons. Having discovered that the weapons of which he spoke not only existed but that the democratic national convention had considered using them at their convention one year, I was no longer able to dismiss his claims, as crazy as they sounded.

One night, a couple of Cindy's adult children began castigating me with vicious lies while in the chat room on franklinfiles, telling others how I had supposedly raped them in the laundry room of my father's house in Iowa and that I couldn't be trusted because I was a pedophile. Unable to defend myself because I'd been banned, I called Sarah and demanded that she get on the website and argue for me, which she did, pointing out to others that our nephew was high on pills. Talking to my niece that night, I told her that even though what her brother had said was a lie, it nonetheless suggested that events weren't what they seemed at my father's house.

The next day, my family went back onto the website and changed the story, saying I had not attacked them but had, instead, molested three boys in a corn silo. When that story proved impossible, they changed it to three boys molested outside of a town they lived in up in

Minnesota. Although the story kept changing, the argument was the same: I couldn't be trusted because I was a pedophile. Doing their best to prevent me from having their mother's death investigated, their stories, as usual, kept changing. (Four years later, after their father died, my nephew apologized to me for the pedophile lies, explaining that he was protecting my father's widow and it was the only thing he could think of at the time.)

Members like "captain" and "desertfae" kept making comments about people being microwaved, and the more sleep I lost, the more I began to wonder if they knew something I didn't. Having to contact the police more than once, "desertfae" told everyone that I was associated with a murderer (which I was, just not the one she claimed), while anonymous others told me that I was going to disappear. Tristan begged me to turn my computer off, or at least avoid frankliniles, but it was like an accident I couldn't turn away from.

The icing on the cake was when desertfae gave another member, who went by the name of "Luke J.", my family's social security numbers over the chat in the website the day after my family's accusations. Figuring they'd originated from my stepmother who'd given them to my niece, who, in turn, had given them to desertfae, I assumed that my social security number was among those given up and I was livid. Cindy's family was doing anything and everything they could to stop me. Luke, a well-known member of franklinfiles, claimed to be associated with the Johnny Gosch foundation, but the fact that he, when talking about Noreen Gosch, often became confused, referring to her at times in the third person, while others, often in the middle of the conversation, would switch to first person, (saying "I" instead of "her"), I began to believe that Luke was none other than the Noreen Gosch herself. She had become angry with me after I had begun to publically doubt the stories from those who claimed to be victims of the Franklin Credit Union, such as Paul Bonnoci, as well as another man who had claimed to be associated with

Johnny named “Jimmy”. Either crazy or playing on the wrong side, I had come to distrust Noreen and her claims that Johnny was alive and hiding on Indian reservations, and was angry that desertfae had given her my family’s social security numbers.

I filed a police report the day after, turning it over to the agencies involved with identity theft. Mortified that my father's family would go to such lengths to victimize me, although not surprised, it was then that I started having serious problems with anger and sleep.

The court case we had going against my father's widow had gone poorly, and both Sarah and I walked away feeling that we’d been duped. Sending us email after email, Shady explained to us that these things took time, and that he was having problems with my stepmother’s lawyer, who was coincidentally, our step mother’s cousin. At the end of our \$5,000 retainer, Shady produced my father's "will", but although my father's name was signed at the bottom, the signature was in my stepmother’s handwriting. Later, we both got a letter in the mail telling us that Shady’s firm no longer represented us and that if we wished to pursue this case any further, we would have to go to court immediately as the statute of limitations was due to expire at the end of that year. Sarah and I had both felt that Shady had played us.

Never having been able to force my father or his widow into court, I’d always hoped to be in front of a judge long enough to explain what I’m detailing in this book. Although I’d failed in that respect, I did succeed in what I had initially set out to do, as the fraudulent will was my proof that my father hadn’t lied when he told me that he had included us as beneficiaries. Years later, Tristan and I saw Shady on a flight back from Chicago, and judging by his reaction, we were correct in assuming he’d swindled us. Neither of us said a word, but immediately after we latched eyes, his look became stricken. I was already sitting on the plane while he, staring at me

as he got on, looked for a place to sit. Choosing a seat on the opposite row of mine, he sat a few seats back so that he could continue watching me. Tristan urged me to let it go, but I turned around and stared straight into his eyes, giving him a taste of the anger I felt toward him. A few minutes later, he lowered his head and, from what I could tell, spent the rest of the flight cowering in his seat.

It wasn't just my father's family that went into attack mode but complete strangers as well, and not just in chat rooms but in real life. Soon after the death threats on my phone, I was contacted via email and told that a man named Doc Marque wanted to speak with me. He lived in western Nebraska and had been involved with Satanism not as a victim but as a practitioner of the art, having written books detailing himself as an "Illuminati witch." It was during our first and only conversation that I realized that this man had written books about how he'd tortured people, including children, and yet here he was, free as a bird, gay as Christmas, and eager to proudly declare how he'd hurt children. Polite on the phone, we spoke about my situation, despite the images in my mind of reaching through the phone and decking him.

My inquiry was psychologically taxing and eventually I found it impossible to sleep or keep grounded, even with Ms. Smith's help. Child abductions, ritual abuse, satanic churches and Iran-Contra conspiracies, not to mention the death threats, were all difficult for her to believe. People were shying away from me, no doubt uncomfortable with my constant anger which would flare into rage at the slightest provocation. My voice, which is deep even in the best of times, had taken on stronger tones and inflections, and I knew that the intensity I was experiencing wasn't healthy. Ms. Smith assured me that it was a symptom of my childhood defense system while, during our sessions, she constantly tried to talk me down while patiently listening to my excuses as to why I found it impossible to control myself. Commenting that my

anger was like being run over by an emotional freight train, some sessions she just listened while I yelled about my frustration concerning the situations I was finding myself in and the fact that I, once again, felt powerless.

Everyone has a breaking point and mine came a year and a half into my investigation, when I had a "brief psychotic episode." Unable to sleep for two and a half weeks straight, I ended up going to my psychiatrist and begging her to admit me into a hospital. I'd spent the night before at Art's house in an attempt to try and sleep someplace else but couldn't. Looking me straight in the eyes the next morning, he told me that everyone was worried about me and that I needed help, commenting how unfair it was that I was putting those closest to me through such hell. Demanding that I drop the investigation, he hugged me as I left to go home, making me promise that I would seek help. Delusional, confused, and desperate to sleep, I went to my psychiatrist's office right after and she committed me that morning. Believing I was safe and away from everything, the strange events of my present would follow me into the hospital regardless, when an implausible coincidence occurred.

Breakdown

The weeks before my breakdown were awful for Tristan as well as those closest to us. Horrified, he had no idea what to say or how to help and spent much of his time on the road worrying about what was going on with me, unable to do anything other than watch me descend into madness. Gunderson insisted that a microwave weapon was being used to inundate and silence me, possibly from as close as a neighbor's house, and all I knew was that I couldn't sleep and was losing the ability to determine what was real and what wasn't. After a week of no sleep, I tacked up tinfoil in a room as well as wearing it over my ears in an attempt to drown out the

ringing in my head that had begun a month before. Later I was told by an ears, nose, and throat doctor that the ringing was caused by TMJ and arthritis in my jaw. Under a huge amount of stress, I had been grinding my teeth constantly and the pain had radiated into my ears in the form of a kind of tinnitus, but at the time, without the rational balance that a good night's sleep provides, I was unable to escape the growing paranoia that I was under attack.

Disheartened to find myself in a mental hospital for the first time in my adult life, I agreed with Tristan that we had arrived at the lowest point in our relationship. At my request, he kept my hospitalization from the majority of our friends, as I found it humiliating, and although Sarah could have sung a resounding chorus of "I told you so," she simply expressed how grateful she was that I'd checked myself into the hospital. Drugs helped me sleep and I began putting myself back together a couple days later, but having lost thirty pounds with huge black bags under my eyes, I had been shaken by the whole ordeal,

Concerned that I was experiencing some sort of schizophrenia, the staff was taken aback when Tristan and Sarah assured the staff during a family therapy session that I was indeed pursuing an inquiry into satanic ritual abuse and government conspiracy. Sarah related a few of her own experiences and she and Tristan expressed their concerns; not that I was crazy but that what I was dealing with was so negative and destructive that they were afraid it would completely consume me. Alone at home too much, due to Tristan's job requiring him to always be on the road; they both had become concerned that I had become self-destructive by clinging to a situation that was obviously killing me.

Tristan struggled to do anything he could do to cheer me up, and I started to honestly accept responsibility for the effects my behavior was having on those around me, especially him.

Finally convinced to "give up the ghost," I determined that my focus should be on those who loved me rather than on a situation that seemed to have no foreseeable conclusion.

Everyone on the ward knew what I was dealing with, given that I'd spoken about it in group therapy. I'd become irritated with my doctor thinking I was "delusional" (at least before the family meeting), knowing I was correct about Omaha being a Satanic ritual abuse capital. The staff, however, was skeptical and disbelieving, making me belatedly sympathize with Sarah's isolation when she had, all alone, come to terms with our childhood years before. Apologizing for being so mean to her at the time she needed support the most, I had begun to understand the resistance I'd felt for so many years whenever the past came up, as well Sarah's determination not to get involved now. Honestly admitting that I was in over my head, it was when I decided to cut the strings that an implausible coincidence occurred.

A few days into my stay at the hospital, a woman was admitted with the last name *Gosch*, who introduced herself to Tristan and me as Noreen Gosch's ex-husband's niece. I couldn't believe the coincidence, and though it seemed like a strange twist of fate, after what I'd just gone through, I couldn't help wondering if it was some sort of set-up. Never once considering that I had been investigating the Gosch family and suddenly, here was a member of the same family, who just happened to be in the same hospital and the same time as me, the hospital staff seemed to disregard the coincidence.

Telling us that Johnny had indeed been a runaway, she told us that Johnny had lived with extreme physical abuse, contradicting everything his mother had purported. Talking over pizza that I asked Tristan to bring to the hospital, she told us about her family and why she felt that all situations concerning her cousin were a reflection of the craziness that was part of his mother's

psychological makeup. Of course, what were the chances of running into such a person in such a place at such a time?

I was in the hospital for a week. Tristan had taken down the tin foil, and I took off the net all of the videos and writings detailing my past the day I got home, feeling disheartened by my failure but believing that those closest to me deserved my time and energy more than a situation way over my head and beyond my ability to resolve. Feeling as if I had failed God, my dad, and worst of all myself, I was humiliated by my instability. I began to review my life, desperate to find some semblance of myself in the chaos I'd experienced., and started to reach out those friends I'd abandoned during my investigation, including BJ.

Rekindling BJ's friendship became important after I got out of the hospital, as I had been left with a need to rediscover who I had been in the past and BJ was probably the only person in the world, other than Tristan, who knew me best. I called him after years of not speaking to him, and after he asked me if everything was all right, I explained to him it wasn't, expressing that I missed our friendship dearly. Apologizing for abandoning our friendship and lashing out at him during the years we'd been apart. I told him that I loved him and we made plans to get together later that week just to see how things went.

Released from the bondage he'd grown up under with his mother and Alan Baer, the Prince of Temptation had settled down, finally getting what he had always been searching for: a family. His wife was a wonderful woman, strong-willed and intelligent, and their perspective daughters seemed like well-adjusted women themselves. BJ and his wife had adopted children and seemed like a version of the Brady bunch – a houseful of kids being raised by parents who

loved each other dearly. The love we felt for each other as brothers was undeniable, and we resumed our friendship as if nothing bad had ever occurred.

Able to sleep but overwhelmed with a debilitating depression, back to being alone while Tristan was constantly on the road, I sank deeper and deeper into despair, feeling as if I'd been abandoned by God. Despairing over having lost such an important battle, I spent hours crying, convinced that my failure was unforgiveable. Over identifying with all the victims involved, my father who had wanted to come clean, not to mention my siblings and me- I felt like I had let everyone down.

Concerned, Ms. Smith called my psychiatrist and asked that I be readmitted to the hospital. Susan felt that I was under spiritual attack, given that she too had had her own childhood experiences with Omaha, and urged me to begin my spiritual practice again while Art counseled me to return to a church of some sort. No longer isolated like I was the first time in the hospital, I reached out to friends and family and finally got a handle on my depression with the help of antidepressants. Nothing weird happened the second time I was hospitalized, and I was lucky enough to have my own personal psychiatrist work with me, which made all the difference in the world. However, following Susan's advice, I took a shamanic journey shortly after getting out of the hospital.

Rising Above Wonderland

Raised as I was, I have always been aware that human beings are moving towards something spiritual, and because I believed in the belief of a satanic version of Christian "last days" Tribulation, it was easy for me to see a takeover by a rich and powerful group. Good at compartmentalizing my thoughts and emotions, I do it instinctively, as it was how I was taught to

survive. However, I had begun to admit that I was no longer afraid that I was a bad guy and had actually started to see myself as Ms. Smith saw me: a normal human being who has had some incredibly abnormal experiences.

After getting out of the hospital the second time, I'd come to accept that life was rarely fair, but although there may not have been much justice on this side for the children I'd been fighting for, spiritually I had experienced a karmic sense of balance on the other side. Needing to know where he ended up, I did a journey in order to find out about Alan Baer.

I found myself on top of a mountain confronted by the most mesmerizing blackness I had ever seen. Hypnotic, this *living darkness* was calling to me in a way impossible to resist, and had God not turned me from its gaze, instructing me never to return to this place, I might have been claimed that day. A black hole of spiritual nothingness, its call was impossible to resist, and I knew that this darkness was claiming those who have chosen to share its nature the minute they exhale their last breath. Coming face to face with TRUE darkness, those involved with past events will find themselves on that mountaintop and be taken as Alan was taken.

After leaving that place, I was given a bird's eye view of people I'd known and what had happened to them once they'd crossed over in death. Powerful and hedonistic in life, they had been consumed by their own hellish desires while still alive. My mother had endured years of physical torture, in and out of the hospital; my father, surrounded by ghouls waiting anxiously for him to die so they could materially benefit from his death; Alan, who had died from the inside out with people calling after his death to tell his widow how happy they were he was dead; Kevin Dobson living out his last days as a quadriplegic, etc.– many of them had already “got theirs”.

I recognized that God's justice is in many ways more exacting *and more exact* than anyone on earth could devise. When I had become so depressed that I had to return to the hospital that second time, I couldn't resign myself to the fact that, on this side, evil generally wins and good has little power over events. I'd been so obsessed with bringing justice to the front steps of the guilty, never once considering that it might not be my place to do so. As it is written, *Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord.*

Not understanding that the real reason I'd driven myself crazy was to open myself up and break myself down so that I could be rebuilt; experiencing a real life dismemberment journey in the process, I was still changing. Although I had discovered that my place in the scheme of things hadn't been the one I thought, as I was only one person and no man is an island, as the poet John Donne wrote, the important part for me was that I nonetheless had a place, and it was reclaiming this big picture perspective that helped me to regain my faith along with the balance I lacked for living life.

Returning home to Tristan and my studio, I returned to my artwork and spent the following year trying to forget the events that had led to my breakdown, processing the past and trying to make sense of it

Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA)

On Friday the 13th in March 2009, Yahoo ran a pop article about some of the history behind Friday the 13th. At the bottom of the article was a link to another pop article at LiveScience.com entitled "Top Ten Conspiracy Theories" by Benjamin Radford, managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine. Among the top ten conspiracy theories, Satanic Cults were number 9, in itself a number favored by Satanists and occultists of various persuasions. The

article quoted Phillip Stevens Jr., associate professor of anthropology at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who claimed that the satanic cults in the 1980's and early 1990's "constitute the greatest hoax perpetrated upon the American people in the twentieth century." Radford then adds that no proof of satanic activity has ever been proven, his evidence being the sensationalist claims of people like talk show host Geraldo Rivera.

Rivera's October 22, 1988 show "Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground" ended up being nothing more than bad journalism convincing Americans that satanic ritual abuse (SRA) was a hoax. Not the first time Rivera flopped, it however lacked the originality of his show two years previous, when he broke into Al Capone's empty vault on live national TV.

Claiming there is no proof is inaccurate with regards to the McMartin daycare case in which 1,200 children from McMartin, along with several other daycares in the area – (including a Long Beach Catholic church conveniently downplayed in the news) – claimed they had been victims of SRA. The fact that no convictions stuck doesn't mean it was simply "Satanic panic," considering that after the trial, forensic archeologists were given three days to excavate the area, at which time they found tunnels and rooms containing Satanic relics. Indication that the children had been telling the truth about the rites they had testified to, they exemplified the issues that the trial hadn't wanted to address, not to mention begging the question as to how and why these tunnels remained hidden until after the trial?

How did so many children, in different parts of the nation, come up with the same claims around the same time, and more importantly, for what purpose? Why would parents subject themselves and their children to public scorn? Blaming it on the therapists who reported the issues and claiming they were guilty of crafting an "elaborate hoax" to bring down a bunch of daycares makes no sense, especially when you consider that it happened before the Internet. The

most elusive version of a Bin Laden in this country's history, no one has EVER found the person or persons, guilty of creating the panic in the first place. Eager to put it in the past, a government lockdown ensued on the issue, and historically, people have lost their careers trying to push the issue, indicating that our "Satanic panic" was indeed a nationally crafted hoax, but not in the way people think.

The False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF) is invaluable when it comes to dismissing the possibility of SRA from the public mind. Of course, some of its early funding originated from the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), with founding FMSF members connected with the NAMBLA board itself. Like they say on *Southpark*, "Dudes, you have sex with children."

Many FMSF theories presented in court cases as "expert testimony" for the defense have been since been disproved, as studies have shown that drugging and traumatizing a child does affect their brain and its ability to remember exactly. FMSF involvement in marginalizing the SRA issue should at least be suspect, not just given its NAMBLA conflict of interest, but that such a group felt necessary to form in the first place. Why has it been necessary to spend so much time and money on something that has been deemed a hoax? Unless, of course, they know something the rest of us don't.

Most harmful to victims of RA (ritual abuse) and SRA (Satanic ritual abuse) is Kenneth Lanning's "1992 FBI Report – Satanic Ritual Abuse." Of course, taking the FBI seriously is suspect in itself, as is expecting the FBI to investigate itself, as in Lanning's report. Considering that the man wasn't even part of the FBI at the time, comparing his report to Noblitt and Perskin's *Ritual Abuse in the 21st Century: Psychological, Forensic, Social, and Political Considerations*, I found that the issues are not as cut and dried as our government has tried to

present.. Noblitt is the clinical psychologist Director of the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services in Dallas, Texas, and Perskin the Executive Director of the International Council on Cultism and Ritual Trauma. Both are experts on what is actually a complex psychological issue, not “Satanic panic.”

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has said that a child is abducted every 43 seconds, meaning roughly 800,000 children a year, or eight million in a decade-numbers that were tabulated by our own justice department. Indication of an obvious problem, with numbers of children so great that they overshadow the Holocaust, why don't we, as a nation, know more about this problem within our borders, and why does the media always associate human trafficking with third world countries while downplaying our own numbers? It is undeniable that the media exploiting one dead child at a time is effective in distracting the nation's attention from a problem that our government has known about for decades, but it begs the question why? Considering that groups in Europe are starting to demand to know what is happening in our secret CIA camps over there, and most of the people are not even aware we HAD secret CIA camps, it is not improbable that our government, and those connected to it, are guilty of doing secret things within our borders. Knowing that there is a great deal of money to be made from human trafficking, and considering how much money was being made in Omaha in the 80's , at a time when there were no computers, it is an indication that all of this was well funded and certainly well protected.

In a way, the SRA issue, and its history, relates to all of these issues. The truth of the matter was that our America leaders at the time brought over a bunch of Nazi scientists after the war and let them continue on with their research here, hoping that it would help us win the cold war. They did so because their research was producing results, which is why we have continued

with the programs, although constantly changing the names, while producing people like Aquino and his ilk. Once denying that our American government tortures people, those same leaders have gone on to proudly say that they would do it again, claiming that history will be their judge. Having been in control for decades, either directly or behind the scenes, the same group of leaders has become incredibly rich and powerful, proving over and over that they are capable of anything. All of them a bunch of Rupert Murdocks in their own way, it is not hard to believe that our government, and our rich, are capable of influencing our media, thus controlling the population's perceptions. Something obviously happened, at least here in Omaha, and you only need to examine the history and follow the money to discover who was behind it. It is as Arthur Conan Doyle wrote; "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

Leaving Wonderland

What if these are the fabled "last days" prophesied by mystics and prophets? As Matthew 24:6-7 says:

And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

Sounding like the nightly news with all the reports of fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and flood after flood, as they report on the impending extinction of the oceans due to overfishing and global warming, it's easy to see how someone might view the present in a Biblical way. Taught that we are living in prophesied days, but never wanting to think about it much, I have always

chalked it up to millennial hysteria, trying to dismiss it at that. However, believing in self-prophecy, I began to wonder what the effects would be if our leaders were apocalyptic in thought and belief.

Since the 1960's, it could be said that American leaders have been leading the nation toward apocalypse. One percent of the population now owns over 98% of the nation's wealth, acquired primarily through backroom deals. Historically, when this happens revolution occurs, but dumbing down the schools with No Child Left Behind and controlling national liberty with the Patriot Act, has made many of the population to ignorant to grasp the concept of totalitarianism. Constantly fanning the flames of fear for the public, our media distracts us with a tragedy of the week, never once mentioning that every immigrant in Mexico seems to be able to make it over our borders but the only terrorists that have made it here either already lived here, or are the ones we trained to fly planes. Many of us know more about the Kardashians than we do our own government, seriously limiting the number of leaders who could lead at a time of dissent.

I assure you that our government and its leaders are aware of the concept of millennial hysteria, and it makes no sense that they wouldn't have taken some sort of preventative measures to ensure they could keep control if anything should happen. Let me remind you of George Bush Jr. and the time he took over the Whitehouse. The man continuously spoke of he and his group as if they were the right hand of God, always talking about their convictions that God was on their side, even after a young Christian man, who helped them win the election, quit almost immediately after being given a position at the Whitehouse, claiming that George Bush Jr and his posse were "apocalyptic" in belief. If this is true, working within the framework of that belief, it could explain why America is in the position it is today, unless of course you believe that it has

just been a random series of events, nothing more than bad luck, which has brought us where we are as an American society today. Obviously a result of our leadership and the choices made within that leadership, baring the fact that they are completely inept, my questions is whether our leadership could have deliberately lead us to where we are today?

Psychologically, none of us have any clue what will happen when the clock runs out in 2012, when all of our ancient prophecies are at an end, although it is not 2012 that I fear but the years after. Dwindling resources with an exploding population, the systems seem to be breaking down at the moment, and the rich, who have the most control, also have the most to lose in all this, and although they are unable to control the weather, or natural catastrophes, barring an act of God, I believe that they would rather burn the world down rather than ever lose control of it.

It is my observation that our population has become disconnected from family and community, and in a myriad of ways, we have alienated ourselves from ourselves, despite social networking on the net. The media, as our propaganda machine- whether intentionally or not, celebrates narcissism, apathy, and hedonism. Watching death and scandal marketed on the news, stress and an endless onslaught of life's indignities absolve us of personal responsibility, and cynicism seems to reign. Clinging to God, having little left to loose, everyone seems to have a gun, and no one seems in control, much less our leaders.

On one thing I'm certain; Jesus and his angels are not going to break from the fifth dimension and save us from that which we have wrought ourselves anytime soon.

Taught that it would boil down to control in the end, considering how heavily involved in world matters Aquino and his friends were, and the fact that they all seemed to be brilliant, if

anyone would know it would be them. Of course, any fool sees that such belief goes hand in hand with the belief in Satanism, so, in the end, take it for what it's worth.

Millennial Reflections

Taught by men who wanted to know what it literally means to be “made in God's image”, I have learned that spirit is intelligent and creative, and can be harnessed when focused. Removing the mysticism, Quantum Physics teaches us that life can also be viewed as a series of energy frequencies, which, when perceived properly, can be influenced. Electricity is a good example of this process, and just as we channel it into our homes to power our appliances, life's energy works within and around us doing the same thing in our lives. Much more than a hypothetical exploration into life's mysteries, I believe the training I experienced was focused on discovering not only the literal meaning behind the power of life, but more importantly, doing so in a such a way that provided definitive results that could lead to practical application

This is some of what my family's friends were looking for I believe. Any social worker can tell you that an abused child often becomes hyper vigilant of his surroundings, and I think they wanted to know what would happen if they took that to an extreme. Exploring the survival instinct while influencing our innate abilities to perceive the world around us, it was the first and only time I ever met face to face with Noreen Gosch and John DeCamp, that he would give me the word I had been searching for. Staring uncomfortably at the floor, he suggested what they were trying to create was a group of “psychic warriors”, trying to dismiss the idea even as he said it out loud. However, he was right- they is EXACTLY what they were doing.

My life has been a series of levels that I have had to process before I could accept what I was dealing with. For years I dealt with memories of physical abuse, but it wasn't until my mom died that I was able to face the sexual. Dealing with the sexual, it was only after my father and sister died that I could bring myself to face the satanic aspect, and even then it was limited. It was trying to comprehend that my father's skeletons had been connected to something so vast that put me into the hospital, but in time, I had to accept that as well. This process of acceptance has been a constant since then, and as a result, as you can tell, I didn't exactly remove myself completely from what I was doing before I had my breakdown. It was when I started to grasp the concept that what Aquino had taught me was not only real, but that he had been right in believing that it worked, and began to realize that it was due to the lessons I learned as a child that helped save me as an adult, that became the complete game changer for me.

The fact is that Aquino and his friends are perfect exemplifications of the fact that rituals are believed to work in greater ways than in just the indoctrinations of its members. Why else would they be so secret? Dismissed in the same context that we dismiss the Freemason group, although they are the first, largest, and most secret group in American history, whose top echelon consist of the world's richest men, the Temple of Set is not the only example validating the fact that our nation's rich and powerful believe in the power of ritualistic practice. Unable to fall into the same category of conspiracy theory that the Freemasons are afforded, California's Bohemian Grove is a testament to the fact that our rich and powerful adhere to secretive ritualistic practice. A playground for the super-rich and powerful, its borders are protected as fiercely as is the secrecy of the rituals practiced within. Virtually invisible to the general population, its existence is nonetheless well established, and is known to have housed virtually all of our presidents at one point or another, as well as many of our nation's leaders. With

regards to the history surrounding the Bohemian Grove, it has been suggested that governmental policy has often been determined during its annual celebration, which breaks treaties as well as totally disregarding the nation's constitution and laws of the land.

Whatever the case, the practice of rituals is well known to occur here, and although they remain steadfastly secret, they have been dismissed as nothing more than frat boy antics. Nixon once inferring that the place was too homosexual for him, no one really knows exactly what happens at this place, but the fact that it exists, and in pretty much complete secrecy, is undeniable. Not to digress however, my point is that I am far from the only person who believes in the power of ritual, and Aquino, satanic founder of Temple of Set, who is well known to have often been in attendance at the Bohemian Grove, as a past teacher of mine, definitely has an appreciation for the art. This is not a secret.

Many of today's Christians seem to be hell bent on literally interpreting the Bible, but rarely bother to consider the question as to whether demons actually exist. Comfortable keeping the thought ambiguous, it is a question rarely considered, as it is believed that communing with such beings is impossible, although Jesus Christ preached otherwise. Having been raised to believe, it still took me time to admit what had happened to me, both in my past as well as spiritually, had actually happened, and was real. Unable to dismiss my childhood any longer, it took even longer to reach a point where I was able to allow myself to contemplate the larger implications of my experiences and what they may have had on events surrounding me.

Aquino's school of witchcraft was no Hogwarts, and I was regarded as nothing more than a host. Opening me through trauma, teaching me abilities I may never have had otherwise, all this was done in preparation for an event they believed was in my future. Helping me to become

hyper vigilant in a way that allowed for a much stronger consciousness of my surroundings, it was through their activities that forced me to focus on the world within. Forcing my mind to expand, I was given the ability to think in ways far outside of the box, and I thank my experiences in Satanism for leading the way to my Shamanic practice.

A brilliant man, with strong convictions, Aquino can in no way be considered crazy, nor can any of his associates. However, although they learned how to strongly influence conscious choice, they were unsuccessful in eradicating it. Opening Pandora's Box, they never considered that I would take what they taught me as a child further than they could control as an adult, and working within the context of Shamanism, was thus able to transform myself from a host into a doorway. Teaching me that the fallen exist and that human beings can commune with them, it never occurred to Aquino and his friends that I might help them cross back over rather than manipulating them for their power, obviously disregarding God's promise concerning the concept of choice.

In my journeys, I have seen that Uriel being embraced back into Heaven has changed everything, encouraging hope where it wasn't before. No longer having any doubt as to whether what I experienced was real, I have also seen the significance with regards to the energy of the upcoming planetary alignment that the Mayan's referred to, as our solar system as a whole aligns with the heart of Ophiuchus. Unable to dismiss the coincidence of its timing, I have come to believe we are in the Tribulation, (although I don't think that Jesus is returning to Earth, but rather we are going to be taken back to God). Regardless of what you believe, however, the one thing we all can agree with is that we are all eventually going to die

I am convinced that we are in a period of great spiritual judgment, and that this tribulation is calling souls to awaken. Once using Burke's observation "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing," as a mantra, I have come to appreciate the value in the phrase: *Let go and let God*. Although Aquino and his associates were right about many things, they were wrong about one, however. Always given a choice- how we live our lives will either move us toward a new world or thrust us further into the palpable darkness that lies between this world and the other, a fact none of us, regardless of how rich or powerful we may be, can escape.

Deluding themselves with their own sense of power, Aquino's group's main problem is their tunnel vision, which helped to convince their group that they would be able to a master control while they put their plans in place. No one truly able to thwart the will of Heaven, they toyed with power that was never theirs to play with, and based on the specificity of their rituals, are going to be judged accordingly. Binding themselves to something they shouldn't have, they made their choice consciously, and now face being claimed spiritually by the same darkness they so willingly offered their souls too.

With regards to all of the made-in-God's-image platitudes and our responsibility as individuals, the question has always been what to *do* with them? Abide in faith, hope, and, greatest of all these, love. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love your enemy as yourself. Forgive yourself as well as others and do better next time. Give praise. Judge not lest ye be judged. Vengeance is mine, sayeth the lord. True today as it was two millennia ago, but worthless in our lives if it's not continually practiced, as it is our responsibility to seek out the truth.

Giving us each of us a choice concerning our own personal redemptions, Aquino and his friends still have that chance as well. Consisting of two components, they can choose to save themselves by bringing this all out into the light and trying to make it right, or, they can choose to be claimed by the darkness they helped to create, pure and simple. Darkness in which, due to their vigilance, as they were promised, they will be given prominent regard as special pets of that which resides within dark. Regardless of their choices however, balance is already being spiritually restored, and no ritual or incantation is going to change that.

A Message to Survivors

Because of the torture we underwent as children – whether under the CIA’s Artichoke/MK-Ultra program, ritual abuse, or satanic ritual abuse – we were broken in ways we will never get back. Well into my forties now, I still grapple with residual fear and paranoia. Spending a good deal of my life hiding, when I wasn’t hiding I was running, most of all from myself. Having tried everything possible to escape the memories of what happened to the child I once was, there comes a time when a person can no longer run from the darkness that surrounds and permeates them, and I finally reached that point. To ascend to heaven, one must first descend into hell to name the demons and lay them to rest. The story of Jesus Christ teaches us this. With the help of a fantastic therapist, I gleaned what I could from what had happened to me in order to escape the continual hell I was unconsciously creating for myself.

The most important thing to remember when working to release ourselves from shackles of childhood is that *the past is the past*. And regarding MK-Ultra, RA, and SRA, it is crucial to know that they only picked the brightest to go through their training and programming. Sadly, many children did not survive, but many of us did. Bright enough to adapt to everything they

threw at us, our survival is a testament to the brilliance residing within us. This is fundamental. When I looked back, I understood that in many ways I was smarter than my handlers/trainers. The horrors they put us through were designed to stimulate the dormant part of the brain that would lead to psychic abilities and in so doing they taught us to do things that they themselves remain incapable of doing. We can look within and trust our intuition with that *knowing* side inside of us. They opened a part of our minds that they couldn't control, a part that gets stronger as we mature, and especially when we finally make our past conscious, enables us to draw from the wisdom and use it.

Their most effective tool being fear, they taught us to be afraid of everything and everyone and not to trust. However, controlling a person with fear rarely works forever, and the more one tries to dominate with such tactics, the more the human spirit resists. Inevitably the victims start to feel contempt for the perpetrators. Contempt breeds anger, anger feeds thoughts of rebellion, and eventually all heaven breaks loose. Given that what we experienced was internal and mental, we must remind ourselves that the revolution we're involved in is a *mind* revolution, while we learn to fight the urge to turn the fight onto ourselves, instead focusing it outward where it can still do some good.

In the past, there has been nowhere to go and no one has been willing to listen. Not able to really focus what we had experienced in any way that could make a difference, we've been shunned, ridiculed, dismissed, and ultimately ignored by most of society who has been hoodwinked by the media into believing that our government couldn't possibly be guilty of such things, taught that such memories are a "conspiracy theory." History, however, is cyclic, and has a way of returning like a dog to its vomit, and finding ourselves in the era of Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib and Bagram, we must also admit that we are no longer children, and, more

importantly, we have a voice. More importantly, for many of us, the talents they strove to elicit in us have grown in sophistication, and now, as adults, we are not only able to recover, but many of us have a passion to help others. I feel that, knowing what we do, it is thus our responsibility to prevent similar torture from happening to others.

I believe that the reason why MK-Ultra, RA, and SRA survivors are waking up from their nightmare now is because humanity is on the verge of a spiritual revolution. For the first time in thousands of years of human history, general consciousness is expanding to encompass the *human bond* binding us all, a bond that supersedes family, nation, religion, or race. What they did worked, succeeding in making us more conscious human beings.

Occasionally, Sarah and I talk about our past. She is still bothered by how only a campaign of silence greeted her when she came out and began talking about childhood memories, while a decade later; my experience has been completely different. My memories validated in a way I couldn't deny, I think that is the biggest difference between us. We live in different times, and everything has changed in just a few years. Historically, when the world has been presented with a new idea, the new perspective is always first ridiculed, and then resisted, until it is finally accepted. Galileo and Newton are example of this process, considering that the people once believed the sun revolved around the earth and fought the concept of gravity with ferocity. In the third stage now, our experiences are about to become common knowledge, and accepted as fact.

As for what to do, first, reach out and educate yourself. Satanists and occultists believe that knowledge is power (*Scientia est potentia*) – and in this they are right. Putting fear aside, we are able to free ourselves when we accept that the things we remember are not only possible but

probable. Understanding that there are others, many others, in the same boat helps; for me, it was a saving grace to know I wasn't alone. Sarah and Tristan were always there for me, but it took me a while to grasp the sheer *numbers* who had survived and are surviving the same experiences we did.

Secondly, although we were intimidated at a young age not to use it, we now have a voice, and it is the strongest and most powerful gift given us in this life. Every one of us has a story to tell, and every one of our stories is important, whatever the details. Simply standing up and saying, "This happened to me," sends ripples of truth throughout the world, and there is no better way to start reclaiming your power.

Last and probably most important, practice what they taught you. Look within; don't be afraid to find unusual answers. Our lessons may have been horrible, but we now have the choice to overcome the fear and allow ourselves to embrace what they taught us. This time, *we* have the power. What they forced open within us is awakening on its own merit, and we as a group are starting to become aware of not only our abilities as individuals but also our strength in numbers. Our handlers' biggest weapon was to convince us that we were alone; helpless to stop what was happening to us. Those days are over and we are now in a time in which the world needs what we have learned. Owing it to ourselves, to others, and to God, we need to let ourselves shine in the way we were taught to do, finally practicing what we *taught ourselves* to do.

All of us survived because they couldn't break our light-bearer spirit. In darkness as children, we were forced to seek the light-something they couldn't stop, and it is this that binds us together and gives us a commonality with each other. Instead of embracing the dark, we became light bearers, discovering the *true* power within, and it is now time to let our collective

light shine. Trust me: we are already shining. In fact, the light's so bright that when I look at it as a whole, it hurts my eyes.

America was a very different place thirty-plus years ago, when Omaha was a small town striving to be a big city. There were no cell phones, and the personal computers owned by a few were still pretty awkward. In other words, we couldn't access information like we routinely do now and we depended on the corporate media at the time to inform us of current events. Given that many of the owners of those media outlets were some of the very men engaged in profiting from drug, arms, and child trafficking in and through Omaha, one can guess that there was a serious conflict of interest concerning the facts being presented for public consumption.

Thirty years ago, Omaha was pretty much a cow town, filled with small-town people trying to make a living in the "big" city at the center of the nation. In no way accustomed to the activities that came to light in the 1980's, Omaha residents had no choice but to take what the local media was presenting about investigations into the failed credit union, child trafficking, and activities surrounding several local wealthy businessmen accused of being involved. Eventually, the national media got involved and headlined that things happening in Omaha led straight to the White House. In fact, events in Omaha were well connected and heavily funded by the first Bush presidency and the ex-head of the CIA's many government and business cronies. Local media run or influenced by the very people accused of being involved, vehemently fought these revelations, calling them "witch hunts" and the reports of serious abuse against children "conspiracy theories."

Historically speaking, the rich have always done what they wanted. Very few of us will ever know what it is like to have the power to acquire anything we desire or do what we want when we want with no legal consequences. Only a select few ever truly understand the absolute power of having enough wealth to control their community, the legal system, media, and elected politicians. Lord Acton who said in 1887, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts

absolutely." also said "Great men are almost always bad men." Fortunes were made from Omaha to Washington, D.C. in the 1980s, thanks to child trafficking and the cocaine pouring in from the Contras, yet local and national media did a fine job of covering up the truth that the rich got richer from crimes that most of us who believe in decency cannot even fathom.

What makes the rich and powerful "bad men"? Perhaps the psychological shift when one has enough money to get whatever one wants. Most of the population has to focus on survival: job, paying bills, feeding families. But I believe that having more than even one's bloodline could ever spend in a lifetime leads to perversions. Able to do whatever one wants could lead one to think that the successful life no longer entails survival. Years ago it worked like this: when money wasn't enough to guarantee power over "eaters and breeders" and individuals who insisted upon being "honorable men," there was always blackmail and intimidation. Politics at its nadir means manipulating the system however one must, in order to keep the profits rolling. Omaha being a small town, keeping a handle on situations was not as difficult as it might have been somewhere big like Chicago or New York.

Enamored by wealth and with those who have it, Americans have a tendency to accept inappropriate behaviors of the rich. Omaha media outlets run by men engaged in pedophilia and child snuff films distracted the public mind from hundreds of child abuse cases by either sensationalizing scapegoats or making those accused of such activities seem to be the victims (as when police chief Robert Wadman was "victimized" by Alecia Owen's "perjury"). Smoke and mirrors, bread and circuses have worked since the invention of the printing press as ways to distract the public from truths their elite masters do not want them to know.

Omaha is a glaring example of the evil that can be perpetrated on the unaware by the rich and powerful. In time, the truth generally breaks out, but how much is lost until it does? Events in 1980's Omaha have now been properly documented and exposed in books such as Nick Bryant's 2009 *Franklin Scandal* and documentaries like "Conspiracy of Silence" (on YouTube) plus my own videos on Youtube and my website: DavidShurter.com. To understand the

underbelly of present day human trafficking with its staggering numbers – 100,000 American children are forced into prostitution each year in the U.S. – just study Omaha in the 1980s, an American experimental lab for this deplorable global practice. Study how child crimes fell between the cracks of justice and were kept hidden for a generation. Can we learn how to stop such blatant misuses of power so that at least the histories of child abuse and human trafficking might not circle around to another era? It remains to be seen.

A Spiritual Explanation of Sorts

It begins and ends with Love. Love for Others and Love for Ourselves. Whether dealing with creation or destruction, work from love and do no harm. Holding this in heart and mind will lead to the road of success, bringing one always back to the source and offering the blessings of peace. Peace of mind- Peace of heart- Peace of spirit. Grace for all manifests world peace.

First I searched and found within the understanding and compassionate Father- all knowing and eternally loving. A patient teacher, he helped bring me to embrace the three aspects of the Goddess Sophia. Mother, how nurtures and feeds me; Maiden, who shared her love and council with me, and the Warrior Brighid, who stands proud and fierce with the absolute power of the pure potential of the dark feminine, assuring me that even in the darkest of moments, I AM responsible, I AM strong, and I AM loved.

Life is a celebration. Allowing appreciation for the complex blend of love from the feminine within me offered strength and comfort, helping the masculine discover the power in humility- becoming vulnerable enough to let me let God help me manifest my life within and without- any moment I choose, knowing that every moment is a choice and I AM responsible for my choices, for we all reap what we sew.

As a Shaman, I believe that the kingdom of Heaven is within. It is within that one finds God. In my journeys I have me guides an angels who have helped in leading me further and farther within so that I may better understand myself. Through and beyond the depths of despair, in the glistening darkness of pure potential grows the Tree of Life. Enveloped in the silence, sit in quiet contemplation, breathing deeply- embracing and releasing, for it is here that one hears God. In letting go- we are shown the wonderments of the universe and the glories of life, which, in turn, brings us back to love.

It is easy to become distracted with wildflowers in the labyrinth of the soul, but in every Direction there are the signs of Love- giving Direction and answering the question of the meaning of life- echoing the joy for the opportunity of our obligation to bring love and compassion as light bearers to the dragon within ourselves, while offering encouragement, love and forgiveness to those around us. Stimulating spiritual evolution through personal enlightenment and transforming us with the realization that within and without- there is nothing but God, and God is Love.

Epilogue

It has been my experience that life, like history, is cyclic, and always circles back around. Often finding myself in similar situations but in often vastly different positions, these experiences generally change me in ways I often find surprising. Once having been a victim, I look upon myself now as a survivor. Although my parent's child, it was by becoming the adult that enabled me to save them in ways that they never couldn't for me. Changing in ways that I could never have foreseen, I've have lived so many lives and had so many experiences that I sometimes feel very old.

In retrospect, it's funny how when you get on the right track, things just seem to fall into place. A year ago, I started writing this autobiography in order to try and understand my experiences, which started me on the path of redemption in a way. Not intending to publish it, I wrote it simply so that I could see it in black and white.

In August of 2010, I found out about a conference S.M.A.R.T. was having concerning ritual abuse, mind control, and government abuses and torture. The conference coordinator, Neil Brick, is also an MKUltra survivor who has developed a website detailing the existence of ritual abuse and the events currently surrounding many cases of such abuse. Convinced that I would never be able to pull everything together to attend, given that I had only had one week to prepare, magically things worked out: Tristan had a business trip at the same time in the same place and had already booked his stay at the hotel where the conference was being held. Flying with a companion pass, I was able to attend the conference at the last minute – and it changed my life. It was in meeting so many people who had experienced the same things I had as a child that I discovered true camaraderie. Reminding myself that the reason I became involved with all of this in the first place was to help others heal, I gained a new perspective and strong sense of hope from meeting others who were fighting the same fight and making a difference.

BJ has once again moved out of town and we don't really talk much anymore. Having learned that sometimes people only walk a time with you until your paths diverge, I still love him and probably always will, but the time had definitely come for us to go our separate ways. There are times when too much water washes out the bridge and you find yourselves standing on different sides of the shore, and forever proving the fact that he was willing and able to throw me in front of a train any time it served him, I am glad to be rid of him.

Sarah and I have become incredibly close since our family died off, given that it is just the two of us now. Our stepmother still lives in town, but we never see her. Having run into each other only once since my father's death, she avoided my gaze and left before Tristan and I received our food, obviously afraid I was going to make a scene in front of the group she was with, which I probably would have had Tristan not demanded that I avoid her or risk him walking out. None of us wishes her ill but rather look upon her as an unhappy soul who is best forgotten. The child part of me still loves her, but like the story of the scorpion and the frog, it is her nature to sting those closest to her, and, never having had any love for me, Tristan is right in his belief that she is best avoided.

I don't see myself leaving Omaha now. It is said that once you wear out a pair of shoes here, you are destined to keep returning, and honestly Omaha is my home. All of our friends and family live here, and neither Tristan nor I wish to move away from our support group. Besides, with all of the construction in the past decade, it is physically no longer the city I grew up in, helping to keep at bay bad memories of the past.

Since the conference, I've gotten together with survivors and survivor advocates and we've begun to develop an outreach organization for survivors struggling to come to terms with what happened to them here as children through education and advocacy. Forming the North American Truth and Reconciliation Coalition, some of us have now begun to group together in a way that is trying to empower people to come forth and recount their experiences so that the general population can understand what has happened in America regarding RA and SRA abuse.

It was in the writing down the details of my experiences that I have finally succeeded in reclaiming my life and spirituality, which, in turn, has helped to focus me on helping others in

their spiritual search. Acknowledging that Shamanism is off the beaten path, it is not really all that uncommon, considering that it is practiced by thousands of people in the US, not to mention abroad. Simply another way of communing with God, it is a way of life for members of the human race who need more than a material life.

With regards to Omaha, and the events surrounding the Franklin Credit Union, the last victim to come forward with allegations concerning what happened here in Omaha was a boy by the name of Brad Fuguli. A good student, well liked, and an activist in his school, he made a formal complaint against some of the people involved in his abuse to the Omaha police department. However, the next day he was found dead of an apparent suicide. Publically this was never known, and would have been completely forgotten had it not been for our current mayor Jim Suttle. You see, his right hand man and the one who was instrumental for getting him elected also happened to be one of the men Brad Fuguli made a complaint against. Barely mentioned in the news, but there nonetheless, it was explained since the boy was dead the complaint was dropped, and it was quickly dismissed. Adhering to the general rule concerning the situation, it is perhaps, once again another coincidence, but there seems to be an awful lot of them associated with this situation.

Human trafficking is still a problem obviously, and the more we learn how interconnected pedophile groups are, the more we see how vast this problem really is and how it has corrupted the heart of the nation. Books such as *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery* by E. Benjamin Skinner (Free Press, 2008) explain in detail the mindset of ritual abuse that keeps sex slaves and domestic servants quiet about what is happening to them. The 1994

documentary *Chicken Hawk* clearly showed the mindset of NAMBLA, and those who believe in “Sex before eight or it’s too late, while on November 13, 2010, a *New York Times* article written by Eric Lichtblau explained how Nazis were given safe haven in the United States . Ample proof that some sort of cover-up happened continues to grow, as has our government’s desire to keep anyone from considering such things. Banning of the website Wikileaks stands as proof that our government can and will try to control the flow of information whenever they feel it is necessary. With absolutely no “transparency of government,” the question of what else doesn’t the public know can be raised. My personal experience is that the rich will do whatever it takes to retain power, that ignorant complacency can be fatal, and that Omaha is a shining example of how nasty it can get when the rich and powerful are allowed to run amuck.

It is up to us as *individuals* to become educated, arming ourselves with the knowhow to see past the smoke and mirrors presented by government, corporate America, and the media.

The more we learn about human trafficking, the more we understand how ritual abuse is used to keep victims silent and in their place. The more we learn about street gangs, the more equipped we become in understand the dynamics of how such profiteering works The bottom line in Omaha with regards to the drug and child trafficking was money, no different than any place else. The better we understand the issue of human trafficking and the money that is and has been made for decades on the practice, the more we begin to grasp how prevalent this issue is in the United States. Pedophile groups such as “Dreamboard”, who have been discovered to have been in existence for decades, show us that the human trafficking problem is not just a recent phenomenon, and the numbers from our own Justice Department shows that there is a problem.

Although America's ignored it, the so-called "Satanic panic" was not some hoax, but rather a call for help from a group of people who were left in the dark after reaching out to alert the public to incredible abuses by our own government. Although a strong indicator of our nation's human trafficking problem, Omaha is far from alone in dealing with allegations of satanic abuse, as the documentation shows places such as Atlanta, Seattle, Michigan, and California, have all experienced such problems. No longer able to be explained away as mere "coincidence", satanic ritual abuse can no longer be ignored, as there is far too much information indicating otherwise.

At this point, I look forward to whatever happens. The future is unpredictable, but I have lived a very full life, and, in the end, it is the love we take with us that matters most. Blessed with so much love that I felt as if I had to give something back, what you have read is my attempt to do just that.

Lasting impressions lasting a lifetime, if I could impress one last thing upon you, it would be my belief that we are engaged in a rebirth. I believe that everything that is dying around us is waking up in the New Earth that exists on a different level than the one we currently reside, and, in many ways, is the paradise we've been searching for. Although the spiritual is invisible, this does not mean it is not real, and I believe that we're undergoing a spiritual transition the likes of which we have never seen. Getting darker before it gets lighter, we will all end up making our choices, and though it won't be easy, I can promise those of you who choose the light will find the path enlightening as well as inspiring. . As lightbearers, we must answer this call as our very souls depend upon it. The trumpets have sounded, the seals have been broken, and the hourglass is about out, indication that it is our time to shine has come.

American Statistics on Missing Children and Human Trafficking

If you add to the current statistics on child trafficking the fact that 2,185 children disappear each day, it does not take much thought to realize that this social problem will grow worse as world and domestic poverty increases. More and more money will be made in the sex trade off the backs of millions of undocumented people. In fact, human trafficking may be one of the reasons that immigration reform constantly stalls out, as the drug trade and human trafficking is making some people very rich. Surely those involved in this global criminal industry have not overlooked the money that could be made off the large numbers of undocumented poor.

Considering that it takes a village to raise a child, and we are all children of God, we must educate ourselves about the interlinking of human trafficking and child abuse that is robbing hundreds of thousands of women and children of their most basic human birthright. Turning a blind eye to this mess will only allow it to fester and grow, not to mention that doing so is morally ethically, and spiritually wrong. Here are a few sobering statistics minus the personal stories that lie behind them:

- Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders (some international and non-governmental organizations place the number far higher), and the trade is growing. (U.S. Department of State. 2004. Trafficking in Persons Report. Washington, D.C.)
- Of the 600,000-800,000 people trafficked across international borders each year, 70 percent are female and 50 percent are children. The majority of these victims are forced into the commercial sex trade. (Ibid.)
- Each year, an estimated 14,500 to 17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States. The number of U.S. citizens trafficked within the country each year is even higher, with an estimated 200,000 American children at risk for trafficking into the sex industry. (U.S. Department of Justice. 2004. Report to Congress from Attorney General John Ashcroft on U.S. Government Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Fiscal Year 2003. Washington, D.C.)
- The largest number of people trafficked into the United States come from East Asia and the Pacific (5,000 to 7,000 victims). The next highest numbers come from Latin America, Europe and Eurasia, with between 3,500 to 5,500 victims from each. (U.S. Department of Justice, Health & Human Services, State, Labor, Homeland Security, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. 2004. Assessment of the U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Washington, D.C.)

From National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at Missingkids.com:

(Andrea J. Sedlak, David Finkelhor, Heather Hammer, and Dana J. Schultz. U.S. Department of Justice. "National Estimates of Missing Children: An Overview" in *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children*. Washington, D.C. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, October 2002, page 5.)

The U.S. Department of Justice reports also reports:

- 797,500 children (younger than 18) were reported missing in a one-year period of time studied resulting in an average of 2,185 children being reported missing each day.
- 203,900 children were victims of family abductions.
- 58,200 children were victims of non-family abductions.
- 115 children were victims of "stereotypical" kidnapping. (These crimes involve someone the child does not know or someone of slight acquaintance who holds the child overnight, transports the child 50 miles or more, kills the child, demands ransom, or intends to keep the child permanently.)

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