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## Chapter One

At first there were rumors. Yet another so-called Unidentified Object. I did not pay much attention. I am deeply aware of my environment, I cherish and nurture the plants and trees and the animals that live in and around my garden (what Americans call 'yard'). Outer space seems very remote to me. But very soon after those first rumors the Media exploded with what apparently was real news. Observers had seen something in orbit around our earth that was not supposed to be there. And inevitably a few days after that the media talked about an alien space craft.

I do not read a newspaper regularly, but I watch the news on television and of course everyone talked about it. It was hard to take all this seriously, but... Newscasters said things like **FIRST CONTACT!**, and **A Day That Will Live In Human History Forever!** But then, perhaps a week after that, the words changed. Apparently we — I assumed that meant our government, or maybe many governments, or the United Nations — had made contact with the 'aliens' on board that spaceship! And soon there was talk about planning where and when the space craft would land.

**The Biggest, Most Monstrous, Most Colorful Event Ever Staged!**

"... to create an extravaganza that would be visible from everywhere on earth."

**And, Yes, short notice, but we cannot keep the visitors waiting!**

Headline writers ran out of superlatives. Even our thinking got blurred from voices competing for finding yet another way to say biggest, the most, the first time ever. We, ordinary people, felt left out of this enormous "event" to be attended by All The World's Great, and all that.

Eventually, of course, I had to pay attention to what was going on. I am not exactly hiding from the world, but I feel more comfortable in my garden than in a city, even the nearest village where I do my weekly shopping. I live at the edge of civilization, my visitors tell me. It is not easy to get here. Of course today everyone is instantly connected with everyone else, worldwide and, yes, I am 'online'. But I must confess that I am not that curious any more about the gory details of how we humans are destroying each other and our world. I know where we are heading and I know that things have a tendency to get worse. I live in a very quiet place, my street is little more than a one-lane unpaved path carved out of raw lava. So it was that I missed the first mention of the arrival of these 'aliens'.

We were told that the Visitors contacted us, that it was they who asked how we would want to make First Contact. That opened a Pandora's Box of concerns of course: political, religious, ethical, intellectual, military no doubt, and on and on. In fact, it seems that at one point every organization known to mankind had something to say about how, where and when First Contact should take place. At the same time of course there were those who loudly proclaimed, "shoot the buggers, we don't want them in our space".

From day to day, from hour to hour, we were kept abreast of every last detail of the preparations. How many millions, or billions of dollars, euros and other coin was to be spent to make this a Success with a capital S (everything was written in capital letters those days). People who love statistics told us the exact number of cameras that would be placed to record every second of the event, with zoom lenses that could see the whiskers on a mouse ten miles away. There would be lights stationed around the site that had a total candle power exceeding the light of the sun, super microphones so sensitive that they could hear the sound of a breath from across Manhattan, and so forth. All of that expensive equipment would be stationed around The SITE, so that we would not miss even the softest whisper the Visitors—some publications stuck with Alien(s)—might breathe.

A child asked, Do they speak English? Well, nobody had considered that they might not, of course. But in case they spoke another language (another earth language, of course), there would be more than five hundred experts on hand who, between them, were fluent in all the major and some obscure languages spoken on earth.

The date, as well as the location, had been the source of the most intense international debate ever heard in the halls of the United Nations General Assembly, the Security Council, and no doubt in the halls of every government on earth. After endless discussions and secret meetings through weeks of nights, the World decided that First Contact would take place in the waste lands of Brazil, where a little over 1000 square miles of land—formerly Amazon rain forest—were bulldozed flat. Rivers were diverted, roads laid, seven new power plants built to drive such equipment as the world's media insisted was needed to broadcast The Event to the farthest corners of the earth, and, of course, to record for posterity what could only be imagined in mega superlatives. An extensive radar network had been installed of the very latest sophistication to assure the safety of VIPs', the media told us — we all knew of course that the radar was there to keep an eye on the space craft and the aliens.

The organizers had decided that only Heads of State (and their closest advisers and security details of course) would be allowed within 100 meters of the outer perimeter of the landing circle. Behind them were ranked the many hundreds of thousand less important but nevertheless worthy officials from everywhere. No private citizens, it goes without saying, would be admitted. The weather forecasters predicted a cloudless day, not too hot, not too cold. The time of the landing, it had been determined, would be high noon, local time. Everything was done as planned, the whole world was holding its breath, FIRST CONTACT was about to take place.



The staged Event had been planned to take a total of 18 hours. A bit of night, a whole day, and an evening. The actually landing was scheduled to be at high noon, 5 a.m. here. We did see the Overture, late night before, a multimedia extravaganza, composed by the most famous of sound and light composers. Sound was carried in ultra high fidelity to even the remotest corners of the world, as of course were the stunning visuals of the latest in laser beam technology. There were speeches, before and after the Overture, there was entertainment from the most famous performers in the world, and since there was no World Anthem yet despite submissions from all the most famous composers of the world—the world could not agree—a medley of National Anthems was played by a seven hundred piece orchestra with thirty-nine soloists, singing in a hundred and four languages.

I am quoting all these statistics rather randomly. They mean nothing much, so forgive me if I misquote! Charlie had invited everyone to come watch the Event on his monster-sized television set. There were many of us.

We saw and heard it all — all that 'happened' in any case. It was awesome, we were impressed and eventually bored. Get on with it! Lets get going, most of us felt. But it was not quite noon yet at The Site. We idly wondered about those huge, bizarre structures that were placed here and there among the important people. One of the many commentators we happened to pick up told us they were 'baffles', to assure that sound recordings, even outdoors, with all the commotion of thousands of people and millions of machines, would be 'perfect'. And because this is the time we live in, we could not help but wonder whether these 'baffles' might not also contain who knows what secret weaponry?

The circle in the middle of what was now almost a new city where the space ship would land had been polished smooth as marble, painted a glaring white so as to be visible from far away in space. All around this circle towers of varying height held the cameras and microphones needed to see and hear every last detail of the landing. Everything was filmed in 3D, of course, in millions of color. We marveled at the sound and picture shown on Charlie's monster DVD/TV. It truly was as if we were there. This Event that had been described as a mile post in our evolution as civilized sapients, marking the very moment when humankind first meets its equals among the thousands of races of the Galaxy... (Oh, yeah? They came to us, did they not?) The world's commentators and announcers unanimously agreed that, truly, First Contact was the Greatest Show on Earth. I'm sure it was.



Noon in Brazil (very early morning here).

The Overture was over, all sound faded to an almost palpable silence.

## The World Is Waiting !

Something spherical, at first almost invisible, softly floats down out of nowhere. It looks strangely like the movie spaceships we have seen, a shimmering even iridescent globe of unimaginable size (we saw people hastily retreating from the glaring white circle). The space ship seems to float, to slip slowly down, eerily quiet. Despite all the fancy sound systems, we hear no engine noise, nor did we see any swirling eddies from what must have been heated air around the spaceship as it smoothly settles perfectly in the middle of the glaring white circle. We cannot see whether it actually touches ground, but after a few wobbles, the spaceship somehow anchors itself. I must say my heart pulses faster. It finally dawns on me what all the fuss had been about. This really is an historical moment for humankind! The suspense is palpable. Even here, thousands of miles away, our attention is riveted on the screen.

For what seems long minutes we do not see anything happen, there are no sounds from Brazil, all we see is the shimmers of the fierce light of the sun added to its equivalent in human-generated candle power.

Then, a large opening appears in the spaceship (later they showed us that there were three doors, equally spaced along the periphery of the featureless globe). In proportion to the size of the spaceship, these 'doors' are large, very large indeed. Inside we can only see dark. Shadow, of course: The sun almost directly overhead at noon.

As many of us probably, I expect a sort of boarding ramp to slide down, and then someone to walk down to meet us, as we had seen in one of those movies that were so popular some years ago. Or maybe three aliens would come down three ramps? If these doors were made to the size of the Aliens they must be quite a bit larger than we are. And many other such thoughts and guesses go through my head.

We wait.

Nothing happens. I can just imagine the suspense of the people who sit there. We see people turn to their neighbors and shrug their shoulders. What's going on? One person gets up, perhaps to get a better view of the space craft's door facing him, but his neighbors pull him back. Still nothing happens!

We notice that some of the uniformed men get a bit restless, perhaps checking the safety on their guns. We see another instrument being hoisted up on one of the sound towers, perhaps something that can look inside one of those doors? The spaceship sits there, nothing moves, nothing happens.

The opening we were watching slowly fades. We cannot see it very well any more. Its edges sort of blur. The shine, or twinkle, of the globe fades. Now the spaceship seems a dull non-color, a smudged sort of beige; no, grey, dirty grey in those fierce lights.

We all lean forward, move closer to the screen, to see what is going on, but every second now, what we see becomes more blurred, vague. Also lighter, now it is a very pale grey, perhaps even pink against the shimmering pale, pale blue of the sky behind it.

Finally, the space ship is not there any more.

After many more minutes we had to accept that the space ship has disappeared. Evaporated... It is gone.

Gone?



We who were watching in Charlie's huge room had become very still. We must all have felt the same feeling of emptiness. After all those great expectations, nothing? We look at each other. We feel utterly let down.

What happened?

Eventually, when we look at that huge screen again, we see people moving around, calling for information, we see uniformed and armed people moving forward. The sound has been turned off, we do not hear anything, but it is clear that there is massive confusion at The Site. It looks as if there is a lot of screaming, yelling, wild gesticulating, waving hats and recorders of various kinds in the air. Minutes later the screen blanks out and an invisible voice announces that 'the officials' were deciding what was to be done now. Meanwhile they will broadcast 'other material', which turns out to be advertising and a very old movie (probably old enough for its copyright to have expired).



At first we did not dare turn off the television, because maybe the First Contact show might come back, or someone would give us an explanation. But after hours of nonsense most of us decided to go home. Such a letdown! There should have been 'something'. Could not someone have spoken, at least?

I thought: the secretary-general of the United Nations, or our President, or some other high official of the Committee that had planned all that— someone should have said something. They should not have just shut off the broadcast. Somebody, or many somebodies goofed.

I felt angry as well as let down, but I slept well enough, Got up briefly to eat something and then I slept again. I cannot remember any interesting dreams either. Oh well, it had been exciting, but it was a flop.

Now life could go on its ordinary and familiar way again.





## Chapter Two

**Disappearing Space Craft**, headlines blared the next day. I am sure everyone on earth wondered what had happened, talked about what happened, or what had not happened. On all TV channels commentators interviewed scientists and experts of all possible persuasions. They conjectured, analyzed, guessed, thought, proposed, but nobody could prove or even hypothesize with any degree of certainty. Within days the world was flooded with books by the hundreds, all of them bestsellers no doubt. The internet was sizzling, some sites became off limits, they could not handle the volume. And rumors! I think no conversation, in person or over the phone, did not have a story, a guess, a "somebody told me".

The second week learned books appeared, written by scientists who said they did not know. Mystical books blossomed, written by mystics who wrote thousands of pages to say there were no words... We were assured, several times, that camera, radar and other experts probed and prodded the billions of frames of the nonevent recorded on film, tape, disk, and a few unreleased-as-yet more exotic media. They saw nothing. They could measure nothing. They could not squeeze any sound out of the blank tapes. There were no unexamined recordings of the event that could add anything to what the whole world had seen not happening. A fading door, then a disappearing space craft. That was all.

Of course, our scientists had taken x-ray and other pictures. There was not even the shadow of a person, or a being, to be processed from miles and miles of exposed film.  
Nothing!

When the world recovered its composure, we began to look for the space craft. It was where it had been before, in orbit around the earth. Someone must have wired the space ship, official people certainly radioed or sent messages by laser express or whatever they do. But no response. Nothing. The alien spaceship was there, the aliens were silent. For a while the Military of the world became very nervous. Political alliances were made and broken and made again between nations who wanted to 'do' something and between those who said let's wait.

Eventually of course our expectations, hopes, fears, and thoughts of Aliens and First Contact faded away as the spaceship had. The Media soon found other, more reliable 'events' to work with. The Site was abandoned after the most expensive equipment had been removed from what was left after the looting. Six of the seven power stations were shut down, the airports closed, as

were a thousand hotels, shops, restaurants. The Site became the world's largest ghost city, waiting for plants and animals from the surrounding tropical waste land to take over. Disney announced and then withdrew plans to make a theme park there. A French concern thought about making a launch platform for the ever-increasing number of satellites that were needed 'up there'. But for now, nothing much happened.



For a few months we wondered, but obviously there was nobody who could tell us anything substantial. Occasionally the media reminded us that the space ship was still there, in orbit around the earth. Where then were the Aliens? After all the planning, the consultations that must have taken place between humans and aliens to make First Contact memorable, what all of us would remember and tell our grandchildren about was The Big Fizzle.

Eight months after First Contact That Wasn't, the aliens moved their spaceship to another orbit, farther out. Scientists who know about orbits proclaimed that this new orbit was one of the few orbits where a space craft would not be endangered by space debris. That proved, they said, that first, the aliens were alive, and second that obviously they were at least as smart as we were to be able to figure out that new orbit. Other scientists and important officials who busied themselves with the bad memories of First Contact That Wasn't, told us that this move to a 'safer' orbit strongly suggested that the aliens were here to stay.

At least for a while.



Again a few months later. It is difficult to remember how long ago it was that we stared at that huge screen, looking at Brazil at noon, on the Day That Will Live in History etc. I must be honest, First Contact and the Aliens were not much on my mind any more. The aliens were not often in the news either. The usual local excitement kept us busy: the annual Parade and Fair of course, another drought (in a place where it 'always' rains and where we rely on rain for all our water needs). The volcano continues to churn out lava which eventually rolls into the ocean, creating lots of steam and a few acres of land but not much fireworks any more. Two more people have cancer; one wonders. Ecologists continue to plead for a campaign to eradicate nonnative species (plants that is, not humans; not many of us are 'native' here). The weather is changing, we are told, as if we had not noticed! We had some memorable marriages.

My garden is where my heart and soul are. Americans say 'yard' but the lava with a bit of soil covering I take care of is not a yard, it is a garden. My visitors call this the boonies, 'nowhere'. It is not exactly rural, there is not much

agriculture here. In fact there is not much of anything, other than the crater a mile or so away. It is quite civilized. I have electricity and a phone. A few years ago we were finally able to get a single line, no more 'party line' hassle (a party line, a line shared with two other houses allows no modem, no fax). This year we went digital, finally catching up with the rest of the world. And yes, I am on the internet. My water is rainwater, collected in an old but good redwood tank. I have television, hooked up to what they call 'basic cable', with six or seven channels. I tire quickly of watching pictures of unbelievable violence and equally unbelievable romance when the world of my garden is so infinitely more real.

I cannot adjust to modern people who are always running, cell phone growing out of one ear. People for whom the only information is tomorrow's news. Yesterday is gone forever, no longer relevant. And today we are too busy to catch up with the future. Too busy to think, period. What is real for many people today seems totally unreal to me, and, I am sure, what is real to me is bizarre and out-of-touch to them.

After so long of no news I assume the aliens have gone, or, if their space ship is still parked in that fancy safe orbit, perhaps they are dead. Or, who knows, there might be only one alien, and she is asleep. In fact, I no longer think about aliens, our own world has become as alien as I can handle.



The world is in an uproar again over The ALIENS (again in caps). Someone launched a missile, assumed to be armed with an atomic warhead, to the spot in that special orbit where the Alien Spaceship is — was? No nation or even terrorist group confessed, but even stranger, the Alien Spaceship was not where everyone knew it had been and now the missile is rushing past into deep space. (I hope it eventually wears out, or hits an uninhabited rock). The Media are in a happy frenzy again. There is no 'news' to report, but plenty of rumors, special bulletins, interviews with scientists and of course officials of this and that. Commentators commenting about questions that cannot be answered.

Who sent that missile, and why?

And where is the space ship?

The missile was launched from the middle of the Atlantic ocean, far from land and far from shipping lanes. The missile was tracked by radar on three continents almost from the time it was launched. It had taken a fraction of a second to compute that the missile was aimed at the spot where everyone knew the Alien Spaceship was: bulls eye!

But radar could not find the space craft. If it had been hit, there would have to be some debris, but there was nothing. Had it been moved an hour ago, or the day before, and nobody had noticed? Possibly. There had been no interest for quite some time.

All over the world radar aimed its searching eye to all space, but not a trace of the space craft. Had it left the space around Earth altogether? Had it been totally annihilated without leaving a trace? But there was no evidence of an explosion either.

For a few more weeks scientists publicly deplored that we had not learned more from these visitors from afar. We did not even know where they came from. We had not learned any of their 'interesting' technology. We could not even guess about their technology because now it was revealed that what had touched down for First Contact was not the space craft-that stayed in orbit-but a Lander, as the media immediately dubbed it.

Military and scientific snooping devices had not been able to get any firm facts about the Lander. We were not sure what it was made of, it had not shown any temperature elevation in landing (which one might expect from an object that falls through the atmosphere). The Lander was transparent to all our devices. Radar and other energies beamed at the Lander had been absorbed (is that possible?). A stealth technology beyond ours, certainly! We had all seen it, of course, but that was all. There were no measurements, which worried scientists and military experts immensely. Most experts maintained that the Lander was made of metal: after all, our space craft are made of metal-. But this metal must have been some strange extraterrestrial material... A few European scientists said the Lander was a force field that acted as if it were metal. A group of scientists from India suggested the Lander had been an illusion. But then how to explain that the television cameras had no trouble showing it to billions of people all over the world? Chinese scientists said they 'knew' but would not tell.

All of which made a few (very few) scientists propose that careful but exhaustive analysis of the many measurements they had not been able to get from their many instruments suggested that there had been nothing there.

Had we not all seen the Lander? We had seen the door(s) open-if 'doors' is what they were-with our own eyes! Even visual measurements had been 'inconclusive': the outline of the Lander had been blurry, instruments had not been able to focus. Again, the world had to admit that they knew nothing about these visitors, we did not know where they were from, what they looked like, what their intentions had been. We had learned nothing, and now they were gone.

Perhaps the scientists knew more, but they did not talk, nor did they write learned articles any more. The various military and paramilitary organizations that spy on each other did not have anything to say, of course.

For a few more days the Media were busy speculating about who had shot the missile. There is a limited number of countries that have submarines capable of launching missiles. But then, it would not have had to be a submarine, it could have been a freighter. The missile might even have been launched from

an airplane. Any millionaire could have bought himself a missile and a way to shoot it off from somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean. And of course that famous 'clean orbit' had been described in great detail many times in the world's media. Surely it was not that difficult to program a missile to go to that spot in space. So went speculations.

Eventually (again) the media could not find or make any more news out of the missile and its various disappearances. This time the excitement fizzled quickly. Our world is a fast-paced world and news does not stay new for more than a day or so.

After all was said and done, a hundred times, all we knew was that without warning, announcement or provocation, some unknown party or parties had shot a missile from the Atlantic toward the alien spacecraft which we then discovered was not where we thought it had been. And that was it.



For a while a group of us in our village came together for 'brainstorming evenings'. Since all the real facts were now known to all of us (we thought), perhaps we could come up with a story that made sense. Between the eight (sometimes as many as eleven) of us we came up with some wonderful scenarios! But all of them had flaws of course. So, after a few weeks we let it fizzle.

Yet another unexplained miracle, as there are so many in the known history of our world. Why do the Dogon of Africa think they come from the Dog Star (Sirius)? Who built the pyramids of Egypt four, five thousand years ago, without the kind of machines we have now (a local architect friend claims that none of the machines we have today would have been able to build pyramids of that size and shape anyway). And what is there about four-sided pyramids; they can be found all over the world. When our brainstorming ran out of steam Anne asked in her innocent child voice, How had the Big Powers planned First Contact? From what we had been told, First Contact had been planned with the Aliens (at that time still in caps). So, somebody must have had some kind of contact with the Aliens. Did they communicate by radio, television perhaps?

I remember hearing one of the TV commentators say that the Aliens had indicated that they wanted us, the people of earth, to design and plan the whole event. How did they communicate that to us? Who actually talked with the Aliens? Surely we must have found out something at that time? And how did we know there were aliens? I had missed a time before all the excitement started. Did somebody first spot the space craft come closer to earth, did all our instruments watch as they parked in their first orbit?

Our group decided to research old newspapers and the internet, or wherever we could find information. There must be records of the beginning, we told each other. Four of us spent weeks searching the internet, where 'anything you want to know' is to be found. Our searches found almost immediately that

there had indeed been a Committee of the United Nations. Or perhaps the Committee had been in Washington, DC— the information was not clear. The very first mention of 'something' in space had come from two astronomers in Chile, who had spotted what they first thought was a comet, but then turned out to be stationary. A foreign object, in a very far orbit around the earth. And when they looked again it was suddenly closer, in what we now call 'first orbit'. Then for a few weeks there were no more mentions of this sighting. We felt it was safe to assume that telescopes and other searching devices of many nations had been trying to figure out what this was, and, most importantly, who. Nothing was leaked to the Media, but that was not too unusual, of course. Governments tend to not want their citizenry to be 'alarmed'. Then, suddenly, there was this 'Committee'. That sounded fishy to us, but now, more than a year later, it was hard for ordinary people to learn more.

Apparently it was that Committee that had decided where the Aliens should land, and when, and how. But we could not find any mention, anywhere, about who had actually communicated with what then were 'The Aliens'. It was almost unthinkable that in a world as paranoid as ours, we had decided these aliens were friendly without extensive investigations. Was there any negotiation? We could not find any information about how this Committee had communicated with the Aliens. Classified information, of course. One would think that many others would have wanted to tell the story from the beginning. How come nobody else had wondered who these aliens were, and how we communicated with them about the Landing? But probably, almost certainly, others had tried, and had been shut up. Yes, that happens, we all knew. Undoubtedly there are many stories that we never hear about, or are allowed to find out about. Now, looking back, it seemed strange that we had not been told very much at all about how all the hoopla in Brazil began, who arranged it all. And why?

Our little group died a natural death. We ran into a morass of vagueness, but always with hints that somewhere in the background there were, of course, important and responsible people who had acted in behalf of the peoples of Earth. We decided, twenty years from now, we will know, under the Freedom of Information laws...

All we could do was shrug our shoulders and go on with the struggle to get some kind of income in this place where there are no real jobs. There was enough to worry about in our own lives to be overly concerned with 'the world'. Who were we, anyway, to search for information that of course had worldwide relevance? After The Missile Incident, as it was called, and a First Contact That Wasn't, the whole episode seemed like an expensive and misleading flash in the pan. Nothing had happened, nothing was learned, leaving us with almost no 'facts'. And in this society what else is there? All there is, is that waste city in a man-made disaster area in the middle of nowhere...

There is no satisfactory ending to this story, but then, there was no beginning either. I had fleeting thoughts that for some political reason I cannot fathom the whole episode had been staged by some government (ours?) for reasons we will never know. Maybe it was meant to divert our attention from something else? But paranoia can only go so far. The ways of governments and media are inscrutable. And I am happy to be far away from whatever 'action' there is. The end of a strange episode in our serpentine history.

...

## Chapter Three

One night I had a dream that woke me up and out of bed. A voice in my dream had been so vivid, so 'real', that I looked around to see if there were someone in my little house. I walked around with a flashlight, went outside, looking for I do not know what or who. Was I hearing voices?

Hearing voices?

Like everyone else I talk with myself, often out loud, or otherwise quietly, in my head. I have long and involved conversations with myself. But never in my sleep, or in a dream, or like this. I actually heard a 'real' voice, like someone whispering in my ear! After walking around in the middle of the night, I had to accept that I would not learn more by looking around with a flashlight. Meaning of course I talked myself into believing that it was a dream, nothing but an ordinary dream. Nothing to worry about. Yet I could not go back to sleep. I admit, I was afraid the voice would come again and I did not know how I would deal with that. Even though I did not want to, I told myself firmly to let go, stop worrying... Strange, very strange. The voice I heard in my dream was not really loud, it just sounded so real! A very soft whisper in my ear...



I take dreams seriously. For many years I have been able to dream 'lucidly' as it is called: I am aware when I am dreaming, I know I am I, and that I am dreaming. As far as I know I dream every night, probably several times in a night. I cannot remember having nightmares after my teen years. Oh, yes, I did have nightmares during and shortly after The War, but is it a nightmare when reality invades one's dreams?

One of the wonderful things about dreams is that fairly often I find a solution to a question in a dream. I count on that. When I am thinking about a problem situation and I cannot figure it out, I let go. Then, before I sleep I remind myself of what I need some clarity about, telling myself that it would be very useful if I would get an answer in a dream. More often than not, a dream gives me a new way of asking the question, or a new slant on the whole issue, and not too infrequently I find a solution in dream.

Occasionally I also have dreams that tell me of events that have not happened yet. I do not know how that works but over the years I have come to trust what I learn in those dreams. I have had dreams of people telling good-bye to me, and later I find out that they died. I have read that many others have had such dreams. Occasionally I have had warnings: do not travel on that day, be careful tomorrow evening. Even very specific warnings. For instance, once I



dreamed that when I was going to town I should drive carefully around mile 17. I heeded those warnings! (There was a cop by the side of the road at mile 17). But this whispering dream is a new experience.

And what was it the voice whispered to me? Strange, I do not remember. Now, a week or so after the Whisper Dream, I am still convinced that the voice did not come from me, it did not come from within a dream. It did not come from my own brain, but from outside. It had been so unexpected and so strange that I did not listen to what the voice was saying. Was it a question? No... All I can think of is that the voice said, 'Hello...'



For a while I heard no more whispers in my dreams. Then, I heard the voice again. This time it was normal strength, no loud whisper, nothing scary. And I was aware of the words. Clearly the voice said, Hello, but not in any language I had ever heard. I clearly understood it as a greeting, 'hello'. Not because I understood any words, but it seemed to mean hello, or perhaps, Greetings, are you there? Something like that.

This time it was clear that the voice came from outside, not from inside my own head, although of course I heard it inside my head. And it was not really a 'voice', I did not hear with my ears, but in my head. Oh, come now, impossible! Of course I was no longer asleep. I was wide awake, but I kept my eyes shut, I did not move. I felt I should relax, meditate, and perhaps I would understand more.

'Stay calm', I told myself, 'face the unknown, have an open mind...' That is also what I do when I wake up with a compelling but difficult to understand dream. Often, when I totally relax and let my brain wander, the meaning of the dream comes to me. 'Hello' is a sort of shorthand for words and thoughts and feelings that say, Hi, I am here, is anyone there? That meaning was clear enough, even though I did not understand any words.

In fact, as I reflected about it, the Voice did not say words. And I was pretty sure that it was not a real voice. It was almost as if I just sensed someone's intention. I felt warm, friendly feelings from the message, almost as if the Voice (what else can I call it?) spoke with a smile. No picture of a face came to me. There were no referents, I could not see how large the speaker was, how old, how young, male, female. In fact, none of those qualifiers applied at all.

I tried to answer inside my head: 'and greetings to you'. That did not work. I heard nothing but silence. I heard the wind outside, usually the only noise I can hear at night, unless it is raining, then I hear the patter of rain on the corrugated tin roof. I opened one eye: dark outside, no moonlight shining through the skylights. I shrugged myself into a more comfortable position under the blankets; it was cold in the early morning in this little house. Obviously my answer to this unknown, unseen person did not work.

Then the person whispered a whole sentence, and then another, which I felt should mean something like "I am far away", or perhaps, "You cannot see me".

This was no language I knew, no series of words I had ever heard, so why did I interpret it to mean anything at all? A conversation in my head! No sound, no picture, but somehow we — this other person and I — were having a chat inside my head. Oh sure!

I do not mind talking to myself, but this was different. It felt as if there were another. This was 'communication' with someone outside myself. Then I thought, I might as well go along with this game. If he or she answers, let's see where this goes. I am always ready for an adventure, even in the middle of a dark night. Perhaps particularly in a dark night.

Is that why your voice is faint, like a whisper, I asked? Because you are far away? I was still in a half meditative state, I did not formulate 'words', but almost immediately an answer came, this time with a laugh (that is what it felt like, at least). "No, distance is not important, your hearing is not trained yet to hear me, but it is improving rapidly."

I tried to comprehend that. My hearing? And how could I understand anything when there obviously were no words? And I did not 'hear', it was just an impression in my head. This is getting too difficult to express, or even think about.

Unexpectedly an answer came (although I had not asked a question) again clearer and, it seemed, closer, "Your hearing is getting stronger; your comprehension..."

In my mind I composed a sentence to say that I was trying to learn his (her?) language, but I did not have much to go on. I know a few languages and can recognize many others, but what I heard in my head was not sound, no consonants, vowels, sentences, phonemes. I heard, or understood meanings without words.

Nuts!

Meanings without words. That is an impossibility. I am imagining things. I know my imagination is well developed, but this goes too far. Very clearly, this time, the Voice — now it was very clear that it was inside my head, not whispering in my ear — said, "(we) are not communicating in words". Sure, I already know that. But that is impossible! I realized that the voice certainly did not say a word like 'communicating', that was just my interpretation. My discomfort at this whole 'communication' was getting overwhelming, I turned the light on by my bed. This was getting out of hand. Communication without words, indeed. Well, yes, maybe, I do communicate without words with dogs and cats, and with trees and plants even. And obviously there is some understanding between dogs and I. Even trees seem to answer me, and plants. But this was much stranger because it definitely seemed a person. I have been taught, and I had

accepted, that thinking must be in words. We think in words. How can there be thinking without words, let alone communication without words?

By now I was wide awake and thinking, looping my brain, or mind-what-ever it is that 'thinks'-in knots. Might as well get up, and get the day started. My usual routine. Look outside to see what the weather is like (so-so, maybe rain). Bathroom. Turn the electric kettle on, to make warm water: with lemon if I have it, or a piece of ginger. Get the coffee pot ready. Open windows. Turn on the computer. Walk outside, say hello to plants and trees. Hello, hello, how are you today? Everyone felt happy enough. It had rained in the night, or perhaps it was a heavy dew. The sun, just looking through the trees in back sparkled tiny drops on all the ferns. The ground was wet but not soggy. On the whole a good day. Probably a wonderful day. Take a deep breath. Oh yes, good air, sweet smelling. The neighbor's chickens woke up long ago, but the hens are chuckling again. One neighborhood dog is giving a brief bark. Others answer. Good morning, good morning. My mind is now miraculously cleared. No more voices in my dreams, no more wordless communication.



In my diary, later, I wrote 'the second whisper dream', although I now know that there was no whisper and I did not dream. All that day I thought about communication without words. We humans communicate without words when, for instance, we pick up information from what we call body language: facial expressions, tone of voice. We pick up a lot of information even when we see someone's back, we see or perceive in some way that the person holds himself tight, controlled, or bent with sadness or despair, or age perhaps, but that is a different sort of bending. Communication without words is still communication, but through senses other than hearing. We 'read' facial expressions. So, yes, communication without words is nothing unusual maybe.

Showing teeth means different things in different cultures. Americans smile all the time and we spend a fortune to show pure white, even teeth. In other cultures you never show teeth, you hold your hand in front of your mouth when you talk. I think in those cultures showing your teeth is a sign of aggression. Apes and monkeys show teeth as a threat. Dogs communicate with their tails, their ears, their eyes. Cats talk but I have not learned much cat language. I know tiger language, many different growls and purrs and twitching of whiskers. I must pay more attention to cats, their communication may be like tiger language. Cats are strange creatures. They are not quite tame, they still have a big element of wild in them. Interesting. I like wild. The Wild, as I call it, which is rapidly disappearing on our Earth, even though until not too long ago the Wild was all there was.

But without sounds and no sight, no physical components, no body language, no facial expressions, not even tone of voice, what is there to interpret?

What other senses do we have? Some say we have a 'sixth' sense. Yes, probably. Who knows, we may have seven or eight senses. But...

As with all impossible problems, I let it go. Very consciously I let go all this wondering. I decided to forget the whole episode, dream or no dream. When there are no answers it is best to forget the whole thing.

## Chapter Four

A week later the Voice came into my head again. Now I am prepared. I think. Decided that if the Voice came back I would accept that it was 'real', that this voice comes from a definite person who is 'far away' but obviously not so far that we cannot be in touch through this mysterious mind to mind communication. I vaguely imagined him or her somewhere in the Himalayas, perhaps Tibet, China or even Mongolia, all mysterious places to me. After all, I do not speak any of the languages spoken in that part of our world, so we have to communicate without words.

Oh, I still have many reservations about this whole Voice business, but it is exciting, and I might learn something. Before I can learn anything I must accept that there is something there to learn. Phantoms cannot teach me much, but real people, however strange or distant they are, may be able to show me all kinds of wonderful knowledge and wisdom.

If at first I thought that I 'heard' the Voice in my ear that was an understandable mistake. The Voice was inside my head, or rather in my mind, although the more I think about 'where' the voice manifested itself, the more confused I became about brain, mind, head. Those terms are not exact! Where is 'mind' located? In my musings I am beginning to suspect that 'mind' is outside of me, beyond my skull. Is that possible?

As a working hypothesis, as scientists say, I can accept the theoretical possibility of concepts without words being transmitted and received from person to person. But only as a hypothesis for now. 'Explaining' comes later. I must keep it simple. First be sure I experience something real, then I can figure out how that is possible.

I would go crazy if I denied what had happened so far, but above all I am too curious to ignore the Voice this time. So, I firmly remind myself that I accept that I am communicating with someone from somewhere else, in my mind. And, of course, accepting that is also the only way I can hear what meanings are conveyed.

Now when the Voice comes into my head I am ready, I think. Even though I have not quite figured out how to write about this. And perhaps because of that the Voice is now easier to 'hear' or understand.

Again, first there is 'hello', or 'greetings'. I answer without much hesitation: I am here, or, Yes, acknowledging that contact has been established. Almost immediately there is an answer, which I interpret to mean something like "do you want to talk with me (us)." Us?

Well yes, of course. Yes, I am ready.

There is a silence, but somehow I know he or she is still there.

I ask a question. Where are you?

Without being able to use a word like 'where', the only way I can think that thought is to list images of places: Inner China, Tibet, Mongolia — thanks to the National Geographic magazine which has given us so many images of faraway places we can never visit ourselves. When there is no response, I add remembered pictures of beaches, of jungle, of deserts— all with a question: is this where you are, or this, or this?

An answer comes into my head. I must think of a better way to describe these 'discussions', "Not from your earth!"

No, or not, is easy to understand. My earth? How do I know he/she means 'my earth'? Perhaps the answer means, No, not from the places you sent pictures of. But now there comes an image of a globe, our Earth, becoming vaguer and vaguer until there is no image left. Not earth?

My thoughts are falling over each other.

Well, why not? There had been a very strange feeling about the Voice. I had assumed and firmly believed, that the Voice is from somewhere on earth. The idea of people, or beings, living anywhere else had briefly bloomed in my consciousness when we had that strange episode of First Contact, and then the Missile Incident. But I rejected that as too strange. I think I never really accepted the idea of aliens contacting us. Why would they? I had easily put the whole idea aside after all the hoopla was over. Mass illusion someone had written. It was easier to believe that it must have been something like that.

But now this Voice that talks to me without words tells me he/she is not from earth?

Very softly, hesitantly, I hear... No, it is not hearing, it is understanding... something picks up a thought I have in my head, and mirrors it back. A thought of The Alien.

I ask, From that First Contact that wasn't, the spaceship in the fancy orbit?

So they must still be here, I think, even though I thought the space ship had left, or at least we had lost it. Did not the News have a story not more than a day or so ago about scientists who had decided that since the spaceship was no longer to be found they had gone home, wherever that was?

I must have communicated all that confusion, because a very gentle thought with the softest touch intruded. It felt almost like a hand on my forearm: relax, do not heat yourself up (that was the image I got).

I am trying to relax.

I relax.

Are you (the whole story of the failed First Contact, the disappearing space ship, the missile, the orbit.)?



By now it must be clear that when I write 'I ask' I mean that I compose a question from visual images, or perhaps feelings, trying to avoid words. Not an easy thing to do. It really is true that we—humans at least—think in words. Words have become so much part of my awareness that it is very difficult indeed to 'think' without words. But, evidently, these others (I still have trouble thinking in terms of 'aliens' from another planet) are able to communicate without words.

Trouble is, the more I 'think', the more confused I get. What is thinking? I remember learning, long, long ago, that thinking had something to do with solving problems. And the problems were expressed in words of course. And one of the best ways to seek a solution to a problem is to rephrase it, express it in different words. Well, that might mean that by choosing another way to say the same question gets to the 'meaning', or, what a question is really about. So, perhaps, somewhere in my head (if that is indeed where my thinking takes place) I walk around a concept by using this word and that until at last I have the concept, the essence, in my head. And why would it not be possible that such a concept could be communicated without the words that really are no more than the scaffolding of an idea? Perhaps that makes sense.

Language. Do these others even have a language? I know well enough how difficult it is to communicate with people who speak a different language. We always assume that a word must have the same meaning in another language, but I know from experience that is rarely true. And the way to find out what a word in another language 'means' is to talk around it. But without words?

What if I could somehow share my understanding of a word, say 'tree' with someone who speaks another language, not in words and sentences, but direct? In my head, or wherever it is I store what I know, there is a whole library of thoughts and associations and shades of meanings and perhaps colors and smells, connected with a simple word like 'tree'. I can talk about that, which is cumbersome, and if I have to translate all that talk as well, it gets even more clumsy. But what if there were some way to make a direct contact? What if I could 'send' the whole package of all the ideas and memories connected with the tree across the street?

Or, simpler, at this moment I am looking out the window and I see some hanging pots with flowers that are in full bloom, against a background of many trees and ferns, many different shades of green, there is no sun so there are few highlights. My eyes are perceiving images and colors, it is my brain that is instantaneously (I think) interpreting images into words: plants, hanging plants in pots, flowers, green, brown, shades of this and that color, foreground and background, and so on. What if before I do all that organizing and interpreting I

could let someone else share the raw input, to be interpreted as someone else interprets in her brain or wherever I do all that interpreting...

This is getting too complicated! I must learn not to think in terms of brain and mind and thought and all those words. As in meditation, when I am really relaxed and I focus, I can still perceive all those thoughts and words and whatever is floating around, but as my first meditation teacher said, "Do not give anything a name, they are leaves in the wind. Let them be. Do not interpret, do not think. But above all, do not name, do not attach words to what is going on..."

That is what can be shared with another probably. A 'gestalt' it is called in psychology.



I 'ask' are you connected with (bringing back into my awareness the episode of First Contact, the Fizzle, the orbits, the missile, the disappearing space ship, trying hard not to interpret, use words)?

The answer does not come immediately. It is as if there is a thoughtful pause, and then I hear, "Yes, we are" (all that you show in that messy movie), "we are The Aliens."

Definitely, I understand 'plural', many aliens, we.

And then, even stranger, almost immediately I hear another voice, which I interpret, or translate as saying, "We shall leave you to sort things out for yourself now..." Phew! Yeah. Very thoughtful of you.



Definitely I must sort things out. I am surprised; shocked is a better word. It had never been a serious consideration that I might be communicating with a being from another planet; or beings. I had assumed it must be another human, that in time we could have found each other, or sent each other e-mail. But this...?

And why me?

The thought that I would be communicating (or, whatever you call it) with that Alien, those Aliens, was unthinkable. Even scary. What a responsibility! Should I tell? Who should I tell? Who could I tell? And, what could I tell? Scientists would want facts and figures, and I have none. The media (heavens forbid) would want pictures, interviews, they would want to know how I felt when I first... The more I think of the media, the government, important people, the more concerned I am. They would want to lock me up, at least. But almost certainly nobody would believe me.

No, obviously I had better not say anything to anybody, at least for now. In my understanding this has nothing to do with 'telepathy', which I have always



considered a parlor trick. But I do not have a better word—because, let's face it, there are no words to describe communication without words! Is not that exactly what mystics have said for thousands of years? There are no words?

Many years ago I knew a people who I suspected were communicating without speaking (at the time I thought they were thinking words from one to another). When I mentioned something of that to my friends they laughed, scoffed, made fun of me. My scientist colleagues did not even laugh, they ignored me after expressing their contempt. Unscientific thinking. Crazy and worse.

Yes, I certainly need time to sort this out!



I calmed down in my garden. I spend many hours outside, now trying not to think. Just being. At times I felt overcome with the unthinkable enormity of communicating with an alien, the Alien, many aliens. But I put it aside. 'Thinking' can come later. I had an experience that falls outside of my other experiences, no more, no less. It is not important. What can I possibly think about when I have no idea what this is all about? I have a close and warm relationship with the plants and trees in my garden. My garden is my solace, my connection with What Is. I always feel good in my garden; I belong. I love the sun when it shines, and I also love when it rains, when we have winds that play through the high trees around here, waving them this way and that. The trees and plants know me, accept me. My garden is a gloriously alive world, very much of this earth. This garden is the earth, our human earth, the planet we are made of.

Sometimes I imagine that humans used to have this ability to touch each other without words. We communicate with animals, and with plants, why not with other people? People say plants grow better with music, or perhaps produce more with music. Some animals like music, they say. And I am certain that some of the dogs who come here, and the cats, sense my intentions as I sense theirs. Of course we communicate!

I have always known that humans have all kinds of talents and gifts and abilities that are not recognized by today's scientific society. Is not prayer a kind of communication? To me, prayers are without words, pure communication. I feel the warmth of the energy I send into the cosmos. Sometimes—often—I feel something coming back. Not words, but something. I have known people who had an impression of who I am from looking at my palms, or looking into my eyes, or putting their hands on me in massage. I have known people who could sense where there is water, invisible to the eye and to all scientific instruments, but they knew. I myself have occasionally recognized qualities of plants that I had never seen before. Indeed, there are hundreds of ways some people know about their environment without words. In fact, words, finding

words, often confuses, because words require sorting, naming, categories, in short distinctions. Perceiving a 'whole' has become very difficult in our world.

So I talked to myself for days and nights. I argued this and that. Yes, mind to mind is nothing new, I could accept that. But mind to mind with an alien? But then again, why not?

I cannot imagine that this world would be the only planet in the whole universe that supports what we call Life, and has produced beings who are 'sapient' (one of my dictionaries says that means 'discerning' or 'wise'). Life and sapience happened here, so surely it must have happened in many, many other places of this enormous unimaginably vast universe. Surely millions of other planets must have developed Life in some way or form. With different kinds of sunlight, temperature, chemical composition, different forms of Life would result, of course. On this world we find Life everywhere: in deserts, on the highest mountains, in snow, under water, in the dark. Why not everywhere in the universe?

What we call sentience, the ability to reflect, to be aware, and yes, to communicate, is almost certainly not limited to humans, although some of us would prefer to think we are special and are the only ones with intelligence. Yes, I cannot imagine that there would not be millions, billions, uncounted other worlds in this wonderful universe, and undoubtedly there must be many forms of sentient life as well. The more I think about the inevitability of Life everywhere, the more excited I become about the possibility of learning something about other forms of Life from these aliens.

One night, before going to bed, I reflected that, even after all the scientific exploration of this century, we probably still know very little about our own world, and we know almost nothing about other worlds. Have we learned all there is to learn from the ocean, the atmosphere, the inside of our own earth? Have we learned all there is to know about humans? Suddenly I see all of existence opening wide. My perspective is changing. It is as if I am beginning to see beyond the horizon of my earth, a horizon in three or more dimensions!.

What an opportunity to learn!

## Chapter Five (Dreaming)

The very first time I met the aboriginal people who call themselves “the People,” was when I was invited by a young couple who were doing research on aboriginal languages. They worked in a village that could be reached by car. As anthropologists do, they lived in what they called a native hut. Later I learned that their “hut” was far from what the others of the tribe considered a normal dwelling. This was almost a house, quite large, although it had a dirt floor. There was furniture, chairs and a table. The roof was thatch but the walls were wood planking. It looked somewhat like a Malay house, although those are usually built off the ground. The two anthropologists were sitting around the table with their ‘informant’. We were served a meal of rice and dried fish and some vegetables: a fairly standard meal that one would find in a well-to-do Malay household. Later I learned totally unlike a normal aborigine hut.

I did not have anything to contribute to the lively discussion that was going on around the table so I chose to sit against the back wall. Observing. After we had eaten a tiny woman came in to clean up. Nobody took any notice of her and she obviously made herself as invisible as possible. As she came close I asked her whether she lived in this house. She smiled, no. “I clean up because otherwise it would be a mess in less than a day. She (pointing with her chin) does not know how to live here.” She giggled.

She spoke Malay well enough to carry a conversation. She hinted that this house, and the setup, were not the way her tribe lived. She talked about her family, and with a twinkle in her eyes she said, “They (again pointing with her chin to the two white people) cannot understand how I live.” I asked her about her family, her tribe. She started to say something, then she looked at me and said, “You better go see them, it is hard to explain how my people live.” She touched the earthen floor with one hand, picked up a little soil and said, “This is who we are.” I did not understand at the time.

It was quite noisy in that so-called hut. The two anthropologists, husband and wife, were talking loudly with their ‘informant’, a man who spoke his own language, and Malay, and even some English. I felt embarrassed. Malays do not talk loud and I assumed the aboriginal people would not either. It sounded as if the woman had an argument with the older man, the informant. That did not feel right either. In the cultures of Southeast Asia people do not argue vehemently, certainly not with an older person. I did not learn much about the aborigines I had heard about, and could not follow the argument about fine points of the language.

The following weeks were busy, but I kept thinking of the woman who had talked with me (we had whispered). She intrigued me. She radiated a sort of spirit that was unusual. She was very alive, even lively, and humble. I could not get her out of my mind. I remember her saying I should go to her people and see for myself how they lived. And that last statement, when she held a handful of dirt, of course sharpened my curiosity. I needed to know.

A friend volunteered to go with me. Someone else had given us directions to a settlement that was not too hard to find: we had to find a little Chinese store on a road off the main highway, park the car, and ask where the path begins. Not far, we were told... I knew enough not to ask how far, of course. An hour, two hours? HS and I were prepared for a day trip. We had water and some crackers and two tins of sardines with us.

We found the little store easy enough. We found the path and started walking. In the early morning it was not hot yet. I don't wear a watch so am not sure when we approached the settlement: it must have been late morning, perhaps ten or eleven. We heard people noises and what sounded like girls singing little songs in a strange and exquisite harmony. It sounded simple and yet the counterpoint was sophisticated. HS and I probably talked, we had no reason to want to come upon them unnoticed. We probably made some deliberate noises.

Suddenly it was totally quiet. The singing had stopped. We heard no talk, or other people noises. Even birdsong and other normal jungle noises had evaporated. The path curved left and right, and suddenly we found ourselves in a clearing with three or four bamboo houses on high stilts. The houses were small, the stilts high. I called out, Selamat, hello, anyone here? Not a sound, nobody answered. We did not see anybody.

We were tired and hot, so we decided to sit down and wait for the people to come back. We found a shady spot. We thought they might be shy and were hiding, but surely soon enough they would come back.

We sat in silence until well into the afternoon; we saw or heard no movement, nothing. When it was beginning to get dark a wizened face looked around the corner of one of the huts. When he saw that we had seen him, he came forward. The old man did not say anything for quite a while. We told him who we were, who had told us where this settlement was, we were curious, we wanted to get to know them. We probably talked too much! When we stopped talking, finally, he said in slow but excellent Malay that since it was too late (too dark) to walk back, we might as well stay. And as he said those few words, others materialized from around the little huts. I am not sure how many people there were in that settlement, probably a dozen or so, including three children. There were never many children in other settlements I visited during the next two years.

Someone made a tiny fire. We thought they would be cooking for all of us, so we brought out the two cans of sardines we had brought with us. Not much was said. The old man, it turned out, was the only one who spoke Malay.

They cooked a handful of rice on the little fire, and served it to us with our sardines. We tried to explain that we had meant the sardines for them, not for us. A few people ate something, but not everyone, and nobody ate rice and sardines. As if they thought we had brought the sardines because we could not eat their food! After that I never brought food, or if I did, I did not produce it until perhaps the second day.

Soon we saw people disappearing in the little huts. As everywhere outside of towns and cities people live by the sun: sundown is the time to go to sleep, in order to wake up before the sun gets up again the next day. After we had eaten the old man directed us to the nearest hut. He went first up the very steep notched tree that was their ladder. Two children and one young man climbed up after us — no, they “walked up,” as if the tree with shallow notches was a staircase; I had climbed up on hands and feet.

The old man demonstrated how we would sleep on the floor that was made of side by side bamboo. Sleep with the bamboo, not across, he laughed. HS and I made ourselves as comfortable as we could. I remember putting a small bag that had carried our provisions under my head. I curled myself up in a loose fetal position, lying on my side. One of the children who had followed us inside still stood near the entrance looking at us. He seemed to make up his mind. He came over to where I was trying to go to sleep, and curled himself into the hollow between my legs and chest, with the back of his head in my crotch and his rear under my chin. He was asleep almost immediately. It took me a while to fall asleep.

It was pitch dark, the little boy was sitting up, gently touching my arm, as if to say wake up. It took me a few minutes to realize where I was, and why I was so stiff (not accustomed to sleep on bamboo). I looked around, the other people seemed to be awake, sitting up around the edge of the little house. Yawning and rubbing my eyes I sat up and moved to the periphery, the boy following me and sitting next to me, very close. Vaguely I heard some noises from the other huts where people also must be up. Nobody talked in our hut, but there was an air of expectancy. Softly the old man began to talk, so softly that only gradually I realized that he was talking. At first I could not understand what he was saying. When he saw that I was listening he changed and spoke in Malay. Something about a big tree, and some animal, or many animals. I had a hard time understanding what it was about. HS could see my confusion perhaps, he whispered to me, “He is telling of a dream he had, or at least part of a dream...”

The little boy next to me spoke up. The old man translated, talking directly to me. “He dreamed about your children,” he said. I must have shown my surprise. I could not remember whether I had talked about my family the evening before. There was silence. Then the old man said, “And what did you dream?” I was not sure. I rarely remembered dreams at that time. Something

about... , no I could not remember. It was pleasant, I remembered that. Then the young man said something, the old man translating, "He dreamed of a storm coming. Much wind. But not hear here. Somewhere far away."

I thought to myself, how strange, a storm far away, why would you dream about that?

The old man said he too had dreamed of a storm, or a kind of storm perhaps. It was a disaster anyway. Big trouble. And yes, far away, but not very far. Maybe as far as... he hesitated, maybe as far as "the other coast." I think he meant the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. The little boy put his hand on my knee (I had my legs crossed) and said something that the old man translated, "Your children are fine, you don't have to worry he says, the storm is far away." The old man smiled.

There is something about the smiles of the People that I have not felt anywhere else. It is a small smile, the corners of the mouth barely move up, no teeth showing of course (in many countries of Southeast Asia it is rude to show your teeth, a sign of aggression, a threat). The smile is perhaps mostly in the eyes, giving them an extra twinkle. But sometimes I sensed the smile in my head rather than seeing through my eyes.

I was moved by the concern of the boy, and the smile of the old man. I did not know whether it was appropriate for me to reach out to the little boy. I knew that probably I should not touch his head. I reached over and very lightly put my hand on the hand he had on my knee. I tried to smile the way the old man smiled, without teeth. I think the little boy understood. He looked at me very seriously, deep into my eyes.

The sun was probably up, it was light now. I could hear people stirring and talking in the other huts. Ours was the quietest.

"So," the old man said, "did we dream anything else?" The way he said it suggested that all of us had dreamed together, or the same dream, or pieces of the same dream? I had many questions but they were not answered until more than a year later, when I had visited several settlements.

We stood up, stretched, and one by one we climbed down the pole. Going down was worse than climbing up, for me at least. Again, the others walked upright down the tree as if they were walking down a staircase. It took me a long time to learn to walk on a tree, with or without notches cut in it, as if it was lying on the ground.

Outside, the people from the other huts were talking softly in clumps. Then I noticed that after a while someone would move to another clump. We were sharing our dreams with all others. And, strangely, the dream of a storm far away seemed to have been dreamt in all the huts. But they did not worry, because the storm was far away — later I learned that "far away" did not have to mean far away in space, it could also be in the future.

I was still thinking of the dreams and how amazing it was that sharing dreams made some kind of sense for all of them, when I noticed that people were disappearing. A smell told me where people went to move their bowels. I cannot remember anyone eating, but they all drank water. Someone began a little song again, and a few of the young people were going in different directions into the surrounding jungle. I imagined "to find food." I had an idea that, of course, these people would have to spend all day "hunting and gathering." Soon I learned that they did not work very hard at gathering food at all, and that they hunted only rarely.

As everybody drifted away HS and I were left alone with the old man and the little boy, who stayed close to my side. We said good bye, and thank you to the old man, and I bent over to say something to the little boy. The old man smiled that smile and said softly, "He (the little boy) will guide you back."

But the boy is only five or six years old! We can find the way, we found the way here. There is no need for anyone to guide us. HS and I both thought of all the arguments why we would be perfectly all right. Of course the old man and the little boy did not say anything.

"He says he needs to protect you."

Protect me? HS and I were two grown men, this little boy protect me from what?

"He says, your children will be all right in the storm."

What storm? Of course my children will be all right. The two oldest were in school, the third was in kindergarten, and their mother was taking care of the baby... And what storm? I looked up into a blazing blue sky with no clouds in sight. I had already forgotten about the storm we had dreamed about.

We argued for several minutes that we could take care of ourselves and that we did not need this little boy to...

All this time the boy had not moved, he just stood there, not looking at me or even at the old man. The old man too had not said anything, just smiled. HS shrugged his shoulders and said, Let the boy come with us for a little while.

The little boy walked in front, barefoot, with little more than a shred of rag around his middle, we followed. It seemed an easier walk than the day before. Not the same path, perhaps, we were not sure. The day before it had taken us more than two hours. Now we reached the little Chinese store where we had parked the car in a little over an hour probably, and we had walked easily, never hurried. Just as we knew that our destination was just around the next bend of the path the little boy vanished. He had disappeared.

The Friday following a friend called us in the morning, Did you hear about the storm on the east coast? It's on the news, bad storm! We had planned a

family outing to a beach someone had told us about on the east coast. I remembered the dream. We postponed our trip.



Woke up in the middle of the night thinking — or perhaps even saying — No, no, NO! Not the same People. Then my dream came back in all its vague detail. I had dreamed that I was trying to explain to someone I did not know — but I know that dreams where I am with people I don't know I really do know them and...

The People who are teaching me how to hear them in my mind are not the same as the People, the aborigines, I had known thirty years ago. Why then did I call them both by the same name? No, I did not call them that, they themselves did. They, both of those people, think of themselves as “the people.” And the people who are talking to me now are not even human, I said to this unknown stranger.

There was more to the dream, of course. Now the first part came back. I was outside, in my garden, in one of my meditation places. It was dark, evening perhaps. A strange animal had appeared, like no animal I had ever seen. Not as big as a person, but certainly as big as a good-sized dog. I did not see the shape very well. A roundish outline, quite bulky. I did not see a face, but I heard the voice very clearly. It was saying something like could not breathe. Or perhaps it could not get its breath. Or, there was something wrong with the air?

I thought of the neighbor's dogs. They had made holes underneath the fence twice, and come into my place and dug up some plants. I had a hard time patching the fence so that they could not get underneath it again. Hauled some big pieces of lava rock.

But this animal of the dream was not a dog. It had a very different feeling. It was not even an animal perhaps. But now, sitting up in bed, at a little after one o'clock, nothing more of the dream stayed with me. Just that I had felt frustrated because I could not explain that the current the People were not the same as the aboriginal people who also called themselves the People. I said to the night, “What else would they call themselves?” not being sure which “they” I meant.

Should I make a cup of strong tea and stay up, or make a cup of chamomile and try to go back to sleep?



I am aware that I am in a dream. A very strange and wonderful dream. I am in a space that is featureless but nevertheless full of light and color and movement. Very alive. I am with dozens, perhaps hundreds of people of all



ages, shapes and colors. Oh, and many animals. And even people I cannot see but I know exactly where they are. There is music in the air, or birdsong. Not human voices. There is a lot of touching, smelling each other. I feel skin, and hair, some rough some very fine. I feel fur, and something leathery, could be clothing, or skin. We are very happy, we are singing together. No, not a song, there are no words, but beautiful harmonies that seem to flow and change from one harmony to another.

Hah! I recognize my dear friend C, who died many years ago. And L, who suffered so terribly before she died. No, she is fine now, she says. She really is an ascended master. She said she was, and I did not know what she meant. People I knew in the war, I feel tearful, but they laugh and say... But of course nobody is saying anything at all. I can hear them all in my mind. It's not necessary to hear with my ears. Or even see with my eyes.

There is a dance we do. Part of me is thinking what to call it, a conga, a line, that weaves in and through and over and under itself. Another picture, moebius strip. I remember that I used to make them, that mysterious object that has three dimensions but actually it has only one, when you draw a line it comes back on itself. Or is it two and three? Dimensions? What do you call something like that — an impossible figure — Esscher, steps that go up but you can also see them going down, or my own designs — empty space that is not empty at all — and who was it? Einstein? two objects that are a universe away from each other but know what the other is seeing — hands-on healing — oh, so many things. The everyday miracles we don't even see any more. The many gifts and talents we have. Or had?

I am dancing and talking without words and hearing without ears and seeing colors that are not there and so many people I love them all in the past and the present and in other continents and now I know that the people I recognize are dead.

Dead? Maybe I am dead. I am after. Can that be? I know I am dreaming and so many wonderful things are happening all at once, and...

I pinch myself and wake up with a smell in my nose that I cannot identify. It is pleasant, strong. Plant smell, I think. It is beginning to be light outside, so must have fallen asleep anyway, without tea.

Of course I allow myself to stay in bed for a few more minutes. There is still that smell. Definitely a plant smell, but more. Plant and animal smell perhaps.

While the water for tea and porridge is heating I go outside. The smell is stronger.

As the day progresses the smell fades, but even in the evening I can smell it still. Or is it that I remember? All day long I have been reliving parts of the dream. I know this is an “important” dream. Not many of those; one must cherish them. And I learned long ago that it is not important to interpret dreams, certainly not with one of those books that says that dreaming of this means that. Dreams don’t work that way. The People — I must be careful now, I mean the aborigines — say that the dream world is the real world, and the world we live in when we are awake is but the shadow of the dream world. Certainly I have had too many dreams that have told me things I could not have known, and quite a few dreams have warned me. This dream was a helping dream, the highest kind there is.

The dream reminded me, as only a dream can, that I must be careful not to restrict my awareness to logical thinking only. Remember ‘lateral thinking’! Reality is much more than two and two is four, or things you can measure. My reality is richer than that.



Dreams are an important part of my life. The first thing I do in the morning is write down my dreams of the night, either on a little pad of paper or in the computer. Of course I learned long ago that when I am aware of the importance of dreaming and want to remember dreams, I do remember them. Now I often know I am dreaming in the middle of a dream.

And I have learned that my dreams almost always have meaning only for me. There is no universal meaning to dream subjects or themes. I learned not to force meaning. Very often a dream stays with me, in the background of my awake awareness, giving color or depth to my life. Too often to be chance I have dreamt of an event that then happened the next morning, or even a few days later. As the aborigines did, I now know that dreams come from a real reality that often gives an insight in the reality of every day.

I do miss the little morning ritual of sharing dreams, or dream fragments. That was an important aspects of what I learned about dreaming from the People -- the first people I thought of as The People. Now, if a dream nags me, I imagine a group of a few people sitting around discussing our dreams. It is quite amazing how well that works. In imagining a small group of people sitting around me, I sometimes think I am making up a dream.

All I can say is, it works for me.

## Chapter Six

My conceit to think that I would be an explorer of the far reaches of space through mind-to-mind communication with these aliens collapsed very quickly, of course. I am no explorer and I still feel more like a guest of the Alien (Aliens, probably). Before I can do any exploring I have to learn to communicate and that turned out not to be easy.

I might accept that they are real, but first I have some more questions. Where are you from? How far away is that? How come your space ship disappeared and I can still hear you? How many of you are there? Have you communicated with other people on earth, and a sub-question, Did you really tell that Committee that planned the 'Event' that it was up to the people of Earth to decide where and when? What happened at that worldwide fizzle, our First Contact That Wasn't? Probably I had other questions. Quite a list.

In the meantime, of course, my life went on normally, at least on the surface. I am a hermit by inclination, I do not move in the circle of movers and shakers, not even local ones. The usual things are 'happening' in our little community. I visit people, friends come to see me. I write, answer correspondence, and always I garden. My gardening in fact is often just walking around, observing, sometimes talking with my friends: an orchid here, a tree that suddenly decides to bloom out of season, a patch of moss that turned brown. Usually I can sense whether a plant or tree 'needs' something, and if possible I provide that: more water, less water, occasionally some fertilizer, maybe a sprinkle of dolomite to make our soil a bit less acid. The days are full of sunshine and mellow winds, alternating with days of whipping wind and rain. An almost-hurricane came close but did not hit this island.

The real world often seems so far away. A new plane was unveiled that can fly from New York to Tokyo in four hours — or is it three? no, maybe five.

Technology never sleeps. There are the usual wars and rumors of wars. One country threatens a neighboring country. Another country had an earth quake. Hunger in Africa. It was all 'news' for a day and none of it new. This is the world we humans have made: a barely contained chaos.

Occasionally my mind still reels from the idea of communicating— without words— with some unseen and invisible supposed alien(s). But in time, as with yesterday's wars, or last night's meal, the idea of communicating with aliens became unremarkable. It just is.



At the end of the month I backed up my computer. And, as usual, I went through some of my work of the past month, not wanting to back up things that should be trashed. I read through diary entries. When I reread my notes about the last visit from the Voice, it all came back vividly. First the Whisper Dream that I imagined hearing in my ears. Then realizing the Voice was not really a voice, and if it was anywhere, it was in my head. Then the revelation that this Voice might be from somewhere outside our Earth, an 'alien' voice!

Now, a month later... Only a month? If it was not imagination, why didn't the Voice speak to me again? It had been so real. Why did it stop? True, the Voice had said they were leaving me to sort things out. Had I done that? Well, yes, probably. The idea no longer obsessed me. Life goes on, I think about more pressing concerns. Maybe 'the Voice' really was imagination?

Or perhaps now it is my turn to call him/her/it? How does one call a disembodied voice? "Hello, voice, are you there? Are you listening?" I was driving to town when those thoughts casually floated through my awareness. Not the best time to be distracted by mind-to-mind communication! Fortunately I did not get an answer. When I came home I unloaded the car. That always takes a while, groceries to put away, things to be unpacked, stored in a little house with very little storage space. I made a cup of tea and read the mail. After that I took a nap; town always wears me out.

Finally, late afternoon, I sat down to meditate. I composed a simple, Hello, are you there?, in my head, and 'sent it out'. Almost immediately I heard a response. It surprised me, caught me off guard. So, there really is a Voice! Again there is a sort of questioning on their part. Do you really want to 'be with us'? Well yes, I called, didn't I?

As I say that (voiceless, in my mind, or wherever thoughts live) I get ready to ask some of the questions I had written down somewhere — but where? I make up new questions on the spot. What do I call you? Do you have a name? (Pictures in my head of faces and names). I admit, in my imagination I saw the names in letters. It had felt uncomfortable to communicate with a 'Voice', without being able to put a face to it, not even a name, a word. This question in-

cluded all those thoughts and images. To me it was natural to ask for a name. Who are you?

There is a fairly long pause. Perhaps he/she/it/they (see how unwieldy it is to think?) had not heard me, or, who knows our connection might have been broken, that happens on the computer sometimes. I repeated, What shall I call you, then added, Do you have a name?

The answer, when it came, seemed hesitant. "No," the Voice said. "We do not have a (what you think of as name, or names)."

We? Yes, clearly there were more of them.

"What you think of as the Voice," they said, "is not a single being."

So I should address and think of 'them'.

I have thought for many days about how to write down my first lesson, as I think of it. I had to translate what I experienced inside into words. I tried this and that to describe what I understood in my head, but none of it was very clear. So, please take my word for it (see how locked into words we are?): I 'received' ideas and concepts that somehow became very clear, meaning "No, we do not have what you think of as a name, and yes, there are more than one of us."

The rest of my first real communication with questions and answers was very cumbersome, slow, and vague. I felt in a fog much of the time, groping my way to clarity.

I shall sum up what I learned after a fairly lengthy back and forth. And although it was not like any conversation I have ever had with a person, for the sake of readability I shall write as if it had been an earth conversation.

The voice, comes from a singular being ("now," they added, "at this moment"), but a being who is so completely connected with others of his kind that what is communicated is the combined, collective thoughts and ideas of 'them'.

Putting a face to them was not important. Or, rather, I think they said it was not 'useful', it would not help my comprehension. I tried to fit ideas about this nameless group of tightly connected beings into my point of view, but at first I failed. How can one even conceive of this collective being without voice, without name?

I projected (as a singer projects her voice to an audience) what I think of as my inside (voiceless) voice, When next I call you, should I just yell hey you? Probably I colored my yell with the many judgments that go with 'hey you': rude, loud, crude, impolite, awkward, not acceptable in polite company, and so forth.

The response came back with a smile (yes, that comes across clearly). Very patiently they explained that in time the image in my mind will get richer, more detailed. I will get a 'sense' of their compound identity. "But, yes, in the meantime it would be fine," they said several times, "to call them with my image of them. No words are necessary." As time progressed, the identity will become

fleshed out so to speak. All I have to do when I want to talk with them, is to put my image of them in my awareness. They would answer if they could.

Later, when I thought about it, I realized that even in our human world we make a sort of compound 'gestalt' of what we know of another person. We recognize phone voices of people we know well. A simple 'Hello' immediately gives me the 'gestalt' of a person's face, name, identity, etc. When calling a friend on the telephone I need only say, Hi, and s/he knows who it is.

An aside. One of the first things I learned is that this kind of mind-to-mind communication is in the present. Very much in the present. In our human talk we go between past and present and future, but somehow the aliens never do, or cannot perhaps.



I did not learn much that first time. It seems there is only one 'voice' but because they are so intimately connected the thoughts and answers that get to me are always from many. Of course, their normal communication is mind-to-mind, they must know each other well. Many times, in different ways, they said they are so close-knit that they know each others' thoughts and feelings. Of course! But it took me a while for the implications of that simple sentence to penetrate my understanding. As soon as I felt tired, the communication was terminated. I am not sure who cut off first, I think there was a mutual agreement that we would each go our separate ways for now, but they made it very clear that any time I felt like it, I could call them. And (smile) I knew how to call them. When I came back in the house (I had meditated in one of the two meditation spots in the garden) I saw to my surprise that almost two hours had passed.



As it happened I had nothing important scheduled for almost a whole week. Fortunate, because I was burning with curiosity! I planned to continue my questioning of the aliens until I understood more of who they were and what was going on with their aborted visit. A few times I was tempted to share these first conversations with friends. But I remembered too well the reaction I got when, thirty years ago, I talked with my colleagues after getting to know the aborigines. They too seemed to know each others' minds, and their communication with me was sparse, very simple. When I asked a question that was 'important' there was always a noticeable pause. I was sure somehow that they consulted with each other, and then only one of them would answer. My colleagues, scientists —as I was at the time—, hardly listened to me but they looked at me as if I had lost my mind. I do not think scientists have become

more tolerant of new ideas in thirty years, and I was not sure how ordinary people would react to my wild tales. This society seems to have decided that the safest way to enter a new century is backwards, with blindfolds firmly in place.

The next day I called my wordless friends, as I now thought of them, as soon as I was settled in meditation again; that seems to work best for me. We talked every day for almost a week, sometimes twice a day. For them our talking was entirely internal, with nothing similar to our senses. Rather than recount each session (I made notes) I shall try to summarize.

I do not want to think of them as 'the Aliens', so I decided to call them The People. What else? It is not really a name. Most human groups also call themselves by their word for people or humans.

When I asked how many of them were in the spaceship, they did not answer. That was answered with a silence and obviously some confusion.

Finally, the response was, Are numbers important?

Well, no, perhaps numbers are not important, but we, humans, are used to seeing the universe in numbers: distance, hours, years, miles, temperature, and other such 'scientific' measures that are expressed in numbers. But I let it slide; made a note to myself to ask more about this later. It also seemed that asking about the spaceship and the lander caused confusion, or perhaps they felt those questions were off limits for security reasons?

A bit further on in our conversation they told me that, yes, they have individual identities. Individuals are different one from another. "In time you will get to distinguish between us," they assured me in an encouraging sort of tone.

In fact, I had already noticed slight differences between individuals of the People. It had even occurred to me that perhaps on different occasions I had talked with different groups. I was definitely beginning to hear different voices. Individual differences sometimes came across as shades and tones of color. These colors had nothing to do with their faces, of course, if they even had faces. I had no visual pictures of them at all. But I am a visual person, and colors and shades gave me a sense of variations.

As we 'talked' I began to understand that to the People their uniqueness as individuals is not as significant as their connectedness with each other, a connectedness that is so close and so natural that it is difficult for me to grasp. At one point, when I pressed them, they said, "Yes, sometimes there is an individual who stands out, but that creates problems." It was evidently too early in our acquaintanceship to push further on what to me is a very important point. Humans do not know that kind of close-knit communities.

Although, now that I think of it, in Malay villages there is another kind of close-knit feeling, and individual differences are hidden. If there is a 'rich' man in the village, an outsider would never know who he is. People who own a car, for instance, will park it far from the village. It is considered quite crass to 'stand out'.

Of course I asked about the failed First Contact.

They seemed surprised (upset?, I could not quite read the feeling tone) that I thought it had failed.

They indicated they had wondered why a physical meeting of humans and People was so important to us. They had learned from the Event, they said several times, in different contexts. Now they realize that humans are 'closed' (the image of a hard shell, dark inside; I think what they meant was also like 'deaf and blind'). It had never occurred to them that we could learn anything about them by looking. I sensed they also meant, Did we not have other senses, other ways to know our environment?

But, I protested, all we know of ourselves and our world is what we see, and a little from what we hear, or feel. Communicating without words is unknown to us, and to most of us today it is even unthinkable.

Then I remembered the 'primitives' I had known and other primitives I had read about, and added that perhaps some humans could talk without words, mind to mind. And, I added hopefully, perhaps some others could learn? There was no answer to that, but somehow I felt they agreed. And I certainly felt good having said it.

Why had the 'lander' faded and disappeared, I asked?

For the first time there was a whole chorus of responses to that, in many colors and tones. It took me quite a while (several sessions, in fact) to sort out, roughly, what was said. Of course they did not 'say', but it is unnecessarily cumbersome for me to constantly remind you, the reader, that this was not a conversation in words, but mind-to-mind). This is how I piece it together.

They had known of course, since they arrived in the neighborhood of earth (and that was many turns of the earth around the sun ago) that we have machines that make the most horrendous 'noise' — radiating large amounts of different kinds of energy into space, I figured out.

In fact, that is what had brought them here in the first place. They were curious what this explosion of 'noise' was that had come 'suddenly' from this location in space.

Later I worked out that what they mean with 'noise' is the cacophony of energies, wavelengths, that 'suddenly' burst into space from our planet. Audio signals, but also television signals, radar probably, atomic blasts, electric energies, all radiating into space, eventually reaching wherever it is they live. And 'suddenly', historically speaking, they perceived this great noise, all these 'unnatural' energies coming from our location in space. They came to investigate.

When they came in the neighborhood they realized that the noise they had picked up came from machines, artificial constructs, not from living beings.

That was the first shock, a complete and total surprise to them. A very new idea. They referred to other beings on other planets that they were familiar with. Never before had they encountered beings who made the 'things' we surround ourselves with. They still do not understand, and are trying to learn to understand from communications with me and, I now understand, with other



humans as well. Why do we need machines? We, humans, are obviously advanced but does our Earth not provide what we need, must we use force (make, generate energies)?

When they came close to this Earth, they sort of expected to hear this machine-made noise. To protect themselves they had made' (formed, shaped?) what our Media called a Lander. I could not quite understand what they said about the lander, but it seems to have been some sort of projection, or shell, to prevent them from being blasted and overwhelmed by the noise of our artificial energies.

But when they opened... At first I thought they meant 'open the doors', but later I realized that they meant something I can only think of as 'when they opened themselves', or, when they opened (those doors in the lander?), the noise they picked up was worse than they had thought possible.

Some of the noise indeed came from the many machines, but what was worse was the noise that came from humans! They repeated several times what it was that had so shocked them, because it was unquestionably 'shock' they felt. Or insult, or overwhelming pain. They had expected the noise of the artificial lights and the various energies of radar and infrared devices. They had screened themselves for that. But when the immense clatter and chaos of our human thoughts assailed them they were unprepared. They said they were completely and totally overwhelmed by human 'noise'. It had been extremely painful because it was unexpected and gave them a dangerous overload of sensations they had never before experienced. As they tried to explain what experiencing our human thoughts and feelings had done to them, I can only find images like an explosion from very close by, or perhaps the rolling noise of an atomic blast, or a hit by lightning. Not sound alone but a shock as of wind, heat, furor, chaos. They tried to 'show me' (they insisted they would not hurt me the way they had been hurt). What I perceived in my mind felt like muffled shouts and screams and feelings like anger and suspicion and fierce hope, violence, aggression, scheming, paranoia, bitterness, hope and fear. And all of that at the same time. They let some of these feelings flow across my mind, but veiled, wanting to spare my sensitivities.

"We cannot deal with your noise," they said. The noise threatened to kill them, disable them. It had taken them time to regain their composure. They had never imagined that it was possible to make so much noise, and so many different kinds of noise. They had never experienced mental energies so chaotic, so fierce, from any other race of beings they knew or knew about. They could not imagine sentient beings so chaotic. They were shocked beyond anything they had ever experienced. So they had to 'close' (and, somehow, that included fading the lander out).

They cannot understand how it is possible that we have such conflicted minds and yet can 'send' so strongly. Several times they asked, "do you not sense that noise? Does it not hurt you? How do you protect yourselves from

each other?” When I thought about that later, I realized that, yes, I can hear/ feel that noise in big cities, for instance, or even in a crowded place like a store or mall, I have felt it in airplanes, in movie theaters.

The noise hit them like a blast from a furnace, or as the power of a hurricane, or a tidal wave of noise. Then, when the understanding came that the noise comes because we, humans, are each alone, they were perhaps even more shocked. “You are each alone”, they said with great consternation. And the feelings that came with that image were sadness and compassion and complete, total surprise, and perhaps also fear. How was this possible?

So, they closed. They 'had to let go' they said. I did not understand that, but it seemed they were talking about the Lander I now think of as some kind of microphone.



In later conversations they repeated several times that humans are unique in the universe, they know of no other sapient species (and they do consider us sapient, or sentient) who have chosen to develop a technology whose purpose they cannot guess, while giving up the talents we were born with, talents other beings everywhere else had developed through their own evolution.

On other worlds sentient species (and usually more than one species on the same planet, they said) were in more or less constant contact with each other. The evolution of other species had been in developing themselves. On all sentient planets they knew or knew about (and there are 'many-many'), the beings' own natural gifts and (mental?) talents had specialized in time. Their evolution had led to beings who could communicate with each other, or 'move without moving': also confusing to me. I think they meant that those beings can move 'things' without touching, and perhaps move themselves with their own inner power? I'll find out later.

What an entirely different picture of the universe. Our fantasies of immense warships conquering star systems cannot be, I gather. There are no star wars, no space trade in exotic whatever, no intergalactic spies and all the stuff we know from 'space opera'. We always assume that other species are like us, only more so. Or else we believe we are alone in the cosmos...

We are not alone in the universe, but utterly different, it turns out. We are the different ones; we are the aliens.

The People are quite definite about the 'many-many' sentient species. “Sentience is everywhere, of course,” they said quite a few times (and that is a quote as far as I can quote nonverbal information). We, humans, are the exception.

In this context the People often repeated something I can only translate as "We do not understand how you live" (perhaps that also means 'how can you survive'?)



My education in nonverbal, mind-to-mind communication proceeded well enough I thought. I was learning to understand them, although I still had great trouble 'sending'. Our communication was primitive and often one-way. But I was learning, and they were patient teachers. I sometimes felt that talking with them was very much like talking with my two year-old grandson, except that now I am the child and I am sure that my side of the conversation is as primitive and confused to them as my grandson's utterances are to me.

Often I am reminded of the aborigines, who 'knew' so much that we with our science could not understand, or accept. My aboriginal friends always knew when I was coming, for instance, although there was no way I could let them know, and my trips were almost always spontaneous, unplanned. Dogs and cats also often know when their master is on the way home; someone told me that his dog even knew when he first had the intention of going home! We think that 'cute' but do not really pay much attention. (Note: just found out that Rupert Sheldrake published a book about Dogs Who Know When Their Masters Come Home.)

So many years ago, I slowly learned some of the aboriginal language, but they never seemed to have much trouble understanding what I said. They even understood me, I remember, when I said nothing! The aborigines also saw their world in different detail and meaning than I did. They saw (or felt) things I had never even thought about, they heard sounds I did not know existed. And they could do things I certainly could not. For instance, they could walk through the jungle for hours without tiring, and without sweating, while I sweated buckets and tired after half an hour. They giggled when I asked them how they did that. Watch us, they said. I found that they never drank any water before setting out for long walks, only after they came back in the afternoon. When I tried the same I suffered for a day, but after that I too could walk almost without sweating and I felt more vigorous and tired much less quickly. (I shared my experience with a famous scientist who was doing research in water metabolism. His response: 'impossible').

I imagine the aborigines would have a much easier time communicating with the People, and without noise! I asked the People once whether I too made 'noise'. They hesitated. Not noise, exactly, but often you are too 'fast'. We have to learn to hear you when you talk fast. That never got much clearer to me, except one time when I felt they meant my mind was cluttered, they had a hard time sorting through 'stuff' to find my communication. That is why it 'works

better' when I am outside, where I am more relaxed, or when I am in meditation.

The People are surprised about almost everything they learn from us. For instance, they had never imagined a world where one species dominates all the rest of creation. They themselves can do things other creatures on their planet cannot (for instance long distance communication) but they cannot imagine feeling themselves no longer part of their world. Several times they told me that they have great difficulty understanding how some humans can feel themselves outside of the complex and yet completely integrated ecosystem of our world (my words, of course, but their thought). At least every other session I sensed what I think of as a head shaking, "how can they make themselves so alone?" They are surprised and aghast that humans chose to cut themselves off from their roots, as they express it.

Is that why we invented machines? The People are seriously puzzled by humankind's evident love of and reliance on things they make themselves, rather than rely on the givens of this planet. Of course, all beings in the known universe rely on and love their own world, they repeated often.

To encounter a species that chooses to stand apart from other Life on their very own world, so that they have to rely on things they make themselves, does not make sense to them. And again they say, 'We do not understand how you live', a phrase (thought) they would use often in later conversations.

Slowly, perhaps, I am beginning to communicate, but I am beginning to realize that it is a very one-sided conversation. It is I who tell them about humans, but I have learned very little about them and their world. Hopefully I will learn more later.

Of course it is true that we can hardly imagine living without our machines and all the things and services we rely on in our man-made society. It is hard to remember for most of us that not long ago we did rely on the earth, as all other creatures do. Today, more and more, we depend on our own efforts. We use the earth for raw materials, to make what we think we need, to grow food as if it never grew in nature. What made us decide that we knew better?

The more I thought about that, the more I came to realize the enormity of that concept. To have removed ourselves from the earth (chosen to remove ourselves, as the People say), to create a world of our own making. We are so confident that we can live without the Earth that we dream of living in space, in closed system spaceships, conquering worlds to spread ourselves through space... What bizarre fantasies! In my imagination I see plants and animals floating in artificial vats of fluid, 'living' without roots, without ties to the earth. Is that possible? We seem to prove that it might be. We already grow hydroponic vegetables in sealed greenhouses, fed through water we doctor with those chemicals we think the plants need to grow faster and bigger. We grow animals in tiny enclosures where they cannot move and so get fatter faster, we add hormones and antibiotics to what we give them to eat, all of it 'scientific-

cally' put together. We eat those plants and animals and we survive, so it must be all right? We change nature to conform to our ideas of what is better. We think we must 'improve' nature. As we improve ourselves with surgery and hormones, and no doubt soon through manipulating our own genes.

To the People that is so strange that it is almost unthinkable. Perhaps even stranger, I am beginning to understand, is our belief that plants, animals and we ourselves, are separate, apart from each other. To the People all parts of the whole are so interconnected, so intertwined, that it is literally impossible for them to consider a rock, a tree, the wind as separate from the whole.



One afternoon, when we (again!) had a discussion about this, I was in the garden. My eye fell on a spider web. The wonderful shimmering image of that must have been vivid enough for them to pick it up. They said, Humans think that they can take one strand (of that web) and change it or manipulate it without changing the whole web. But that is impossible. No strand of the web is separate. If you touch one strand, however lightly, the whole web is touched. Your world is like that as well. Everything is connected to all else. It is very hard for the People to even 'see' one strand, they see the web, and they see the branches of the tree that anchor the web, and the spider who never ceases to make it, and the insects that get stuck in it; all of that and more is 'One' to the People.

In mind-to-mind talk that image comes through very clearly, and it took only a fraction of a second for me to comprehend. In words that concept of being 'one' is difficult and cumbersome to describe.

To the People it is unthinkable, shockingly hard, to accept that we can live without an intense, close, intimate tie to other humans, to animals, plants, rocks, water, the wind and sunshine of our planet. There are many other aspects that puzzle them about us, but this is definitely the most baffling.

## Chapter Seven

I took a week off from my lessons in mind-to-mind. Spent a pleasant weekend with friends on the other side of the island, then visited more friends on the way back. The weekend became three days, four, and then a week. When I came back I decided to contact the People right away. I felt refreshed and open. There were still many questions they had not answered. I still did not understand what had happened—or not happened—for instance, when the whole world was breathlessly waiting for First Contact.

They went through that little shuffle that seems to be mandatory before we begin what I think of as a 'session'. Are you sure you want to be with us? Yes, I am sure. They say, you are welcome, and I say something like that before we can begin.

I said, I can understand why you came to investigate when you heard the 'noise' from this part of space, but I am not sure that I understand how you came from wherever your planet is? (And a whole string of related questions appended itself to my question: why did your spaceship move to that second orbit, who did you talk with to arrange the landing, what about that missile, how did you evade it, and so on, and so on?)

They answered, and it seemed unexceptional to them, that they did not really come/travel/move here. There is no vehicle, no space ship, no machine of any kind that brought them here. They are not 'here'.

But... I felt myself stuttering. What about that spaceship, the lander, the...

I was speechless, and more to the point, my mind was speechless. I did not know what to ask.

What we had seen in that famous orbit (here the several voices overlapped) had been a 'mental construct', a projection, something that was in another dimension, something that was there and was not there. That something took energy to maintain and that is why after the missile episode they had just stopped 'making' it. And that also is why when they were so overwhelmed when they first experienced, through what I thought of as the lander, our mind noise, they had 'let go', they could not keep up the illusion. Illusion?

It was my time to be silent, to digest these very strange concepts. I asked the same question again, because I was sure I had misunderstood. They repeated what they had said before, with more detail.

And the big hoopla around First Contact, I asked? It was easy to ask that question. The whole First Contact episode was like a short movie in my head, with color and sound. I only had to add the question mark — how about that? Of course, they said, there was nobody behind those doors that were not really doors of what you call a lander. It was empty. But not really empty either, one of the People added. It was a (projection, a construct) for 'hearing'. A listening device? Well, not only listening, it is for hearing and seeing both. But not a thing, another voice added. It was not a “thing” they emphasized.

Here the conversation bogged down in confusion. They do not do well with details. Or rather, we come from such different points of view that we have few concepts in common. But we are both learning. At least I am learning. I can only imagine they are!

I now have the impression that seeing and hearing are capacities they do not have, at least not as we think of it. They 'perceive' with senses very different from ours. So I understood that 'listening device' was not quite right either. Perhaps something that reflected our energies to wherever they were. Something that could reflect, bounce back the kind of impressions they would perceive? Perhaps even amplify what it reflected. What we called the Lander picked up human energies here and sent them to the People there wherever 'there' is. More like a microphone then. But not a “thing.”

Of course, I thought, they expected humans to be like them, able to communicate mind-to-mind, as we expect aliens to look like earth creatures and speak our language! They had sent other 'mirrors' (or microphones?) to other planets because other sentient beings they had encountered (not 'in the flesh' we would say) also communicate mind-to-mind.

And then, when the 'doors' opened (when they turned the microphone on, I would now say) they perceived this horrendous chaos of our minds. It came across to me as sounds, screeches, crashing cymbals, chalk on a blackboard, falling steel, explosions, howling winds, all going at once, in no pattern that was perceptible.

I finally got it!

They had been aghast.

They had never experienced anything quite so bad.



But that is cheating, I almost yelled. You fooled us. Why did you not tell us? My comments (a nicer word for my angry and confused reactions to what I now understood) fell over each other in my rush to say and ask and complain and protest and generally sputter. I tried to say, Why did you pretend to come down to us on earth? What is it you want from us? I was speechless, breathless, I saw red, I could not think of any reasonable thing to say, so I withdrew.

They had withdrawn long before, I realized. They could not take my noise.



For days I continued to sputter, by myself, about that surprising revelation. The whole 'event' really had been a nonevent? The thousand square miles of land we had bulldozed, the millions of dollars and euros and other monies we had spent on a welcome... all that effort was for an illusion?

There was no spaceship, no lander. What we saw (but could not measure!) was an illusion, something in another dimension but not a thing. Hah!

We did all that for nothing?

I felt quite overcome and at the same time I knew with a sinking feeling that now I could never tell anyone about these aliens who talk to me in my head.

And I realized that I felt as shocked by their casual revelation as they had been shocked by our noise. We really were very alien to each other. We not only did not speak words, we lived in totally different universes.



When I thought I had sufficiently recovered to carry on a reasonable, calm conversation, I called again. The response was immediate.

This time it was they who began, many voices, different tones and colors in my internal perception, explaining that we both had to make an effort to understand each other.

They admitted that humans were so strange to them because they cannot imagine how we can live. And, of course the very idea of everyone being utterly alone they cannot conceive of at all. They had fully expected to come here and talk with 'us', but there was no Us. They had never imagined the difficulties we were having... Obviously, they said, we must be strange to you because you were so strange to us when you were incomprehensibly upset when we told you the simplest and clearest of facts. My outburst of anger at them meant, they said, that I did not yet 'comprehend' well enough. The interpretation of what I experienced inside was not good enough. To them it is unthinkable that I could not feel/sense/know their intentions! And, one wistful voice added (a true whisper), '... and after all this (time) we, the People, obviously still do not understand you humans'.

I tried to think back. How long have I communicated with these so-called aliens? What do I really know about them? Yes, it is true, I do not know their intentions. How can I, without looking them in the eyes — I do not even know whether they have eyes! I wished I knew what they look like, what their daily



lives are like. How and what they eat. Do they sleep? It is time I understand who they are.

We went on for quite a while. I was getting quite discouraged because I understood less and less. Who or what these people (or beings) were was a greater mystery now than before. I did not even know whether they were people.

Did I make it all up?



Then it hit me. They said they were not really here, they had just 'made' something that was in another dimension to listen to us. Suddenly I saw the flaw. It is impossible!

They must be at least a few tens of light years away (probably more), so any kind of messages between us would take at least ten years or more to cross the space between us. "Nothing can go faster than the Speed of Light", right? Is not that one of the immutable laws of the universe? Nothing can go faster than light? So, I could not possibly talk with them as if they were here, with questions and immediate answers. All this talk about different dimensions, illusions, here and not here! Hah. Now I got them. The whole thing is a hoax. It is in my imagination, or they are human people who...

I went through some bad days! Each scenario I dreamed up to explain what could not be explained was more unlikely than the last.



Of course we were no longer connected. They left me when I lost my temper again. They do not tolerate my doubts, or my making up my mind. To me it is important to know whether or not they are real. I must make a decision. Either I go along with the joke and continue these so-called discussions, or...

Or what? Forget the whole thing and pretend it never happened? Sad to admit, I cannot do that. The sense that what I perceive is 'real' is too strong. And yet the obvious impossibility of our 'contact' immobilizes me.

I cannot stand it that I believe something that cannot be. I should have known. From the very beginning that whole spaceship story was too good to be true. And then the fading lander. How could the whole world, important governments, the United Nations, believe and accept all that, to the point of spending millions, perhaps billions to welcome little green men from mars? Not to speak of that deplorable waste land we created.

How utterly humiliating!



## Chapter Eight

I was fortunate to grow up at a time and a place when the world was a wonder. The people around me did not believe that we, humans, knew it all or even could know it all. Hardly anyone questioned that some people could heal by laying on of hands, nobody was surprised that a bird in a cage could pick a filthy playing card which foretold my future (unbelievably accurately, in fact). People had not lost the ability to walk softly, without leaving a foot print. If, at that time, I had heard the Voice of these aliens, I would not have questioned.

Now I am an adult, having spent at least half my life studying the latest insights of science, the modern god. In this century Man took over the world. We accept that what Science discovers is the 'Truth', and there are no other truths beside Science. And Science says, Nothing in the universe can travel faster than light.

Yet I cannot deny that I have had many experiences in my life to prove, for myself at least, that what Science says is not always true, or real. Everyone who is older than thirty knows that scientific laws change radically in a short time. Medicines that were announced to be cure-alls proved to have gruesome side effects. Supposedly harmless chemical sprays proved to be lethal. Now, finally, I have become quite skeptical, in fact, about the dicta of Science.

So, perhaps the speed of light is not the ultimate speed in the universe? Or, perhaps there are universes, or dimensions, in which there is no distance and no time. That took me only two days to see again.



At our next discussion—yes, there was a next—the People asked how we communicate with other beings of our world, with animals? In my mind there is a difference between animals and humans. Humans are more developed, or more intelligent, or have qualities animals do not have. We certainly have more power. We have so much power in fact, that that alone is enough to make us unique on this earth. That puts humans at the top of evolution, does it not? Are we? Those thoughts flashed through my awareness. Before the People could respond to my confused babbling in my mind, however, I realized that we make that distinction between us and everyone else in our heads. There is no proof that we are better, or smarter, or whatever, than animals. . Yes, we set ourselves above creation. And yes, I do communicate with animals; very success—

fully in fact. And they communicate with me. I have a cat, although I cannot stand the idea of 'owning' an animal — there is a cat who lives here. Human-animal communication is not at all unusual, lots of people talk to, and understand their pets.

Only in the last few years of this century have we studied a few animals in their natural state. A few women have given their lives (sometimes literally) to show that we are more like primates than unlike. What was unusual about their studies was that they observed primates in their natural state, respecting these alien species enough to allow that they might be unique and worth knowing in their own world. In their own environment observers soon learned that they cannot remain observers, they cannot help but communicate with primates. We can and do communicate with apes, and they communicate with us.

What you observe also observes you; the observer influences what is observed and what is observed influences the observer. Is not that communication? Or the ground of communication?

So!

My situation with these beings who say they are from far away in space is not much different. They came here to visit me in my environment. Now I am the primate, and they are the observers from another world. If they respect me enough to seek to communicate with me, the least I can do is to learn to communicate with them!

And the only way to do that is to accept them as beings in their own reality. If our communication takes place in 'another dimension', as the People say, so be it. I am sure communication with apes took place in another 'dimension' as well. Maybe it was a heart communication, rather than a mind communication; it was definitely a communication of touch. But as real as communication with words, in fact, probably more so!

Maybe I shall discover what another dimension means in human terms, but for now the thing to do is to observe what and who they are, and in order to do that I must learn to communicate with them. Even if Science says that is 'impossible'!



Again I think about the aborigines. I certainly communicated with those 'primitive' people I got to know and love. The biggest obstacle to communication was always preconceived notions (mostly mine). I had to set aside ideas I had about 'primitive'. When I did that we communicated well enough. For me the word primitive got in the way. It is part of our collective knowing that we believe primitives to be backward, pitiful because we think they have not caught up with us.

Who knows, maybe they are ahead of us, because we have wandered from the path.

The aborigines I got to know were nomads (as all aboriginal peoples were). They were not pitiful, although my colleagues and my family thought so. They were 'poor' and sick, but I knew only too well that they were sick because we had brought new diseases, and poor? They had no money, had no use for it. They ate well, they did not work very hard at all. Their life style was almost certainly less stressful and therefore healthier than mine.

What I had not expected was to find a people so kind, so simply joyful, loving in every sense of the word. From our western point of view they were hardly human, they wore no clothes that we recognized as such, their teeth were haphazard, they were small and skinny. They did not read, they had no television, no news...

But they knew joy. They accepted me — and it is only now that I realize how amazing that was! They saw through my clothes, my mannerisms, my western-ness, my limitations. They saw deep into my heart and read there that I was touched by their simplicity, by who they were.

Early on in my sporadic visits they told me this story: "There were other strangers who came to visit us. But you need not worry. The first (during the time of what in Malaysia is called 'The Emergency' when China was trying to infiltrate the Malay Peninsula, before Malaysia was formed as an independent nation) was eaten by a tiger. The second fell off a cliff, his body was impaled on a bamboo and it took him a long time to die. They did not say, but I understood that those two men had sought them out to get their cooperation in what was then a guerilla war. I came because I was curious, and I fell in love (what a strange expression for a feeling about a tribe of people — I can think of no better). "But you need not worry," they said. I never did.

The aborigines could have thought of me as just another white man, and they knew that white people were insensitive, crude and greedy. I think they even knew that in the end we, or our so-called civilization, would eradicate them.

It took them less than an hour to see past their preconceptions. They accepted me for who I am. It took me much longer to completely accept them as my friends and equals. Certainly we were aware of our differences. We laughed about the absurdities that made us 'different'. We knew that our friendship would be short, they knew I would leave (perhaps they did not know that it would also break my heart). Yet, for some strange reason we were able to reach across cultural ravines that separated us. We communicated, not intellectually, not about the kind of complex issues our scientists burrow into, but human to human.

With these alien People I have no touch, no smell, no sight, no contact except in my head. I am intellectually curious about them, I want to learn, but I have very little feeling for them one way or the other. That gets in the way. But I must make the effort.



It still bothers me that the whole production for First Contact was for naught, an empty gesture. I am not sure I can like these beings, but I definitely want to know them. As I thought all that (it takes a lot less time to think than to write it down) I sensed a sadness from the People. Sad, because obviously I still could not sense who they are yet. They can 'read my mind', but I cannot read theirs. And, again, words get in the way. More and more I realize that it is my mind that gets in the way. My thoughts, all the things I think, the things I have learned from books, from learned scientists. Theories, ideas, concepts get in the way.

They repeated again and again, we can never deceive; how could we? One voice said, We cannot lie. We are never alone where an 'I' can hide feelings and motives. My words, of course, but their thoughts as I understand them.

They said, We understand that expectations can prevent us from seeing what is. We too are locked into our own expectations. We expected you to have noisy machines because we had heard them from afar, but we never expected you to be blind and deaf. Now, however, we have overcome that. We now know that it is possible to talk with at least some humans. We would like to get to know you better and also have you get to know us better. (All that is obviously in my words, it took several sessions to get that information and "translate" it).

They sound amazingly sincere. How can I doubt them?



I must be honest. I did not like the idea that they are inside my head. It is frightening to have my privacy so invaded, even though privacy has become a fiction in a world where machines spy on us. I cannot speak for others (what a typical statement for a people who cannot communicate without words), but I intensely dislike the fact that some monster computer somewhere knows millions of 'facts' about my life. I have no idea what 'facts' it knows, and I do not want to know. So I put it out of my mind, out of my awareness. But I do not like it. My bank, the tax people, the government know things about me I have long forgotten and things that to me do not define who 'I' am. Surely I am more than my credit rating? But I can forget that.

How to forget about these aliens who talk to me, in my head? Or in that mysterious other dimension ?



Strange, I had never really thought/imagined how we, humans, might appear to others. We truly are forever alone, each of us fixed into our own skulls. Feeling that aloneness, we lash out, we become angry, aggressive, violent,

greedy, we lie, we steal, we take drugs to escape feeling. All because we are forever alone.

Yet I have known many times when 'aloneness' was not in my consciousness. There have been—and are—happy times when I feel close to the people around me, to the trees, the land, the animals and plants that are such an intimate part of my world. I never feel alone then. Today, for us humans in western societies at least, intimacy means physical touch, sexual communion, rarely mind to mind or even heart to heart touch. More preconceived ideas, barriers, difficulties imagined! The closeness I feel with plants and trees and some animals makes living alone easier than being with people. Here in my garden I rarely feel alone because I feel intimately connected to all that is alive around me; even the rocks, the lava everywhere, the singing winds, the veils of mist that shroud us often.

Perhaps, when we cut ourselves off from plants and animals, from the earth, we also cut ourselves off from each other. And, more seriously, we cut ourselves off from our roots, from who we are. The high price of civilization.

The People cannot imagine that when they communicate with me, for instance, other humans do not share my thoughts and feelings as a matter of course. In our civilization it is very difficult to reach, even to accept one other person as he or she 'is'. We can hardly imagine what it would be like to allow humans (and perhaps other beings as well?) into our thoughts.

The People think that the scars and hurts we carry with us are the result of that pathological aloneness.

Oh, all these thoughts! Lonely thoughts. Alienated thoughts...



In time I learned that, of course, it was not they who planned First Contact; we did.

They never even thought about 'planning' anything; we did. We 'called' them, they said.

Yes, now I understand how that could be. The People sensed our yearning for contact, they picked up images we created about how first contact would take place and where. Now I understood why the whole Event had looked so much like a movie. It was a movie we ourselves wrote and directed. Not consciously, but our collective response to the visual presence of what we saw as a spaceship was to create committees to plan that grand event. It was our own imagination that bulldozed those square miles of forest that staged the whole show. We needed something grand. That was the only way we knew how to make ourselves as much the heroes as the aliens who had taken the effort to come visit.

Our need was so great that we came up with the idea of a lander they made to please us. To the People our yearning was asking. And probably it was. The People were eager to please. The slowly descending lander had been a

stage prop in our script; their contribution to the movie we had written. As visitors they made real what we expected. What they made was an illusion that was the eyes and ears of the People.

It had never occurred to them that we, humans, could be deaf and blind. They thought we 'communicated' with them, we had 'told them' what we wanted. Only now do they understand that what they thought was communication, was in fact unconscious yearning on our part.

To have another species be unaware of their intention was yet another shock, a surprise they do not quite know how to deal with. How can we distrust them? They are open, they share their thoughts with each other, and they thought they shared their intentions with us. But we are deaf and blind, they now know.

And I am slowly beginning to understand their puzzlement about 'how can you live'. They mean of course, how can we survive, cut off from each other as well as from the earth?  
How indeed.

We are unique in the universe, not because we are so smart, but because we are stuck in our abnormal separateness. They, the aliens, the People as I call them, are the norm.





## Chapter Nine (the Shaking)

Sunday, and for a change all the neighbors must have gone hiking. Such quiet! Not a lawn mower to be heard. The sun is playing a game with the clouds; the clouds are winning. It never really cleared up after this morning's fierce down-pour. A good day to work inside.

Saw a rainbow yesterday. Rainbows are not very common in this part of the island. Perhaps that is why this rainbow seemed especially noteworthy. An early morning rain had drifted toward the setting sun. This rainbow was thick, substantial. It had body. And the colors were unusually bright. All those adjectives are necessary to describe to you what I saw. (It is becoming an effort to think words) In some languages I could have said, I saw a rainbow, and you would have known it was special. Yesterday's rainbow filled me with awe and joy. But now, for some reason my mind kicked in. A swarm of thoughts raced in to describe, analyze, organize what I know about rainbows. A description appropriate for an earth scientist with words like wavelengths, refraction, that sort of thing. That is what the People call the chatter in me. If I wanted to share that rainbow with the People, all I had to do would be remembering my awe and my joy. And then open myself to them. Instantaneous transmission. So simple!



Later. Afternoon, I look at the grass. It was mowed recently. It still smells fresh and green. It looks good. I sometimes think I must apologize to my neighbors because I like grass when it is getting out of hand, when it shows its real face. Some grass grows tall, other kinds creep and invade but never get very high. There is a kind of grass here we call nut grass, I think because the seeds taste slightly nutty. Grass to me looks boring when it is shorn as for a golf green. But now it still looks smooth, green where there is grass, more yellow where there is moss. The grass is cool and soft, slightly wet in some spots. I love my garden most when I can just enjoy, without feeling responsible: is this plant doing well; does it need something? Now I just commune with their spirits and it is good. But I notice that even when I enjoy the grass I cannot help but analyze, describe details as if that has anything to do with my simple joy. Education does that; it spoils being.



In that soft mood a voice asks, Are you there? For a moment I thought it was a neighbor, but of course I know it must be the People.

Yes, I am here.

They ask, do you agree to talk with us? Yes, of course. They say again what has become a sort of overture, Do you agree to have us talk?

They want my permission before they go inside my head (or wherever it is we 'talk': that other dimension of theirs). I am very relaxed, and so we talk without questions and answers. I open my mind, I allow them to experience in me, with me. I share the garden as I see it in these magical moments. Their awe and joy reflect, and reinforce my own awe and joy. A very new way to experience indeed.

Then I realize they have also let me into their mind(s). Much of what I see (feel, hear) is strange to me, because I do not have a context. I have had that same experience in a museum, looking at a very abstract painting. I sense that the painting 'means' something but I have no idea what the painter had in mind when he painted it. To me the painting almost means something, but so far it only hints.

Yet the strangeness I feel with the People is also a warmth I have rarely experienced with humans. I am home, we are in a womb, we are so close... Almost as if we were one. We would be 'One' if we perceived the same. The warm intimacy must be enough. I accept that what I perceive in their minds does not have to 'mean' anything.

This is not a day for questions and answers. That will come another time. Even if I never ask another question, days like this are for being with friends.



A minute or an hour later I wake up. A loneliness fills my veins with ice. Reaching this way I can just touch a tree. My other hand rests on a patch of moss. I make contact with my own earth again. The life force flows back into my hands, arms, shoulders. A deep breath gets fresh air back into my system. I must have dreamed that strange contact with the People! Take a deep breath. I am awake now. Another deep breath...Oxygen — but what does that mean? It is just a word. I do not experience a chemical. What I experience is 'earth energy' giving me life again.

Who cares what anything is called! Names do not explain, they mislead.



For more than a week now there has been silence. They have not called, they have not answered my calls. Is something wrong? I remember some of the sessions we had. Some sessions were strained, difficult, and for a long time I

felt as in a fog. Now, I am beginning to sense that we are getting somewhere. That last time was so magical, so intimate. When I recall that session the warmth comes back first. How can I forget.

And then this strange silence. What happened?



Almost a week later I have a dream.

A very vague landscape. No horizon, no referents. I know, as one knows things in dreams, that this is not air, or water, or anything we have on earth. It is thicker than air, but less dense than water. Perhaps some sort of thick gas; in dreams I do not have to find words. Light is dim, brownish. No, almost grey.

Everything is shaking violently, making that which is not air denser here and thinner there. Invisible swirls show only in a thickening of that medium that is not air.

In the dream I know this is the world of the People. I am 'in' it, not on a surface. The slight nausea I experience reminds me of a time flying to Bethel, Alaska in a small plane. Whiteout, the pilot warned me. Do not look outside, look here, this is our horizon. But all I saw was a small gauge with a wobbly line dancing around the horizontal.

Not far from where I am is a roundish object, darker. Almost globular. It is not one object, there are a number of parts clinging tightly to each other.

They are the People. One small group of the People. They are so tightly clumped that it is difficult to distinguish individuals. The clump of People is being tossed around, this way and that, up and down, upside down, sideways. I see that it is hard for them to hold on to each other, and I 'know' that it is important that they do because if one of them slips away something bad may happen. Occasionally one of them gets loose and then frantically scampers, often with great effort, to get back to the tight clump.

In the dream I know this is a storm of a proportion we do not know on my earth. It is not the atmosphere that moves around a relatively stable planet, but the planet itself that is shaking, within a thick layer of not-air. Their earth is shaking, rumbling so violently that the very matter of that earth seems to be breaking apart.

There are other objects—or perhaps animals?—in the not-air around the clump of People. No, these other things must be rocks, hard, dark and jagged. There is danger that the clump of People will get smashed against one of those free-floating rocks. Rocks much bigger than the clump of People. A few times they come very close, but through their concerted efforts they swim/move away and avoid the biggest of these dark obstacles. One time they do not quite miss, and some of the People are hurt; they cling together even tighter. I can almost sense their panic, their intense effort to cling together. Their very survival is at stake.

I sense no 'thinking'. The People are not communicating. They need all their energies to cling together and survive. I am fairly certain they are not aware of me as I observe this strange, totally alien scene. I see, I hear the booming noise of the planet. I have no other senses, no smell, no feeling. Only the strange nausea of complete disorientation stays with me. There is no instrument with an artificial horizon here. Sounds swell and fade. The huge drumming sound of that whole earth being rattled. The not-air screams as it flows this way and that, compressed, swirling violently.

The People are having a very hard time. There is great danger. Their bodies are as tightly merged as possible. Their minds closed tightly, locked almost in a sort of spasm.

We know about earthquakes here on my island. My house, a mile or so from the crater, is very old, which makes me feel safer. It must have gone through some big ones before, it flexes when we have an earth movement. But a whole world drumming, booming, being violently batted around! No earth house would survive this shaking!

When I finally wake up I still feel the shaking. I wonder whether we had an earthquake that made me dream? I look, but nothing is swaying as after an earthquake. In a minute I shall go outside and see whether the hanging plants are still moving; they are always the last to come to rest.

I know that in my dream I have been to the People's world. How can a planet be so shaken. I am greatly concerned; fearful. Wistfully I think, 'Just when I finally got to know them, now this...'



A few days later I hear from them. I am so relieved I can hardly sit still. I cannot go through the ritual of asking permission, I blurt out questions. Are you all right? What happened? I have been so worried about you! I even dreamed about you!

They feel were far away. Faint, weak. I have to extend my perception to know they are still there. One voice comes through, We will talk soon, we cannot talk now. We are... I feel great pain, agony. Something definitely is not 'right'. Their minds seem not only vague but preoccupied and scattered. Not like before at all. They have been so steady before, calm and peaceful. Now they feel as troubled to me as our minds were to them during the Landing, it seems.



Later again. They still cannot talk; they are very sad they say. Many died. A disaster... Now I am completely open to them. I have witnessed their distress

in my dream. I have 'seen' something of their world and somehow that makes them more real.

They read my dream. They are amazed. Surprised. They are not sure what 'dream' is; they do not dream. They never sleep as deeply as we do, it seems. And they are impressed. They have never met a species that could 'see' their world, even in what I call a dream.

Yes, they say, I had seen truly. Yes, I had seen them struggling to stay together to survive. They cannot understand how I did that, but yes, it seems I perceived truly.

Do these storms happen often, I ask? I think of our hurricane season, our earthquakes.

"No, it is very rare," they say. But they really cannot concentrate on our discussion, they are hurting badly. "Later." they say.

I do not know what to say, so I do not 'say' anything, just open my heart. I may have wept with them. Their pain, or grief, is so palpable. It is a physical pain, but not localized; there is no 'place' where it hurts. They hurt everywhere! I sense their mourning.

It is a short session, perhaps no more than a few minutes, but warm and intimate — an intimacy I have rarely felt with fellow humans.



Perhaps it is the next day when we talk again. When I ask again 'what happened?' they try to explain in concepts I can understand. It seems their earth has three moons, one of them with a very irregular path (a comet perhaps?). When these three moons are in a certain relationship to each other, their earth 'shakes'. No, they do not know when the next shaking might be (nor do they know 'when' the last one happened). I remember they live in the present; their sense of time is undeveloped. The Shaking is a characteristic of their world, they say. It just is. And yes, it does a great deal of damage. Many groups find themselves moved to a new part of their globe. Many individuals did not survive. Some groups do not have enough individuals any more, whole groups may die too. We are very sad — they repeat that often. I sense their hurt. Now the physical pain is less, but they are sad. Very troubled.

They want to learn more about what I call dreams. They are particularly impressed I think that I (we, humans) can experience or witness events far away when we are not even awake, although concepts like awake and asleep are not too clear to them. They conclude that dreams must take place in that same 'other dimension', or perhaps yet another dimension altogether. They have to think about it, they say.

Who knows? We humans do not know much about dreams either. That is to say 'modern science' knows little. We have a few 'facts' (different brain wave lengths). But most so-called primitive people know about dreaming. Westerners think of dreams only as an expression of our subconscious, we think of suppressed desires, fears, unexpressed emotions perhaps. But my dream does not fit into any of those categories.

Not all humans dream clearly, I tell the People. Oh, they understand that. They learned long ago that humans are almost inconceivably different one from another. They are sure that is a result of our inability to be one with each other. Again they say, humans 'choose' to be different from each other, from the other beings on our earth, the earth itself. 'We wonder how you can live.'

Our discussion about dreams is short, and perfunctory. Their minds are obviously still elsewhere. I sense their pain, but most of all that great sadness.

I want to know whether they have recovered from the Shaking. There is a quiet pause, an emptiness. Yes, they say, they (the group that I am talking with now) have recovered but they are still grieving for their loss and of course they are feeding — I think that is what they say. They had not eaten (?) anything during the Shaking and it lasted a very long time. They are hungry (no, 'hungry' is not quite right; it feels more like a need to replenish their energy, like breathing oxygen), but also, the Shaking 'makes' more of what they eat, which they think of as 'moving energy inside'.

In my mind's eye I see clumps of the 'not-air' stuff they live in, which they absorb. It seems a bit like grazing. The lumps of concentrated energy are everywhere. The group no longer is the tight clump I saw in my dream, now there are individuals everywhere, moving this way and that, absorbing energy.

No, this is no dream. I perceive through them, about them. Now that I have an image of what their world is like, it is easier to imagine them as I talk with them as well. The context of their lives has some form for me now. That helps! My understanding is very different now that I can and do go into their minds, almost share their perceptions. I no longer worry about words, or translating concepts and ideas. I can now perceive directly what they perceive and somehow they do the same 'in' my mind — and that is not exact, I am not sure that I perceive 'within' any more...

The dream, for me at least, has opened something in me that makes it easier, more natural, for me to relate to them. Strange... That is how I know that I should not ask about 'feeding' because it is obviously not interesting to them (or, are they as shy about eating as we are about sex?).

You lost 'individuals.' I ask?

Yes. But they grieve most because they lost a 'kernel', a concept that is central to their being. That is what they are grieving about (for?). They lost many kernels.

I am lost. I have no idea what they mean. I think of kernels because in their mind I see tiny little blobs of something material, but perhaps that is only

their way of thinking about something that is immaterial, as our 'soul' is immaterial? I have no idea.



It took quite a while for me to understand what they mean with what I first translated as 'kernel'. No, it is not what we call 'soul'. A kernel is not immaterial, it is a little bit of something, a kind of matter I think. It could be the genetic code of an individual, but more than that, because it also stores what I understand to mean are memories of a life time. But not quite that either. A kind of memory.

The kernel contains the essence of an individual of the People, not just what he or she is born with, but also the essence of this individual's life experiences. The image that comes to me is something like a tiny computer chip, with information hard-wired in, but also the possibility of adding information during a life time (or at the end?). Perhaps even erasing and changing information? In my words a kernel 'records' what an individual learns/sees, 'is' during a life time. But only the important learnings, they confirm. It records, saves what is important to preserve, it seems.

I am fairly certain it is not manufactured; they do not know manufactured objects. Our word literally means 'made by human hands'. Yet I am not sure where it originated. From what they communicate I am certain that what I call a kernel does not originate with the birth or conception of an individual. It can be transferred from a dying person to... a fetus?

A kernel is 'lost' when death is too sudden. I have the impression that the dying person has to be an active participant in this transfer of a kernel, but of course I cannot be sure. For instance, in the Shaking one individual of their group (the group I was talking with) was dying. It was so sudden that there was no opportunity (or possibility?) to remove, or 'catch' the kernel. So the kernel was lost. And that happened all over the planet. That is what they mourned.

In ordinary circumstances, when an individual of the People dies, they explain, the kernel can be captured/caught and sent somewhere else.

I am making it simple and I know it is more complex than that. But that seems to be the essence. It takes great effort, concerted effort of a group, or perhaps many groups, to move a kernel from a dying individual to a recipient (fetus? womb?—again, those are earth words) elsewhere on their planet. But it can be done, and is done routinely. Now, during The Shaking, they lost many of these kernels because they were unable to catch the kernel as individuals perished quickly and suddenly. If nothing else, I am beginning to understand the magnitude of their losses!

Losing a kernel is very serious. A kernel is unique and irreplaceable, not least because it also contains the record of probably many lives. In ordinary times the group of which the dying individual is a part has time to 'broadcast' to

other groups (all around their earth, I think). They broadcast the unique and wonderful qualities of this individual. If another individual, somewhere else, is planning to become pregnant (or perhaps is pregnant now?) and wants those particular qualities in her offspring, she can ask for the kernel. The group then has the ability to get this kernel as it leaves the body (or remove it?) when the individual dies, and the kernel, can then physically be sent to who asked for it.

As I reread that it seems hopelessly earth-biased. I realize that I make it sound more mechanical than it is, from what they told me over many sessions. I am making all kinds of assumptions. I have no idea whether they have genders, whether only one gender grows offspring. (In fact, in later sessions I had the distinct impression that there are three 'genders' of the People, that all three are necessary to 'make a baby' to put it crudely). Reproduction for the People is more complex than it is on our earth. It takes more effort to reproduce and more care to bring offspring to term. They made quite a point to stress during our discussions that the training of the young begins at conception. We learn to talk inside (that was a new way to describe mind-to-mind) almost from the beginning of an individual life. It takes concerted and considerable effort of a whole group, or sometimes of more than one group, to transmit that kernel to the other side of their world. Some individuals have greater power to move things, they say. Or, perhaps, some individuals have greater ability to 'aim', to maneuver the kernel in the right direction. Moving an object, they say, is not difficult, they all can do that. But to know how to direct where it goes over long distances is a special ability that some individuals do much better than others.

I am troubled. I feel I understand much more than I can express in words. Words get in the way. Our words have so much 'baggage'. Meanings exist entirely in interconnected networks of concepts. When the concepts, the realities are different, words are a hindrance, not a help.



I need a break. The concept of the kernel was difficult to unravel. But more than that, perhaps, I was greatly affected by their grief. It was stressful for me, and probably for them, to explain what they were grieving about while they were grieving. We will talk again, another time.

The whole idea of 'kernel' seems strange to me. We are used to thinking in terms of 'soul' (although nobody has ever explained to me what that means either), which is completely nonmaterial and therefore to me and other people more illusionary. In Eastern religions there is the idea of 'karma', an easier concept to grasp. From what I understand of the 'kernel' of the People it may have some similarity to 'soul', but more similarity to 'karma', yet strangely, it is material — although they say it is sometimes material, sometimes not... That is an idea we, in a scientific world, cannot deal with at all.



Humans do not think in terms of a physical something that contains the accumulated wisdom and knowledge as well as the genetic code, let us say, of an individual. And somehow it is not strange that we humans who have chosen to live in a world we consider completely and totally material, also can accept the concept of a 'soul' that is completely immaterial. The People, on the other hand, who have no difficulties accepting 'other dimensions' in which our laws of matter do not operate, think of a kernel that contains the unique qualities of an individual as something material, or at least partially material, or 'sometimes material'.



When I talked with them again, I tried to tell them that we, humans, do not have a concept of something material that contains who we are. But I think they do not understand me. The distinction we make is too absolute for them. They cannot conceptualize a world, a universe that is totally and exclusively material. They do not see much difference between laws of matter, laws of energy, and natural laws of another kind that I can only approach by thinking in terms of other dimensions.

We are too far apart in how we see reality. Realities, plural! Their reality is certainly wider, looser. The world view of some of the nonwestern religions may be much closer to the point of view of the People. Both the People and non-western ways of seeing the world easily accept that something can have a material manifestation and yet also be 'spiritual' (what a lame word that has become).

I ask to talk another time. I must meditate on this.



A very mellow evening. I am sitting outside on the little porch, looking at a rising half moon. One of the People gently calls, "Can we continue our talk? It is important."

Yes. I feel the importance. I am much closer now to understanding how the People feel and see their reality. One of the group says, we want to show you when you saw us in The Shaking (in the dream). They replay what happened in this particular group. They let me in their minds where this little show is re-enacted.

At first, I see what I had seen in my dream, a tight clump of the People being buffeted here and there — although without the nausea of my disorientation! This time I see/perceive from their awareness.

The shaking slows down, suddenly stops. The People are dazed, their perception still unfocused ('deafened' is how it feels to me). Gradually they 'wake up', they take stock, and as they become more aware. They realize that

one of their group cannot hang on, she is drifting apart, and in great pain. As the pain of that individual penetrates their awareness, they gasp, overwhelmed with the enormity of such pain — pain in sickening waves and sudden peaks of near unconsciousness, and no letting up. A screeching pain, a note so high that it is almost beyond perception.

I too feel that pain, although I am sure they dampened their experience of pain for my benefit. Briefly I have a visual image of the individual drifting away, bent over in pain. Or, no, it seems her spine is broken, smashed. I do not get an impression of their anatomy, but I see a sharp ninety degrees bend. I certainly feel that excruciating pain. I do not know whether they have an internal skeleton, as we have, and whether the individual is really 'broken', but it feels that way.

I hear a 'click'.

I feel a great swoosh of energy, and see the injured individual—now obviously dead—sinking away in the depths.

A wail of sorrow envelops me. As I emerge from so much grieving and regret I realize that the grieving is for the loss of a kernel, not the loss of that individual.



The reason I wrote 'click' is that it felt like the click of switching off a light, switching off power. The group has joined energies and 'killed' the injured individual. One zap is all it took. And yet I also know that it was hardly a conscious decision, it seemed an automatic response to so much pain. Stop the pain! — the only way to stop that much pain is to shut it off at the source.



I am overwhelmed. Shocked. How can I feel good about the People if they are beings who made no attempt to help an injured group member, but with a brief burst of energy killed her, without deliberation. Yes, to stop her pain, a pain which was shared with all the members of the group. They could not take so much pain. They killed her.

I do not sleep well that night. The image of that sudden snap, the broken body drifting down, does not let me go.

Not the next day but the day after I decide to call the People again. I am very cautious, I keep most of myself closed. They too seem subdued (or, busy, preoccupied?). We end soon after we go through the formalities of asking permission to enter each others' mind. Not much is shared, except to reaffirm that we are still in touch.

The second night I go to sleep with this thought: The People are dangerous!



When they call, a few days later, I am quite sick. My sinuses are inflamed, I feel flu or cold symptoms. Not much of a fever, if any, but that does not prevent me from feeling weak and preoccupied with my discomforts. My head is filled with cotton, I cannot think or feel straight, my eyes see a filmy world.

Not strong enough to say, No.

I do not want to talk now, I whisper, Maybe...

No doubt they pick up my state of mind and the feelings of my body. It feels as if they tiptoe around. After a few minutes, the distraction and the effort make me feel some better but it takes effort to be open to communicating with the People.

It is foremost in my soggy mind, so I bring back the moment of that zap which killed a member of their group. They wince, but I do not sense any regret, only that sadness about having lost a kernel and an undertone of regret that we are so different that I cannot understand what they feel. I sense their confusion that I still, after all this time, apparently cannot understand/feel their intentions.

Can you also heal with that energy, I ask?

There is no answer, but softly I hear a sort of multi-toned hissing (not in my ears, in my mind). Then the sound of waves on a beach. I have a brief image of milk boiling over. I am enveloped in warm, easy waves. And, blessed relief, as I feel healing energy wash over me, my symptoms float away, dissolve, disappear. In minutes, it seems, I am healed. My sinuses are clearing, my nose no longer drips. My head is clear. (My eyes are closed, but I am sure my vision is also clear). I have none of the symptoms I had only a few minutes earlier.

A miracle of healing, difficult to understand, more difficult to accept. If that is the People's 'healing energy' it is infinitely more powerful and effective than any treatments I have ever received from humans who paid large sums of money to learn this way of no-touch healing. No comparison, in fact.

I cannot deny that the People can heal, even from light years away! And yet I have seen how they killed one of their own with that same energy. How can I understand that? If, as seems likely from what I saw, the individual had broken her spine, or, what serves for backbone in their anatomy, 'healing' would be very difficult, probably impossible if the frame or form had indeed broken in two.

I thought, when you feel another's pain so intimately that the pain becomes your own, you must either heal or kill. I am beginning to understand. Perhaps. But I understand in my head, not with my heart. Obviously our values are very different as well. We who are so cut off from each other, from our roots in the planet that grew us, are raised with the idea that individual lives must be preserved at all cost. The People, who are so close to each other that they liter-

ally feel each other's pain, do not hesitate to snuff out a life if the pain is too great, and if healing is not possible

But you do not understand, they break into my reflection. Emphatically they say, We do not kill!

I am not sure exactly what happened next, but I felt as if I were lifted up high, in their embrace, surrounded on all sides by their 'arms'. No, nothing to do with their anatomy, of course. Enveloped by their many beings. Open, they say. Open yourself, I hear from all sides. Be with us, see/listen how we experience. Instinctively (why?) I resist, at first. Their presences are too overwhelming; I fear being out of control. Out of control, out of control. But at the same time I feel as safe as I have ever felt. Cradled, protected in their 'arms' (I know, physical descriptions are misleading, and nonsense, but that is all I can think of). I give in, I relax. Remembering the miraculous healing, I am willing to let go, let be.

I am in a very large space, threatening, dangerous. Then, suddenly the danger evaporates. I hear very soft sounds. Somewhat like a voice here, a flute there, colorful breaths, and gradually there is music all around. Not any kind of music I have ever heard before. Perhaps like whale song, or the song of coyotes and wolves, with counterpoints of cricket sound and whisperings of grass and wind. Unbelievable harmonies that shift and change constantly. It is as if the harmony itself is alive. I listen in awe. There are themes and counter themes, many melodies yet always that impossible harmony. I experience sound, but at the same time I also see color. A large mural is being woven from different colors, intensities, shades, glistenings, shadow, in an infinite number of warmth... Slowly I become aware that in the midst of harmony, and in a strange way still very much a part of that harmony, there is a screech. A sound not finished, a short burst of breath. When I pay attention I hear that voice, far away (or dampened for my benefit), a voice of agony. The agony is pain, but not physical pain alone. Anguish of something impending, inevitable, but immensely sad; regrettable and unavoidable. I sense a great yearning to 'fit' again but at the same time knowing that fitting is no longer possible. The voice sounds almost surprised at being alone as she has never been alone before. (How do I know she is a 'she'?) The harmony weaves into a crescendo, all themes and parts surrounding and blending with the gradually fading voice of agony. (Briefly I wonder how it is possible to hear such harmony when I can also still hear every individual voice.) The crescendo swirls and spirals, tight and strong. What I had experienced as a whoosh of energy earlier, I now experience as a clash of cymbals, a drum roll and then a breathy flute cut off in mid note. To the very last that sad lonely note is part of the harmony.

I understand that nothing has been done to her. She has been part of the harmony until the last moment. There was never any 'decision', no intent to act.

If there had been she would have been part of it. It is the harmony itself that released her.

The harmonies slide down in grief. Incoherent sounds, moans, storms of staccato yelps and wheezes, rising and sinking. But even now the harmony never jars. The threads of the wall hanging are now subdued purples and dark browns, some black with silver, some colors agitated velvet, others satin, or wood. Even sound of stone. I drown in an immense sense of being part of a living whole.

I understand. So that is what it is like to be in intimate touch with another mind, my mind totally and completely blended with their minds. They let me drift.

I am awed.

## Chapter Ten

This afternoon I am daring the sun to hide behind the clouds that are in such a hurry to go elsewhere. It has not rained today, but it has threatened more than once. I am determined to sit outside, sun or no sun! I found a new place to put my little table and the few things that I need outside, a cup of tea, my little tape recorder. My garden has special spots almost everywhere; some of these I have made myself by adding a few touches to what was there. My favorite perhaps is one of the two what I call meditation spots. One of them is in a dense clump of trees and tree ferns. I moved some stones there, and carefully put two kinds of moss on the rocks. Now, two years later, the moss has melded onto the rock. Many kinds of bromeliads and ferns live in this dark corner, and of course anthuriums, although they stay small without sun. It is a place of mystery in a corner of my garden which is otherwise very open. 'Deep', someone said. This afternoon it is too dark for the meditation spot, I am sitting close to the datura trees. Also close to neighbors, but they are away from the island, I know.

After the People shared with me how they had experienced the Shaking and what happened shortly after the Shaking stopped, communication with them has entered a whole new phase. For the first time I think I understand what true mind-to-mind contact can be. Humans cannot do that. We do not make music in our heads. What I experienced was not really music, of course. That was only my way of putting into words what cannot be told in words. I could have said it was like a feast of colors, streaming, weaving patterns. However I describe it, is less than my experience.

When I was younger I had experiences like that, I remember. Experiences full of wonder, and exaltation. These days life is more humdrum. But the experience of the harmony of the People is a reminder of the experiences I used to have. I vividly remember a day in the jungle. The noises, the colors, the intensity of all that was around me. The day before the evening when I heard the rumble of a tiger, not close but well within hearing. Tiger accompanied me all the way to the settlement where I was staying that night. He gave me direction. Then, too, I was fully open to all the harmonies that so obviously included me with the trees, rocks, orchids, slithering snakes, the myriad insects. And, of course, Tiger.

Today I feel young again. I have found a similar harmony with the People. Not the same. No, our worlds are too different. But their world, which in the

dream I had experienced as vague and drab, I now know to be a harmony of tones and colors as well.



The People told me that sometimes I am clearer than other times. When I thought about that, it seems that I am clearer outside, in the garden, perhaps because I 'think' less outside. I revel in being close to the hundreds of living beings, plants and animals, outside. When I am inside, my mind is 'fast' they say. I think they mean 'cluttered'. Or noisy. All humans are 'noisy' to the People. What we call 'thinking' is strange to them, they do not understand what it is we do.

I am not sure either! True, what we call thinking has usually little or nothing to do with solving problems. We call thinking anything and everything that we experience as 'inner'. Our minds are full of yearning, wishing, hoping and we spend hours and hours in a mishmash of remembering and random thoughts and images. Is that thinking? Whatever it is, it is obviously noise.

In fact, after experiencing the episode that first seemed like killing to me, I am not sure any more what 'thinking' really is. I did not 'think' when I instantly decided that what I saw was killing. I made an instant judgment which came from cultural conditioning, not thinking. The People do not have words, but if they did, they probably would consider what they do as 'being'. Humans are too busy doing, and doing what we call thinking, to be. Compared to the harmony I experienced in the People's minds, what I think of as thinking must indeed be 'noisy'.



It is peaceful; I do not think. I feel one with the plants and trees, I lose myself in being with the tiny little green plants that live in between. Plants just are. It is we who think of plants as existing either for our enjoyment, or for food. We admire their colorful flowers, or we harvest. If a plant had consciousness (and who says they do not?) it must be an awareness of being. Perhaps plants are aware of the health of their tissues. Perhaps that is what I pick up when I feel a plant needs more water, or less, or needs some shade for a while. The variety of plants, even in a small space, on very poor soil, is astonishing. Every millimeter of soil is used, from tiny lichens that cling to a rock to trees that reach thirty, forty and more feet up to the sun.

We so often miss the magic of weeds. One weed obviously likes it here. Hawaiians call it 'ihi, which sounds like a giggle deep in the throat. 'Ihi looks like clover, but it is an oxalis; it has a slightly sour taste. There are different kinds of 'ihi, from very tiny plants, with brown leaves and glaringly bright yellow pinpoints of blooms, to large green leaves with showy lavender or pink flowers, as much as an inch across. 'Ihi mixes well with the many kinds of moss and

club moss that thrive here. How different everything would look without grass, which we brought in.

Why do we like expanses of tightly shaved grass?

Grass is like us, it takes over and is almost impossible to get rid of.

Even with an overcast sky it is warm and soft outside. Before I can properly settle myself there is a 'chime', as I call it (Hello are you there? Can we talk?). Yes, I am here, I am happy to have a visit. Welcome, welcome.

I recognize no individuals, nor does the group feel familiar. That makes me a little hesitant, less open. I need some time to get to know this group.

Note to myself: I must think of a better word than 'group'. Group is too human a word. The clusters (?) of People feel like something woven, each of the strands so intertwined with all others that it is a trick to follow a single plait. Tapestry? No, the right word will appear when I need it.

Today they have a request. The last session was, of course, shared with all the People (of their planet?). Many (perhaps even 'many-many') groups had felt my unease. Can I share with them what I feel now?

Yes, now I feel at peace with what I experienced. I deeply appreciate their efforts to make me feel what the People felt after that horror. I had an experience of deep understanding. What you shared with me was very meaningful to me, it made me think of my own memories of attending humans as they died. All that not in so many words, of course. I could have said I let them see inside me. Very briefly, I shared one of the deaths I had attended. He had been in a coma for ten days. Yet I felt I could talk to him, telling him he had done well, he had completed a good life. He could leave. But when I knew he was close to coming to that threshold I felt I should leave. I went outside.

"Why did you leave," the People ask?

I am not sure. I felt I was intruding on what was a very private moment. Then briefly told them about another death where I sensed a great struggle around the head of the patient, energies swirling around his head, he was shaking his head, as if he were fighting... Then I knew it was his dying. Somehow, I felt he had to die alone.

"You could have 'caught' the kernel," a few of the People whispered.

But humans do not have these kernels you talk about! Many humans believe that we have a soul, a something that evaporates, goes away, when we die. But humans do not believe that the soul is something material. We believe it is invisible. And many humans do not believe we have a soul.

One of the People said, "We think that some humans do have something like a kernel."

What could I say? We do not know much about dying.



The People were briefly disharmonious; chalk on a blackboard. But only for a moment. Then the strands rearranged themselves in a more harmonious pattern. One clear voice broke through to say, again, "We do not understand how humans can think they are alone, we do not understand how humans can each think a different idea. We cannot understand how you live."

I could not help but think that if we do not know much about dying, perhaps we do not know much about living either. After so many centuries of words, we can no longer be in harmony, not only with each other, but with our own planet. How can we have such different ideas about life and death? Obviously we must cherish our aloneness. Yes, we must choose that, as the People say.



Their Harmony has returned. Now I hear it not only as music, I see colors streaming through each other, like ribbons of shiny and sometimes transparent stuff, woven together.

I feel the difference between humans and the People. We may be able to communicate with each other (clumsily, on my part), in the dimension we call reality. But our communication must always be limited. We are so different. We humans are so lonely, alone, always. They are never alone, they are always part of a cluster of others with whom they have the most intimate and 'always' connections.

They make music together; we fight. We argue. We pride ourselves on our differences, even our disagreements.



It is getting dark and cold. Must go inside. I take a long shower, to wash off some of the frustration I feel. Today's session did not help me. It reminded me only of my/our own difficulties. Indeed, how can we live so separated? When I think of the six and more billion humans now on earth, I imagine that the majority of them also wonder, how can we live?



While I am in the shower they call again. I ask them to wait until I have dried myself, have made some tea, and am sitting down. "Why," they ask? As I think how to answer that, I laugh, I am shy, without clothes. I think 'privacy', but what is privacy?

You are too fast, they say, after the little introductory ceremony. Now, finally, I understand what they mean when they say 'fast' (what I put in words as 'fast'). They mean cluttered, broken up in pieces as all our world is broken up in

our broken understandings. No coherent experiences, a little of this, a bit of that, no thread. They perceive it as fast. My peek into their minds had made clear to me again that I do not even perceive as they do. They see wholes. All I can see and hear and feel and measure here is parts and pieces.

I am beginning to feel more at ease with this clump (still not quite the right word, but I keep trying). They felt tense before (of course they are not tense, I am!), now we are beginning to enjoy each others' company.

"In memories," they ask, "can you find the birth/origin of ideas of alone/different/separate?"

Translation: when did humans first begin to think of themselves as apart?

A big question! History of Man. From our point of view today, we cannot imagine homo sapiens as anything but apart. Did Neanderthal or Cro-Magnon Man see themselves as each person unique and different? And all of us separate from all other Life? Probably not. If they were anything like the aborigines I knew they lived in tight bands. And, now that I think of it, often two or three or more of them hummed or sang in a strange sort of harmony. They were not 'songs', they were improvising, they were singing whatever came out of their throats, but they were so tuned in to each other that two or more people could sing spontaneously, and it would sound harmonious. Yes, I imagine people a long time ago were like that. They did not think of themselves as individuals first.

I would not be in the least surprised if my foreparents ten thousand years ago communed mind-to-mind, without words.

It occurs to me that when one of our holy books says, In The Beginning Was The Word, that refers to the beginning of civilization, not the beginning of creation. Words are only needed when you do not know what another is feeling or thinking. Even today there are cultures, groups of humans, who understand much as the People do.

Not all humans feel themselves apart. Just civilized humans.



The People break into my reveries. Bluntly, they ask, "would you like to talk with another human? We shall introduce you." (I have a flash of facetious thought, Why don't you just give me their phone number? Or their e-mail address?)

"The humans we can assist you to talk with have no such machines" (The people have nothing that we would call a logical mind— and therefore no sense of humor).

I joke because I feel very unsure.

In the next moment I hear the now familiar, Hello, are you there?

But this is different, it is unmistakably human. A strong voice. Not words of course, but the meaning is very clear. Both of us know we must first do the Introduction. I go through the ritualized form: I welcome you, I invite you in.

Only now, when about to open my mind to another human, do I realize that 'respecting boundaries' is very real and very important. Now I see its necessity. With another human, yes, it is important that we both agree to respect boundaries.

Being mind-to-mind with another human is a strange experience. His mind feels very different from what my mind feels like. I think of it as more vague. Darker, and very strong. I have an impression of a tree, a kauila tree, that very hard, dense wood that used to grow in Hawai'i, so dense that it sinks in water. Kauila has the reputation of being holy, spiritual (the word kauila also means lightning, and nowadays electricity — very powerful but invisible energy). His presence is tough, strong and wise. I do not see him with my eyes of course, but I sense a large, strong aura around him.

It takes me a while to collect myself. Tears are rolling down my face. I feel myself shaking, laughing while my eyes flow. I am in the cave of another's flesh, dark but also red and shiny, with nooks and crannies, paths that go off in different directions. Feeling warm, almost but not quite familiar, and always strong. And I am very careful not to intrude where I am not wanted. I am still unsure of myself.

The other (I have no name for him) is calm and feels very much in control. His welcome feels like a strong embrace.

He is blind; has been blind since his teen years. He lives in a tiny community, with a handful of people. Through them he lets me 'see'. My eyes are outside me, he says. He feels hot, burning. I ask whether he is well. He obviously has a fever, but that certainly does not diminish his power.

Yes, it is almost time for me to leave; he means 'die'.

There is not a shred of self-pity as he says that. He accepts without question. It is how things are.

It is good, he says; meaning it is good that the People have introduced us. Yes, it is very good. Now I feel completely calm (my mind is no longer 'fast'). I am wholly in the present

Of course there are no questions. It is not important to know the name of this person I am with. Distance does not exist. He is dying, and it is totally irrelevant to know the name of the disease

that will take him. I am calm, focused completely on this other human. Oh yes, we are definitely communing mind-to-mind. Communing with him feels 'equal', I can feel his feelings as he can feel mine. And there is no confusion, I know which are his feelings, and which are mine. I strongly experience the difference between empathy, feeling with, and feeling for. I feel with him. There is no drama. If he were broken, the way the female was broken after the Shaking, I would certainly feel his pain, but I would know it was his pain, not mine.

I would not have had to 'kill' him... Oh, suddenly I understand more!

The People feel others strongly, but now I understand that to make harmonies, there must be an understanding that there is an other. They may not be alone, ever, but yet they are certainly aware that others are different, each individual is unique.

And now I understand 'kernel'!

Perhaps it is the kernel that makes one individual different from another?

The old man (he may be younger than I in years, but in his world he is an old man) — the old man has become an intimate friend in no time at all. He has become more dear to me than almost anyone I have ever known. I pick up things about where he is. First smells, then cold gusts of wind, sliding around his burning face and hands. I vaguely hear another voice—not his—in a language I do not know. No matter. I am not even curious.

Outside a soft rain begins to fall, the kind of rain that in Hawai'i means 'the gods are smiling'. I hear it on the roof. I feel blessed. The gods are smiling on me and the old man. It is strange that in a few minutes we have come to know each other so well. I need not ask the usual questions humans ask each other when they meet. What is your name? What do you do? Where do you live? Are you married, do you have children?

None of that is important when two humans commune as we do. He is as he is, now in this moment, and I am who I am in this moment.

He is not in pain. Some discomfort because of his fever, but he does not allow fever to dull him, he wants to be aware. He is fiercely aware. I feel as if I sit by his bedside, holding his hand. But no, that is the wrong image. This is different. We are in that other dimension the People know, there are a few glimpses of a house, a smell, but they are just background.

After a time he says, Thank you, and gently moves away.

I know he is not dying now, not this moment. And I expect he will call me again.

Or, I can call him, he says.



Words, words. Wordless doze, sleep.



The feeling of being able to touch a person, a human being, in this very ancient way is truly without words. There are no words. He accepts dying without question. His whole life seems to have been without question, only awe and wonder at what is. Even now, weak and feverish, he has a strength and joy at

the very root of his being. In the moments we shared I recognize that deep joy within myself as well. A great gift!

Being with him, even for a short time, reminds me strongly of what I have known and forgotten, known and forgotten, much of my life. People die; babies are born. That is the flow. All the rest is fringe, decoration. We have made a world so complicated that we are lost in it. Life and living is simple. Not easy, for most humans, but simple. Each step leads to the next. A moment is followed by the next moment. Hunger, a full stomach; pain. joy. My mind, my awareness, is often so blurred by social and cultural ideas and taboos, rules and regulations that I cannot see straight. But I always knew, although I have often repressed it, that none of that is real, it is not 'natural', not a part of the natural flow of this earth.

Surely it is a miracle that the old man and I can commune. We must live in such different worlds! I do not know where he lives, but I sensed that he lives in an ancient world. Perhaps somewhere isolated from my civilized world. Tibet? Mongolia? He has heard stories about my world. Stories as strange to him as the world of the People is to me. He too cannot understand how we can live!

Not trying to 'do' anything with him, say anything, think anything, just being has felt so right! What loss that we cannot be in that rightness very often. It is we, civilized humans, who have strayed from the path of evolution; we have chosen our own path. We chose a path of conflict and confusion. Why?



The next day I call him. His fever has gone up, I think, he feels the cold around him. A moment before he moves away from contact, his mind drifted. Perhaps he slept.

I softly call the People. Hello, Are you there? They answer equally softly, as if they do not want to disturb my mood. This time I pay close attention to the opening ritual, I listen carefully to how they ask, what I answer. Now I understand how important it is that we ask permission and even then tread carefully. We do not want to go—we cannot go—where we are not welcome. I had known that, of course, but it took contact with another human to make me see it again clearly.

Carefully, trying to keep it as simple as possible, I thank the People. I tell them I have regained a part of my humanity, a fragile thing, something that had been dormant for so long that I am not sure I could have found it by myself. The old man, in a few minutes, helped me find it. I must not forget!

Are there others like the old man, I ask?

“Oh yes, many.”

Can I call them myself?

A pause.

“When you learn more you will be able to call others, but for now be content with what you have already.” The People are teaching me patiently. I have much to learn yet. I must wait.

Do they learn from me as well? I should like our being together to be equal, shared, mutual. What a silly thought, when in the matter of mind-to-mind they are obviously much more capable than I. But, “Yes,” they say, “they are learning much.” They have learned from me, and from other humans, although the big mystery remains: ‘How, when did we change?’ When all the universe that they know has produced beings who are aware, and who have developed their inner capacities, humans remain a mystery. Why did we choose to make machines to enhance our awareness? Why not learn to enhance our awareness within ourselves? As strange as the difference between human individuals.

Yet, what they have learned from me and many others is that there are still individuals, here and there, who have those inner qualities, or can rediscover them in themselves.

That is good, they say.

## Chapter Eleven

My friendship with the nameless man became stronger each time we talked. I must change that sentence: the oneness the old man and I feel grew with every being together. Friendship is different. I did not keep count, I have no idea how often we talked, but more than enough to feel that we have a strong kinship — although we never met, would never meet, and neither of us had any idea where the other lives. Or even how we live. We know each other by 'touch' I want to say, meaning mind touch. Names are not important in that mode. That kind of being together cannot be put into words because it is, I am sure, something from before we invented words. It feels like an ancient, vaguely remembered sense of belonging, of being home, being complete. Human minds can fit together as if they belong together as pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. And when the pieces fit it is a magical experience.

My western self occasionally marvels how it is possible to have such intimacy with a person never met, unknown in almost all the categories that are important in our world: his name, his age, where he lives, what he does for a living (or did; he seems old). Is he married? Does he have children? What does he look like? I do not know any of that, and it is not important. Is he educated, meaning has he been conditioned and brainwashed to know the kind of things civilized people must know: reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, biology, the principles of science, which means our way of seeing the world? No, he is almost certainly not educated in that sense, but he has volumes of wisdom as well as uncounted practical skills. And although he has been blind most of his life, he sees through others' eyes. He hears keenly. He is so intimately familiar with his surroundings that he walks unaided, without stumbling or running into things.

Of the important things in life, he knows more than I.

Perhaps that is why he is so much better than I in mind sharing.

I have never asked where he lives—he has never asked me, either—because I have not felt even the slightest curiosity. And in truth I would not know how to ask! In my imagination I see a face, but I cannot know whether it is a face I have created for him, or whether it is how he thinks of himself, or whether it is a likeness. The face I see is dark, not black but mahogany brown. He is old, but in my mind's eye I do not see an old face, there are no lines, no sunken cheeks. I do not see eyes. I see only a vague outline of where a mouth would be. Long hair, I think.

Being with him has helped me open a whole new chapter about communing mind-to-mind. With him I do not have to worry about creating images, revising them, running little movies in my head. Communing human to human is like breathing. Easy. It feels completely natural, perhaps because I have learned to turn off my western self (although that is not as simple a task as it sounds). I have to step out of the way of my civilized self and bring my ancient self to the foreground, a self I first rediscovered years ago when I was with the aborigines.

Now I am also much more relaxed when I talk with the People. I do not try so hard, and we understand each other better. The more I learn about turning off that western self, the easier it is to just 'be' with the People.

My dream about The Shaking helped. I had at least a glimpse of what they might look like, which made them more real. And through their strong desire to share their grief with me, and telling me about 'kernels', I was able to feel with them. Before, our communication had been intellectual, in the sense that I was mostly interviewing them, and they were teaching me 'facts'. After The Shaking we communicated mind-to-mind, as far as that is possible with another species.

Through communing with other humans I also became better at communicating with the People, aliens from another planet. I no longer doubt that they are aliens, and from another planet, but it is no longer important to know 'facts', as we think of facts, about them.



One day the People said they would like me to get to know another human 'who needs me'. Of course, I said. Introduce me, I am curious.

A child. A girl who does not know who she is, where she is, or even what she feels and thinks. Her mind is chaos, it looks like the inside of a house where nobody has ever thrown anything away. Old and new images stacked ceiling-high everywhere. Nothing is understood, or digested, or even properly remembered. Everything is wide open, without any sense of where 'she' is. She has no boundaries. There is no 'I' in the midst of all that. She has no discrimination, everything that she saw and sees, heard and hears, is thrown together.

But who am I to say that in her mind there is no organization? All I can say is that to me it seems helter skelter, unorganized, painfully chaotic. Maybe there is a system in her madness, but I cannot read it. She is human, but a severely damaged human.

At first she seems a child, an unformed child, but after a few minutes I think she must be in her early teens, maybe twelve or thirteen? Or older. It is no use asking; she does not know. She does not know what I ask. She accepts the People without hesitation, nor does she hesitate to accept me. Simply another strangeness in an awareness that is not very aware at all. I pity her, but I am also afraid of being swallowed in that chaos. She has no boundaries and has no



idea what a boundary is, even in what she sees and hears. She does not know where she is, who she is.

She knows her mother. Almost the only other human she knows. But the mother has left, or at least cut some sort of mind-to-mind tie with her, and now she panics.

That I am human and different from the People seems blurred. In her mind it is all one and the same. Her awareness is cluttered with so many realities that I feel I have to hold very still if I do not want to drown in that morass.

Our first encounter was frightening, like falling into the wildest dance hall with flashing colors, deafening noise, sounds I never imagined. I withdrew. I did not know how to get through to 'her', it was as if she has no self. Of course I understand her 'need'; her need is, as far as I can tell, to get some sort of integration, knowledge of herself and the world she lives in, but where does one begin? I felt that the first thing I must do—even if only to maintain my own sanity—is to find, or establish boundaries. I felt if I staked out an area and said, this is 'me', then another area would be 'you'. But I have no idea whether she understood. Here was a human who had easy access to her mind, she let everything and everyone in without question.

And there is nobody home.



After a few attempts to communicate I have pieced at least a little of her story together. The only person in her life is her mother, with whom she has 'talked' from before birth. The mother was so scared at first about this mind-to-mind contact that she and the little girl moved 'further up the mountain'. Until recently, the girl has always maintained that unthinking, unquestioned contact with her mother. Now the mother has 'gone away'. The mother who was her anchor, and in a way perhaps her identity, left (the girl's mind), leaving her alone and feeling very lost. The mother withdrew from contact. To the girl her mother cutting off contact and yet physically still there, taking care of the girl, is one source of confusion. This mother who present is another mother. Eventually I realize that the girl has only the vaguest idea of self and other. She never had a clear idea that she and her mother were not the same being. Now, as she is approaching puberty and she seems to sense great changes happening in 'her' body, for the first time she has to grapple with an identity, with the idea that she and her mother (and other humans, other beings) are different. She not only does not know who she is, she does not know that she is. In one of our chaotic contacts she seemed to express the thought that she knew that her mother and I were similar, but different from her. A beginning?



She is very angry. She screams. She is wide open and I sense that she broadcasts her anger and confusion to all the world. It is difficult for me to keep the communication open. I do not think I am successful in getting across to her that she is, and I am, and we are different even though we are in touch. I try comparing us to plants, or trees. I am this tree, she is another. But her mind is too literal. You are a tree, she asks?

Then, one day—maybe the fifth or sixth try—she is calmer. She is in a sly mood.

I try the introductory ritual. That means, she says, I can also keep myself closed from you?

Yes, indeed. If you want that.

Boundaries established! Great progress. Apparently, if she wants, there is a she who can decide what she wants. It feels like an amazing breakthrough.

I tell her, Indeed you can keep yourself closed from me, or from your mother, if that is what you choose. We can each keep ourselves as closed as we choose and still be in touch. Or, we can open only a little bit. Bringing in the mother is a mistake. She loses it. Her mother is part of her and she cannot think of her mother as in any way separate, that hurts too much.

We — meaning I and also her mother — are the same, we have been the same from the beginning, she says.



We never really communicated. Probably my own inadequacy. I would need special training to communicate with someone as hurt as she is. I tried to imagine what I would do if we were face to face, and if I could talk words to her. I do not think I would have done better.

Suddenly I remembered there was a young girl, a bit older than this girl, I think. She was institutionalized because she had what was then called 'uncontrollable, violent impulses'. What worked in that situation was that through patience (and, in fact, almost no words!) I was able to get that girl to understand that there were acceptable alternatives to acts of destruction. She went around the room with a pair of scissors, snipping little bits of paper. When she came to my chair, which had a cloth covering, she began to snip threads. More casually than I felt I took another pair of scissors and cut out a row of paper figures holding hands. She got it: rather than stabbing my chair with scissors, she could use the scissors to cut paper dolls. In the short run she seemed changed. At the time I sensed a great sense of relief that she could express herself without doing damage. She could make something that others recognized as good, useful, pleasing. Perhaps she could get attention by doing something good rather than bad. It was her choice.

Do I see the chaotic girl too much in modern clinical terms? What if I could just accept her the way she is? I tried. It worked better than previous ex-

periments. The girl relaxed, at times we almost seemed to share little facts of life with each other. She shared with me what she likes to eat (bread was obvious, the cheese she had in mind looked like feta, kept in salt water) , she could express that it was cold where she is. With some effort I overcame my upset over the mess in her mind. Some people have messy homes. If they can live in a mess, what business is it of mine? But we never got very much further than that. We shared simple things. And perhaps that was important. But it was hard work on my side, and I never could get much of a reading of what or where she was.

I remember thinking, Is that all this mind-to-mind is good for, another kind of psycho-therapy?



Her circumstances remained vague. As the girl grew, so did her powers. Her mother had not known how to deal with that, so she had withdrawn. I hope that the girl learned, or will learn, that in this human world it is mostly up to her to manage the powers she has. From my point of view, what 'ails' her is not something wrong, but insufficient training to use what could be a great gift. She is wide open to mind-to-mind contact.

Now I understood that any kind of training would have had to start early in life. I realize that in our world she could do a great deal of damage if she were among people. Apparently she lives so isolated that it is safe, at least for now. The mother goes to a village, a few hours walking, to barter for basics. Now that the girl has become an embarrassment, she no longer takes the girl with her. What is to become of a girl who grows up so isolated from other humans, but with a rich (and messy) internal life, and who knows what other unknown qualities?



What this girl needs is a father, I thought. Or a 'you', she adds — I was not aware she was listening in! She never accepted that mind-to-mind contact has to be negotiated. I reminded her, again, but she paid no attention. I tried to tell her that who she needs I cannot be. I can only be one of her teachers, perhaps, giving her a lesson in how to manage her talents. Perhaps trying to teach her that the most important lesson is the first: you cannot invade another's awareness, you cannot listen without being invited. And of course, others must not be allowed in either without permission. She must learn to protect that core within her. I tried to explain what I call the Introductory Ritual, as I had learned it from the People. We practiced. Again, and again. Probably, I thought, she would never learn...



When, the next day, I ask the People how to get across the importance of 'asking permission', they answer that such learning is best begun before birth. "We are in touch with the unborn," they say, "long before it enters into the world. We surround a 'beginning being' with our caring as well as our knowledge. And so the young learn very early to accept 'layers' of contact. We never force entry, never. Even with the unborn". They say this many times.

This girl never learned before birth, or after for that matter.

Another voice of the People adds, "As we grow older we open ourselves more and more, because we have slowly made a core, a center. It is that core that is finally passed on" (the kernel?).

The 'kernel' is a concept that still escapes me. Is it then the accumulated knowing of a life time? Well, yes, but it is also what the unborn being started out with.

One day I make an effort to explain pearls to the People, how they grow in certain mollusks. It took time to explain, but then they agreed — "perhaps, maybe?" The concept of deliberately introducing a piece of sand into a mollusk and then 'harvesting' the pearl, throwing away the animal seemed so strange to them that I could sense them shiver. But there is some truth, they said, "when the kernel is in place" (I think that is what they communicated to me) "then, yes, we accumulate certain (values, experiences?) on/in the kernel... "

I had better not go on. I am not at all sure that values and/or experiences are accumulated on, or in the kernel, for instance. This was a long discussion, I was trying to understand 'kernel' and they were trying hard to explain. I think I may resist knowing all the details of 'kernel'. They seem to feel that it is a very simple concept and they do not quite understand my difficulties understanding (or 'accepting?').

At some point I asked them about the very first kernel. Where did it come from?

But that kind of thinking is foreign to them. They do not see beginnings — or ends, for that matter.



Over the next several months my contacts with the girl were less and less frequent. Perhaps because she realized that I had given her what little I could. Also, because I realized that I could only take so much. There is a big and important difference between communicating mind-to-mind and having someone else be in your mind unbidden and uncontrollable. The girl, at least at first, invaded without thought, without awareness.

I am reminded of visits from my grandson. He is one of the few toddlers I know who can entertain himself for hours on end. But there are times when he

is demanding, he does not want the crayons I give him, he wants the 'other' crayons (my collection of pens and colored pencils). He takes books out of the book case. He upsets a vase. It is easy to forgive him, however. I know he will grow out of this phase, and he is a most affectionate child.



Yes, I am fussy. I like things in my little house just so (otherwise I cannot find anything). I have organized my mind in the same way, I think. I am ruthless about getting rid of things I do not need (and there are few things I do need any more). In the same way I am learning to get rid of memories I no longer need. I no longer try to remember names of plants, for instance — Latin names seem so meaningless in my world view. I remember plants as whole gestalts, as I know people as a visual bundled with layers and layers of other information. My house is neater after I get rid of things I no longer need, and my mind too is getting simpler, and clearer, and hopefully less 'fast'.

As if to grind my nose in my fussiness, a new person introduced herself one evening. She asked to visit. That pleased me, so I invited her 'in', and we went through a much abbreviated opening ritual, Yes, I am here. Yes, I shall be happy to communicate with you.

She was impatient. I'll help you with that girl, she said before anything else could have been communicated. I recognize myself in her, she said. You are too patient with her, she bit at me. You have to be strong.

You are very welcome to try, I said. You probably have already listened in so that you know how to contact her.

Yes, of course. We (you and I) get to know each other later.

Then she adds, almost slyly, I want to know you — and she is gone.

In the brief and hurried contact we had I had a strong impression of this woman. She is strong, powerful. And I also feel a great compassion. She is obviously used to dealing with sick and troubled people. The girl, untrained in what I think of as 'the niceties', will have a surprise coming!



The People have always been very insistent on proper introductions, and in all their contact with me have always been patient. Now that I am beginning to have some experience communing with humans I realize that the People, most of the time, have been remote. Communing with humans is very different. We are impatient, not trained, not smooth. I realize, over and over again, how important it is to learn to respect boundaries, to ask permission.



I am beginning to enjoy contact with humans more and more. Naturally! Compared to communicating with the People, human sharing is more meaningful, more direct, and more natural. In honest moments I must accept that I am very 'civilized'. My whole being is suffused with all kinds of ideas about how one is supposed to behave. I have notions about who I am in relation to others. I am shy, but draped in yards of convention, and I have many kinds of these conventions, Western, Asian, Polynesian. And now—as thirty years ago, when I spent time with the Aborigines—there are times when I can let go all those conventions, and just be myself. A wonderfully life-giving experience indeed!

I know now that it would have been impossible for me to commune with other humans if I had not had the experience of being with the aborigines. They taught me (perhaps 'showed me?') to step aside, to put my civilized self aside and call on a much more ancient self. It felt wonderful then, and now, in very different circumstances, it feels wonderful again.

We have mostly forgotten, but humans miss being able to relate to others from the heart rather than from a brain full of shoulds.



I had been curious how a girl and her mother could live in such close communication in our modern world. The answer is, of course, that they do not live in our modern world. I think they may live somewhere in Eastern Europe perhaps? They have a garden and some chickens and, I think, a goat. The girl cannot speak with her mouth, she says. Is she mute, or deaf? The girl knows she lives 'here', and the village her mother goes to occasionally is 'there'. That is her whole world. She is curious about the few other people she has seen in the little village. But people are afraid of her, she says, they 'make faces', because she cannot talk. She shows me how she pushes her face and herself close to others; and then people run away screaming, cursing her. Yes, she needs someone. Her mother cannot deal with the girl any more. I do not know how to help her. I am too new to this way of being, although I sense that if I had been there in person, with her, I could not have helped either. Maybe the new woman can help.

Once the girl joined in, unasked of course, when I was talking with the People. The People immediately closed. I felt the resonance of echoing empty silence.

One of the People said, "We have not been asked" (very formal, I thought).

After a few seconds another of the People said, "If you want to join a being together you must ask every one of us."

"We (meaning the People, leaving me out) ask you (now) to ask us permission to join."

She came into the silence, asking softly (I could sense a blush), May I join?

The people said, calmly but warmly and with love, "We are full (complete?), we are engaged, we are busy, the communication we are having cannot accommodate more."

The girl withdrew, confused I think, and angry. But she complied.

Later that day I called the girl, carefully going through the whole introduction, before opening myself further. Perhaps now she understands that it 'works' better if one respects others.

She tells me she has shared the Introduction Ritual with her mother and that has stirred something in the mother that the girl does not know how to deal with. She had come to us for help, and then we had not let her in!

I did not say I was sorry. In mind-to-mind communication one cannot lie. I praised her for learning quickly and well. I gave her much good feelings, warm feelings. Then I asked, Why did the Introduction make her mother angry/upset/surprised?

It seems that all these years the mother thought she had been playing a game with the girl, and when the girl grew older the mother had tried to disengage herself from that game. "It is time the girl grows up", the mother thinks.

When the girl made clear that the game is not a game, but real, and there are rules, the mother could not accept that. (Could not accept that communing mind-to-mind is just a game?)

I cannot be sure that I understand all the feelings and interpretations of what her mother had said, because the girl does not understand. All I do understand is that the mother thought that the contact she had with her daughter had been 'fun'. Now, if she first must ask permission it is not fun any more. The mother never thought that talking with her daughter mind-to-mind had been 'real'. She was just pretending! When the girl told her about communicating with me and other humans, as well as with the People (to the girl the People are no different from other humans), the mother panicked. When the girl said she talked with people from far away the mother could not believe (or did not want to). When the game turned serious, the mother feared for her daughter. Of course the girl felt the fears of the mother. For the first time perhaps she thoroughly understood that she was different from her mother, and therefore also from other humans. Now she knows that the outside world is dangerous; the outside world to the girl means the village, and a nameless invisible 'far away' where all kinds of different voices exist who talk with her. The mother says that when the girl grows a little more she must go away from their little cabin (why? the girl asks me) and live with a man, and have children herself (why and why?)



Early one morning I called 'the new woman'. She answered almost immediately, then said she was 'somewhere else' (asleep?). Later...

That told me I was not very skilled yet. The People told me long ago that before you call on someone, you always carefully probe to check whether they are awake or willing to communicate (they have no concept of 'busy').

Not an hour later the new woman calls. She is wonderful! She explains she was doing something when I called. At first I could not figure out what she had been doing, but gradually it dawned on me that she had been doing an important ceremony. A healing ceremony, I think. She is still tired but happy because the person she worked with is better now. Not healed, she snaps. He will never get well, but he feels better.

During the next ten or fifteen minutes we commune (about 'nothing' it seems). Almost as good as with the Old Man. Better in some ways. She is so alive! Full of ideas and opinions, all of them sound, it seems to me. And not the least bit shy about expressing them.

We share as old friends who have no need to establish a common ground. More than once she says, You feel good in my belly. I think to her 'belly' means what in my language would be my head, my mind. Or, perhaps, what we call 'heart'?

No, not what you say, she corrects me, you are 'in my being' (she also shamelessly listens in on my thoughts!) True, I also feel her presence in my 'being'.

We soon discover that any sharing about our daily lives is very difficult. We live in different worlds. She must be in Africa. Our pasts, the cultures we live in, the people we have known, what we 'do', all these are barriers. We have absolutely nothing in common. Not important. Increasingly unimportant.

Yes, she visited the girl a few times. Then something happened to her, she reports. She can no longer 'get close' to the girl. There are other people all around her now.

I too had discovered that the girl is no longer in her cabin, or wherever it was she was before. Sometimes when I call I sense a dense, cloudy silence with only a glimmer of response, other times a wild madhouse of conflicting impressions without any 'self' again.

Once the girl called me. She sounded bone weary. She told a confused story. Some people had come to the cabin, had physically picked her up and put her in a box which moved fast, taking her somewhere. Then in another box to somewhere else, and more boxes, more somewheres. Until she came to another 'here' place. Many others, all 'shadows', as she expressed it (not real?). These others cannot hear her. She feels lonely, the occasional times when she can feel at all. These others are not afraid of her (as the people in the village were), but she is afraid of them. They stick her with needles, or force stuff in her mouth she does not want to eat — but they force her. She cannot leave. Even when the door is open she cannot leave.



It took her a while to project that story. She would fade, doze perhaps. Her awareness was very thin. She is institutionalized I think. And drugged, no doubt. I wonder how many others are locked away?



Communing with the People is easier now. I am grateful that they have made it possible for me to get to know a few of my fellow humans although I am distressed by what I am learning also. I am learning about the inside of human heads that are so filled with meaningless and conflicting ideas that it is hard to find the self that has collected all that stuff.

My own head is probably just as messy, stuffed with unfinished business, old memories, new impressions. But I am trying to simplify, if for no other reason than not being so 'fast' when communicating with the People feels good to me also.

Every day now I go through a part of my house, and throw away what I have not looked at for a while. It is frightening what I have saved. For what? I have found all kinds of things that do not work, parts that have no known use any more, books I saved for sentimental reasons — how could I have felt 'sentimental' about them? My clothes closet is getting thinner, it is easy to throw away clothes I have not worn for a year. My books are more difficult, when I go through one shelf I keep coming across a book that I think I might want to use again, some time, perhaps, in some unknown future maybe?

Then there are the knickknacks people give me. I know they were expressions of appreciation or love for me, but how to fit them in my simple home?

After an hour of throwing away, I must go outside. Even in the rain (and it rains a lot this year). The harmony I feel outside heals me and clears my head. The stuff in my house is unimportant, it has little to do with 'me'. Things weigh me down. I must get rid of more. No regrets. It is only in the world humans have created for themselves that 'things' are what is real. 'Things' are nothing.

The People do not have possessions, they cannot even imagine owning.



## Chapter Twelve

The old man who I imagine lives in high mountains somewhere, has become a dear friend. Most of the other humans I have found (or, who the People found for me) were interesting, but 'difficult'. It was work trying to communicate with them because I am the one who had to make the effort. They are either very young, or very troubled. But the old man is like a long lost brother. It is so easy to commune with him, almost as if we had done that all our lives. And now the new woman.

The new woman still amazes me. I cannot remember ever having known a person so uncomplicated — no, that is not right. Of course she is not uncomplicated. But she is 'whole'. She is completely straightforward, no games, to use a current jargon. At our first contact I was almost bowled over. The People refer to her as 'a strange human', by which they mean, it seems, a human to whom mind-to-mind is normal. To me she was never strange. Different certainly; forceful, definitely. Maybe there are no people like her in my world. All the people around me have a shell, an exterior which they carefully polish, nurture and maintain. This woman has no shell, she is what she is, and she accepts that completely.

Communing mind to mind was so natural to her she did not even think about it much. Perhaps that is why she does not bother much with the Introductory ritual. Just when I realized the importance of setting boundaries, I meet this woman who ignores my boundaries, barges into my awareness — and I enjoy her presence. Who says we must be consistent? What is important is that I am who I am. The woman (must think of a better name for her) is perhaps close to my age, although in Africa people perhaps do not live as long as we do in more protected societies. She is tough. That was immediately obvious after we had spent a few minutes in contact. She is a healer, or a medicine woman, a shaman perhaps. Her mind is often in dimensions even the People do not know about. At first both of us probed and tested. Neither of us wanted to have to admit that the other might be powerful. Then we laughed. I had never imagined what it is like to laugh with another person who is in my mind ('in my belly', she says). The laugh is multiplied. I who do not laugh often, laugh with her. Imagine a spacious open vault where laughter echoes and reverberates, comes back in giggles and smiles, while we dance around in something warm and intimate. She is not shy. From the beginning she lets me look through her eyes. That is how I know she lives in Africa. Once she held a piece of mirrored glass in front

of her face. What do you think, what do you think, she asked? What else can I say than "I think you are beautiful". She spat on the ground. Then she laughs again (I imagined the cackle of a crazy old woman, but probably she has more of a belly laugh, it feels full, rounded). I am outside at the time, so I walk over to one of my rain barrels and lean over it. The rain barrel is full, water to the top. My reflection looks back at me, but somewhat distorted. What do you think, I ask?

A boy, she says. You are a boy!

No, I am an old man.

After a minute or so, she says thoughtfully, Yes, now I see. But you are also a boy.



Do you heal, she asks in her blunt way?

Yes, sometimes, but carefully; in my world there are healers who are very powerful, very rich. She does not at first understand the distinction between powerful and rich; I thought to add 'rich' because our rich healers can buy people's allegiance. Still not clear. But powerful she understands. However in this context she understands powerful to mean what I can only see as a sort of slave driver, very physical, men who beat others, torture them.

How can people like that be healers, she asks in genuine consternation? I try to explain that, No, they do not beat people, but they have made a whole structure of buildings and assistants to help them in treating people for diseases and other ills. The image she gives back is of a very dark medicine man, a shaman of sorts, with assistants and many 'things' he uses in his practice. The implements of his trade all seem sinister, as well as old and worn. I show her in my mind images of our implements that are all shiny chromium, or white, and always sterile, although perhaps equally sinister. It is hard for me to see our modern medical establishment in the light of her medicine men with masks and dead animal parts, dried and distorted. Our system is so devoid of primitive trinkets, we like our machines shining silvery or smooth plastic. The biggest difference, of course, is what we call 'health care', the whole System of doctors and millions of helpers, other professionals, scientists, people and buildings and insurance companies — all of it very Big Business, and very much part of our culture. Civilized man gets hours of education a day, via the Media, about the latest advances in medical science, about drugs, nutrition, diet. We are consumers of the System, and in a strange way also part of the underpinnings of this enormous System. We buy into it (what choice do we have?). Our knowledge of health and illness comes from thousands of experts who write books, advertise, speak to us all the time. We do not notice when they change their ideas, the propaganda is too powerful to ignore.

In the end I had to give up trying to show her what our medical system looks and feels like. She understands that it is huge, powerful, important in our world — very different from what she thinks of as 'healing' in her world. She lets me know that she is a healer, people come to her when they are sick. She does her best to make them feel better. There are others like her 'in the village' (she lives outside of the village, it seems). I get the feeling she is somewhat marginal to the village, which, in turn is part of a larger area with a number of villages not far from each other.

Now we sort of shrug our shoulders and agree to confine our exchanges to personal knowledge of plants. Over the next several weeks we exchange trade secrets, one might say. She holds up a wilted plant and asks imperiously, And this? Or, For what? In almost all cases I have to admit I do not recognize the plant. Until she thinks to chew a leaf, and lets me share the taste; then there are quite a few plants I recognize. Some of them grow here, or in other places I have lived. Some grow bigger here, or smaller. But everywhere they are healing herbs. I share looks and taste (sometimes smell) of many of the herbs I grow and the ones I store, usually dried. Smell and taste works a lot better than seeing a wilted plant.

I teach you, she says. Or maybe you teach me, she adds hesitantly. Can you come visit me, or can I visit you, she asks?

We are far apart and there is a great ocean between us. Probably several oceans. She is not too clear what oceans are. I do not think she has ever seen an ocean, but she has heard people talk about great expanses of water.

I ask how she heals, Do you do more than give herbs?

Well, of course! She is quite indignant. I cannot just go up to a child and say, here, eat this! (It appears she works mostly with children, sometimes women, hardly ever men, as far as I can tell). Because it is difficult to commune about things like the kind of healing we are both interested in, we agree to share the experience some time.

It is refreshing how quickly we understand each other, and how quickly we agree on things. I do not think I know any people like her.



Communicating without words about abstracts like spirits or demons or gods, or whatever so-called "spiritual" entities are called, proved impossible. However, what I think of as 'energy' we both understand.

She invites me to be with her the next time she works. Unfortunately our time zones are opposite, so that when she calls me, urgently, Now, join me now, I am asleep and cannot wake up fast enough to please her.

Eventually we had to give up sharing our daily lives. We both agree that our relationship—because that is what it feels like to both of us—is much too

interesting to spoil with 'facts'. We have a lot in common without having to compare our lives in the outside world. Not important, we both say.

It is unlikely that in this crazy world we could have met in person, but if we had I think we would have 'recognized' each other. Yes, certainly. She is a sort of soul mate, I think.



Once I asked her name. First she smiled, then she was mad. After so many moons (which to her means menstrual cycles, as well as moon cycles, I think) surely you 'know' me?

Yes, I do of course.

Then she says slyly, you could not hear my name anyway.

True, we do not talk in words, and words are almost impossible to communicate mind-to-mind. When she whispers something—her name?—all I hear in my mind is a sort of cough, a growl, a sound that comes from far back in the throat. When I write about her I shall call her Growl.



Communing feels very intimate 'from the inside' as I think of it. Now we spend time together as old friends, or old lovers. I have never felt so intimate with anyone perhaps. I know how it feels when she has a bad day. I experience her hunger if she lets me, I feel her body from the inside, almost as I feel my own.

She depends on others to give her food, or a live chicken which she keeps around (tied to one leg) until she needs it for food, or for a healing broth. Sometimes people give her a piece of cloth. She finds her own greens. Once a woman from another village, or another area, gave her some coins to 'pay' for a healing. She threw them back at the woman as worthless. The woman was insulted and they had a short fight. I tried to tell Growl that coins and other forms of 'money' are used in many parts of the world. Bah, she says, she knows! Here there is a very fat man (I think that means 'rich'), he has a box of those coins, and he has many women who work for him! Almost wistfully she says, No man ever wanted me, even when I was a young woman. Then immediately she adds, I am too strong! I accept that.



Early in our relationship she asked when, or perhaps how I had become a healer. I answered truthfully that I do not know, healing had been something I always knew, even as a boy. Yes, she said. Yes, she too discovered that she was a healer as a young girl.

One day she told me the story of her growing up, or her young girlhood. I am not sure I understood all the details of her story as she relived it for me (over a number of sessions). I think it began when she was perhaps eleven or twelve. Old enough to be cut, as she said. But she refused to be cut. She knew how other little girls had cried and screamed and hurt afterwards. She fought, the old woman could not hold me down, she shared with some pride. Then, in the middle of the struggle, they had heard a loud 'pop' (a gunshot? ), and everyone had fled to the bush. She had run far, far from the village. When she was very tired she had hid in some bushes and fallen asleep. She heard a large animal and she told him to leave me alone. The animal had walked away. Later (maybe days later?), when she was very, very hungry, some men had found her from another village; or perhaps she meant from another tribe. They grabbed her (she was very weak, she said, she could hardly stand up, and very thirsty), one held her arms in the back, almost breaking one arm. Another got in front to rape her. She made "the noise of that big animal" (growled) so strong that the man who held her arms let go, and the other stepped back. She threatened them, yelling after them that she would give them (a disease?— at the time I was not clear what she meant). The men fled. Later that day, when she had found some grubs to eat, she thought about what she had said. She said to me, I could have given them a very bad disease, you know! The next part of her story is confusing. To me, because it is also confusing to her. Eventually, it seems, she was taken in by a very old woman, who taught her about plants and healing.

And she did not allow to have me cut, she said triumphantly.

My story is different of course. Southeast Asia rather than Africa. The world is a strange place, and yet it can give humans similar experiences. I tell Growl about tigers. I always liked tigers; I feel a great affinity with them. I have met tigers in the wild, and I felt they were my friends.

She shakes her head, Your lions are different from our lions. But they are also the same. Hmmm.

Where she is, she says, there are no lions, but other cats. A bit smaller, and meaner.



A few times I have gone to the ocean here on this island, meaning to have Growl experience through my eyes. But so far we have never been able to synchronize times when we are both free to be with the other. A few times I have awakened in the middle of the night when she called. My night is her day. We communicate at the edges, early evening here which is early morning there. That seems to work well enough.

Of course I ask her about the People. She thinks of them as They in the Sky. We both wonder what their lives are like, but she is much less curious

about the People than I am. Perhaps because she has met so many different kinds of 'others' already. The People contacted her not very long ago, when she was searching in 'another dimension' (she thinks of it as below this earth) for a certain spirit/demon? Grrr, she says, I never found (the spirit); maybe they do not really live below. But she answered the call of the People.

Growl had not been surprised when she first heard them call. She hears many voices (she thinks of them as "others my neighbors cannot see or hear"). She never questioned who they are; she certainly never worries whether what she perceives is 'real'! To her they are real, what else? She understands the People are far away — as you are, she giggles, but not across all that water! She believes the People are behind the clouds. Her interest in the People is quite casual. They have never been able to teach me anything about plants, she says with some scorn and maybe disappointment.

But they do heal, I say. Oh yes, I know. Once when she was sick with a fever, they talked to her and then made her between night and day (I sensed that meant cool, they cooled her fever, or perhaps it even meant the People gave her a healing dream).

Can you do that, she asks me?

I don't do that any more.

What, there are no sick people where you are? People do not break their legs, where you are? Women do not die from not being able to get a baby out where you are. eh? People do not hurt each other where you are?

How to explain that here there are thousands, millions of people in my world who take care of sick people? I felt foolish when I said that. But it is true, I cannot be a healer any more. Not here, not now. Growl does not understand.

But healing does not go away, does it, when you get old?

No, I do not think it goes away, but where I live, the chiefs of my 'village' do not want me to heal.

And as I put that in my mind it makes me feel even more foolish. I am foolish. Our whole world is foolish. Why should we not be allowed to use our true talents?

One day, soon after, she bursts into my half-awake breakfast staring-into-space, You! You can heal young children perhaps, when they cry. Or women when they are old; not sick, but lonely. Is that not healing? Or talk to those crazy young men who cannot think while their bodies go crazy? You can do that!



After getting to know Growl, or, actually, after getting to know the Old Man, I realized how truly different the People feel inside. There were times when I thought the whole story of the People was a fable, I had made it up. Now



I know that if my communing with fellow humans is real (and it cannot possibly be not real) then communicating with the People must also be real.

The conversations I have now with the People now feel so very different, probably because there is so little we have in common. With humans there is always the warm feeling of shared humanity. We are the same on a deep level.

Even communicating with Earth animals has become different now that I allow myself to feel free to communicate. Of course animals are not the same as we are, their awareness is 'simple'. That is not the right word. Their awareness (and I am thinking of so-called higher animals) is one-pointed. There is not much of the floating debris that so characterizes human minds. A dog is wholly in the present. A cringing dog may 'remember' many beatings, but not in awareness, it is a physical remembering. And dogs certainly do associate an event with a person. I knew a dog who was severely beaten and had turned nasty. But with me he was perfectly normal, he behaved naturally, attentive and kind to me. As soon as his 'boss' came in view, however, his whole being changed. It did not feel at the time as if the dog 'remembered' but rather that he became a different dog in the presence of his boss.



For a while I wanted to introduce humans to each other. I asked Grawl whether she wanted to talk with other humans.

Why? I talk with you, is that not enough? I cannot have more friends in my head — of course she said 'in my belly'.

I asked the old man. He is not only not interested, but he feels strongly that he does not want to clutter his head with unnecessary fluff (my translation of a concept I sensed almost as cobwebs cluttering an attic).

True, Grawl listened in when I tried to commune with the girl, I certainly did not 'introduce' her. She was never apologetic about that. When I understood and accepted that the Introduction, as I had learned it from the People, was necessary and essential, along comes Grawl who barges through rituals as if they were illusions. And I accept and understand her too.

And I also know what the Old Man means about not wanting more clutter in his brain — or wherever it is we commune. I feel the same.

Humans are complex beings. I feel no conflict holding conflicting ideas in my awareness.



Communing mind-to-mind is still a novelty for me. And every now and then I am beginning to have a sense of... obligation? A feeling that humans are my people, I must help them learn, or relearn this skill. Of course I know that most humans cannot accept that mind-to-mind contact is even possible. And I

should know by now that 'helping' others does not work. I discovered that long ago, and I keep on discovering it. Only if they ask, and even then, with great reluctance...



When I visit the Old Man—now at least once a day—I first empty my mind. Thanks to my contact with the People I have learned to approach him with an almost empty mind, just love, friendship, appreciation, and acceptance.

And now I am beginning to feel as open as he feels to me.

The Old Man is approaching his time of death. I know that he knows. The people around him are impatient, he says with a gentle smile. He told them to be patient, it will not be long now.

He obviously enjoys our being together, if only a few minutes at a time. We do not say much; what is there to say? He is not in pain, only sometimes a vague but general discomfort. His breathing is becoming more labored. His hearing is much less than it was before, he says. But he can still see through other people's eyes, although everything is darker. That worries him. Once he asked why his inner sight would be darker?

His time is near. He is not sure he will have the energy to call me.

I shall check in on him more often. Does he want to die alone I ask, or, would he like to have me there when the time comes? He laughs! The woman (his companion, wife?) will be here, perhaps some of the men. But they do not hear me.

I told him I had sat at the bedside of people when they died.

Not the same, not the same. Those people were not open, or were they?

No, I do not think so. I am not sure.

I will call, when it is time, he said.



There was a baby, unborn. I heard her call. Or, probably, the People made me hear. The idea of communing with an unborn child was very strange. Before our children were born we 'talked with them', but I was never sure that we were not playing games. I have known women who talked to their unborn children. But now, long distance, for me to try to comprehend an unborn? I thought, How much 'mind' can an unborn have? Surprisingly, it was less strange to commune with this little mind than I had imagined. Her mind is blissfully empty of our man-made ideas, fears, do's and don'ts. Very simple, and perhaps because of that, very clear. She needs warmth, support, love... Her point of view was not what I expected. She did not experience her environment as dark, or red (that is my preconceived idea). To her it just is, all there is. She does not have much idea of 'self', but she does feel boundaries. Most of all she cries out for recog-

nition. She feels lost. I get the sense that she is very close to term, it is almost time for her to be born. That is what makes her uneasy. She senses—she 'knows'—that something momentous is about to happen, it is almost happening, and the idea of change, of being broken out of the only existence she knows, the only reality she knows, is strange. More frightening, I imagine, because she has no contact with anyone, although she has cried out for some time. No one has heard her calling. She has not felt any welcome. All she feels is rejection. I give her my welcome.

Is a welcome from far away, from some unknown being, enough to ease her into this world? I try to tell her that what she is about to experience is a natural event, all of us have (had) the same experience. With her talents for communing she certainly will find others who will love and nurture her. I encourage her to keep calling, surely there will be answers.

She had a very difficult birth. I was there in the beginning. The mother denied that anything was happening until it was almost too late. The child barely survived, and would not have survived if someone other than the mother had not called an ambulance. She was born in the ambulance as it raced through noisy streets in a large city somewhere. Perhaps the little being was damaged in the birth. The experience was noisy and chaotic and very painful for the little one.

Our communication became difficult, weak and short, because the child now needs all her energy to live. Her feeble calls get weaker, as if she is out of breath. She is hurting, many parts of her body are not 'whole', but it is mostly her head that she feels. She knows she is helpless, she cannot move (held down, or strapped down?). She hurts.

I call Grawl, urgently. Can you help?

She is furious, indignant. She says, An unwanted newborn (she shakes inside from uncried tears) is better dead. But yes, of course she will help, if she can.

We are in and out of contact. She is soothing the little girl, trying to make her feel more at peace. Then Grawl turns to me and it is almost as if I can feel the tears on her cheeks. She is very angry. How can a young woman...?

Later she calls to say there is little more she can do. The little girl is in a cold white place, Grawl says. Many people are around her, and they do not know what the baby needs. She tried, but she cannot talk to the people, and now she cannot reach the baby any more. She thinks she is dying, or perhaps dead already although 'something' keeps her going. I try to explain life support machines. She is appalled. It would be better if I could reach her, she says. What do they want with that little girl, she asks? Why not leave her to die?

I have no answer.



I am reading a magazine. Growl calls. 'Call' is not really what she does. It is more like, Hey you! But I don't mind, it is good to be with her. My mind is not really with the magazine, I still think about the little girl who came into this world unwanted, and then is not given any mental or emotional support. Nothing but machines to accompany her on her path.

As Growl begins to commune my eyes happen to look at a picture in the magazine. Probably an advertisement. A white man in spotless white clothes, a white helmet on blond hair. And a gun.

I interrupt what she is beginning to share with me. Have you ever seen someone like this, I ask?

Oh yes, she says after a short hesitation. Her reaction is mixed, I feel disinterest, a sort of disgust, but also a fear I have not felt in her before.

You cannot trust them, you know, she says to me. After a few seconds, she continues, But you I can trust, because you are in my belly. Then, Do you sweat, she asks? That man you showed me sweats a lot. And he is not doing any work to make him sweat, the men (of the village) do all the work, but he sweats. Ugly. She continues with a deep shiver, They always want. They want help, they want girls, or sometimes a boy, and they want you to work for them. They want for us what we don't want.

Not much discussion after that. She drifts away without saying good-bye. Wish I had not looked at that advertisement. A stupid picture, as if from an old-fashioned movie. It is good that Growl and I can be in close intimate touch without talking, without our different worlds interfering. The touch is enough.



The People say it is important for us to learn to recognize each other, those of us who can commune mind-to-mind. They say that some humans certainly have talent but we must 'emerge'. The image was clear, something coming out of an egg, or something coming into light, yet I am not sure what they meant. Are the few of us who have communicated with the People supposed to go public?

For people who live in not very civilized places—I guess that may still be the majority of humans—it might be easier. For those who live in civilized countries it is difficult! I know. It took me half a lifetime to 'emerge', as the People say. I think it means being who I am, not who other people want or expect me to be. In my case it meant unlearning what I had spent the first half of my life learning. How can we 'emerge' from today's world? It is everywhere. I have to eat, I have to have a roof over my head. The people around me do not understand.

I have day dreams (and often real dreams) of living in some woods (warmer than here, I hope) where I have to figure out what can be eaten. How can I learn what will nurture me? Trial and error as scientists say? Of course not,

I would starve, or poison myself. No, I must 'read' the plants and trees, and bugs or slugs, to know who can be eaten, and who cannot. I must listen to all living things, know them and have them know me. Those are not skills anyone knows any more; not skills we even acknowledge. And yet they are the skills we had to have once, for survival.

For a while I made some efforts to 'find' other humans with whom I could commune. But so far not much success. Sometimes, very occasionally, I meet a human who I think is 'open', only to be denied contact. A few times—three times, to be exact—I found myself almost in touch with another human, but in a place that was impenetrable. It felt like a space where walls moved out of the way, or shifted color. Very disconcerting at first, then I learned that making a 'house of mirrors' as one of them said, is protection from the 'noise' of modern civilization. I found it dizzying to try to come in. I gave up.

Naively I had imagined that when I called someone who obviously could sense me, I would be welcomed. I expected the walls to become less reflective, or disappear altogether. But she kept herself well hidden, even then. The mirrored walls were 'for always' he whispered, go away, go away.

Of course I cannot invade where I am not wanted. That is the first lesson I learned from the People, and I already knew that. Humans who discover an ability to commune mind-to-mind must learn to accept that even when they come across someone who is 'aware', nevertheless they may not be welcome. Some people have developed defenses not only against the world, but against others who want to be in touch. They probably have been hurt. Their defenses bristle with what feels like barbed wire, or worse, shifting mirrors. And sometimes a double or triple padlocked steel door.

The People cannot understand that. The People think perhaps that the Opening Ceremony is just a custom. On this earth it is a necessity. I too have become leery of people 'barging in', so to speak — except for Growl! She is welcome whenever the spirit moves her.

But, the People say, how can it be that a human calls out, and then makes it difficult to approach her (the man of the 'house of mirrors')?

Note: Humans, of course, commune inside as they communicate outside. If they are open and friendly communicating with words, they are also open and friendly communing mind-to-mind.



## Chapter Thirteen

Heal me!, she yells. Growl of course. I am not in a mood to be interrupted. I had been transplanting basil, green basil. Basil seeds are so tiny that a pinch makes more than a dozen plants. Transplanting the tiny plants is careful work.

I can tell you are not doing anything, she says.

You are wrong, I am doing something, something that takes a lot of concentration, Why not at least say 'hello', or 'can we talk'?

I am in pain, she says, calmer now. I am in much pain, and I want you to heal me as the sky people do. Just as they do, zap!, and the pain is gone.

How can I? I am not of the People. I live on this earth, not on another planet. I am the same kind as you; they are not. My healing ability is less than theirs.

I must have gone on and on, because, again, she interrupts, Try it!

Give me a minute to compose myself.

Of course. I always need that also. I shall be quiet, can I be with you?

No! Leave me alone for a little while... Oh, all right, you can be with me, but leave me alone, do not interrupt. Her pain and her disappointment of being almost rejected were too much for me.

I wash my hands at the outside faucet; dry them on my pants. Get the cup of tea that had been brewing too long. Take a sip: bitter! Add some lemon. Somewhat better. Add a dollop of honey, I will need the energy.

Sit down. Get up again, go to my bed, lie down.

When I have cleared my mind of distracting debris I carefully reach out to her. I can sense her pain, of course. In her mid section. Stomach? No, lower. Feels like some obstruction in her bowels.

Cramps?

Yes, sometimes. Irregular.

Her belly feels cold, not hot. And very tight. She stays calm. She too goes into a sort of trance, I sense.

Now I do not do this any more, but when I did I would hold my hands an inch or so above the person. My open hands, particularly my right hand, feels where there is heat, or stress. When I did not diagnose or try to describe what I felt. I was only completely aware of 'something'. I did not give it a name, but I knew that here and here and here, there is 'something'. I strongly believe that 'healing' is nothing but aiding the body to heal itself. I learned not to tell the

body what to do. That does not work. But usually I can feel whether a spot needs more energy, or smoothing out of energy. But even that I do not think about. I leave my thinking behind. I just open myself.

Whatever energy there is flows through me. In my experience the less I 'do', the better the results. I step aside. I write 'energy' for want of a better word. It feels very real as I feel it rushing through me, it feels energetic — but what 'it' is, I don't know.

When I was very young, perhaps nine or ten years old I discovered that I could 'feel' hurt animals that way. I found that somehow my hands knew what to do. I rarely touched the animals. I felt their pain and now I think I wanted strongly for that pain to go away so that I would not feel it. It is difficult to remember exactly how I knew what to do. But I knew, or at least my hands knew. Some of those instances are still very clear in my memory. Someone's pet monkey getting old, I knew. It was hurting very badly from something in one of its eyes. The little monkey sat on a little platform on top of a pole, a chain around his ankle. The owner held the pole close to him; he wanted to touch the monkey I think but the monkey did not want to be touched. As soon as I saw the little monkey, I felt his great pain. I felt my right eye almost bursting from pressure. I had a sudden severe headache. I reached out my right hand. Not to touch, I think, but... just reaching out. The animal became calm almost immediately, and after a while the pain disappeared. I could sense the relief in him, and in me. Even now I feel the surprise I felt then. And then the relief, because my own pain was gone as well. And I also remember that I felt completely drained. I almost fainted, I think. One of the people standing around us caught me. Another gave me a cup of sugar water, very sweet sugar water. Later I learned that honey works better.

Another strong memory. Someone brought a chicken with what must have been a damaged toe. It could not walk, they said (I felt it did not want to walk). I cupped my hand around that limp foot and after some time (minutes? I never knew) the chicken straightened up, ruffled her feathers, and when I took my hand away she straightened out her toes, very carefully at first, than more boldly. The man carefully put her down. She walked away, limping. But she walked. There were times in my life when I lost the ability to feel pain in people (I did not think of animals then). That was during the war, when there were so many sick and hurt people all around. I could only bear the pain by not feeling. For a while I thought it was the effort to shield myself so powerfully that made me lose so much weight, but it is more reasonable to think it was because we had hardly any food the last six or more months of that war.

For many years I was very careful to maintain that protective shield. Shielding myself from physical pain is easy, shielding from mental pain is more difficult. Then, at the time, I knew I had to if I wanted to survive.

Many years after the war the aborigines helped me live again without that shield. Or, not really 'without', but to be selective about what, or who, I



shielded from. I learned to be me again. I shall never forget the relief of not having to protect myself, at least for a few days at a time. There was a cost of course. When I returned to the civilized world I got sick. I was sick for many years, on and off, with diseases and disorders medical people could not diagnose. They

did tests, I was hospitalized for observation, until finally they said it was an "autoimmune reaction", I was allergic to myself.

I am allergic to the western self I have to be.

Eventually I recovered. Learning to let go of the shield from time to time helped. (I am skipping many chapters of my life; it is time to get back to the now). Those thoughts moved through my mind as I lay on my bed getting an impression of what was going on in Growl's lower belly. I sensed her encouragement. It felt almost as if she were cheering me on. To my surprise holding my hand above her belly, as if I was there with her, was quite easy in my mind. I did not have to be there. But it was my real right hand that 'felt' something.

Suddenly I know, I am certain that I can do something about the pain. Distance is unimportant. I feel a knot in her lower belly, I feel it in my hands as strongly as if I were there. I may be weak and ancient but the energy I pass through me is not my energy anyway, I just move it on. I feel a great surge of power coming into me, through me, to my hands. All I do is direct that energy—it is very powerful now—to where Growl is. I do that twice. I wait. Again I hold my hands over her belly. Her belly is much calmer, and warmer. As I move my hands this way and that, I sense there are other areas of disharmony. I cannot give a name to what I feel. An unbalance. I go deeper into myself, gathering strength again, a feeling of enveloping myself in what I call power, or energy. I focus on the source, the source of energy, of Life itself probably. I direct the energy flowing through me to whatever area of her body that needs it.

I have an image of Growl bathing in light, light swirling all around her, tight little swirls where extra energy is needed, broad bands of light everywhere else. I 'project' my warm feelings for Growl, knowing that her body is strong, can heal itself, will heal itself. I do not do anything.

Let it flow. let it flow.

The energy flows where her body needs it. All this time the bright light, in a large, very large, space all around her, is pulsing, changing color sometimes, contracting, expanding.

Finally, slowly, slowly the light is fading, flowing smoothly now.

Growl is silent; I sense tears. Deep relief, she is relaxed. And something else. A sort of awe close to fear.

I relax all my muscles, empty myself of even the memories. A smile is on my face. A thought comes into my awareness: I must eat some honey. get out bed, make some warm tea and put a whole tablespoon of honey in.



This morning I talk with the People. They thank me. I have slowed down, they say, and that makes it easier for them to understand me. I am pleased, their praise feels like a sort of graduation. It dawns on me that all this time they adjusted to me, trying to make me understand, now finally I can do something to make communication easier from my end.

It is amusing to think I am too fast. In my society I am considered slow. I cannot speak as fast as modern people do; I cannot even understand people who speak as fast as is the fashion today. The modern way of presenting text and illustrations in print, with boxes within boxes, flashy excerpts from the text placed at odd angles throughout the main text, illustrations cut up and pasted helter-skelter all over a page. To me that makes it more difficult to read. That is 'fast' to me. That kind of page makeup is designed for people who snack on information in bytes here and there but never take the time to actually read, or follow a thought from beginning to end. Perhaps those pages are not meant to be read, but scanned.

I make a resolution (again): from now on I shall make it a point to carefully 'empty my mind' before I talk with the People. And whenever I do make the effort to empty my mind I realize what flotsam there is that I must get rid of. My mind is full of extraneous thoughts and what might now be called 'links' (a word or a phrase makes me think of another subject, and from there my thinking goes off to yet other thoughts, where another link makes me think of something entirely different, and so on). When I realize that, I understand it makes it difficult for the People to understand my wild jumping around, of course.

What humans call 'thinking' usually has nothing to do with reflection — when humans say, I think, they mean I believe.

At first when I talked with the People it was 'work', I was not aware that all those busy nothings were in the background of my awareness. I must do a lot more meditation to finally learn how to get rid of that stuff.

Education does that; it spoils experiencing.



Growl asks to come in. She sounds meek, 'different' somehow.

No, I am not different, she interrupts my thought. I want to thank you, she goes on. That was quite a... she does not finish that thought.

Are you better, I ask?

Yes, better, and my neighbor says that after my sickness I am younger. I look younger. Perhaps I feel young too. Bad you are far away, I want you inside... no, not in my belly ('head', you say!) but the body of you.

That image is very clear in my mind! And very physical. Yes, I wish...

This is my day for being appreciated. We were together the whole afternoon. Or, afternoon here. I think there it was after midnight: very dark, chilly, not as quiet as here but still quiet. I felt very close indeed; I am sure she did too.

One of these days I may ask you to heal me, I say.

But I do not do what you do from far away.

You can, of course.

How do you know so much about me?

Remember, you told me when you were a little girl; you ran away; you were weak and hungry, two men from another tribe caught you, one holding your hands, the other wanting to rape you. And you made them stop. Do you remember what you did?

Yes, and they stopped! I felt her sleepy mind waking up. Then she adds, Did I tell you that both of them could not be with a woman after that?

You did that? How do you know?

When I was almost grown they came looking for me. They asked whether I could take away the spell. I said, NO.

Why?

I did not want to.

We are quiet for a long time. She almost goes back to sleep.

I say, You know, maybe what you did to those men was of the same kind as what I did with you.

But you healed!

Yes, and the same power can also kill, or make them ill.

So I could have 'healed' those men when they came back?



I am in the shower when I hear the call of the old man. He is clear as new ice: I am reminded of very thin crystal, completely transparent yet sparkling fiercely. I towel off during our very brief introductory ceremony. He is dying. I see him standing (I have never before imagined what he might look like). He stands in an enormous landscape. The horizon is far away, the color of the land blends almost imperceptibly into the sky, which is brownish grey. But there is a radiance also in the landscape. Two chains of mountains, on either side; very far away, merging in very far perspective. He wears something of a warm red color, it looks like heavy wool. I am standing by his side — and I am here, in my cabin, wrapping myself in a towel, I am still damp, shivering.

He says, We... And then, with a twinkle, What if we had met when we were both young?

I cannot help but laugh. Thinking back to myself as a young man. I answer, Even if we had met I would not have seen you, forgetting that he lost his sight when he was a young boy.

And I would not have heard you, he says.

Then. It is good, he says.

Yes, it is good. I think of the quiet times we have had together.

He holds my hand (I look at my hand: I feel that touch). I feel tremors running from him into my own arm. He withdraws his hand.

It is I who is dying, he says, not you. Not yet.

I think, what now?

My wonderful, warm friend turns and looks at me. His eyes open wide.

I can see, he says, I can see. I see... and he is gone.

## Chapter Fourteen

The day after the old man died the People call. You did well, they say. And then they say a strange thing, You have learned. You are now on your own.

I am shocked. I am accustomed to a regular communication with these alien beings. I have many more questions. I have a vague idea of their world and what they might look like. But I do not feel ready for 'graduation'. Not yet!

They interrupt my thoughts. Now it is time to talk with your own kind.

I stutter something, I am not sure I can do that on my own, but the connection is broken.

Later that day, when I am outside, walking among the plants but not really seeing or hearing them, I still think about the old man's dying. A good death, I feel. I shall miss him. He knew when it was his time, he did not fight it, he surrendered. I never use that word, but it describes what he did.

Suddenly, as always, Growl comes into my mind. Stop it, she almost yells, although you cannot yell in mind-to-mind. What nonsense to think of a 'good' death, she says. Dead is dead. I see dead people all the time. They are not there any more, they leave an empty shell. Empty.

Inwardly I am smiling about her fiercely assertive thoughts. I want to ask why she is so excited, but she interrupts that thought as well. Now it is you and I. We must get to know each other better.

I say something about the break with the People, who suggested I now must find other humans.

There are no others, she snaps.

Oh yes, there are. You remember the girl you talked with, and the baby?

But they were broken, she says — the image of something broken in many pieces very clear.

We do not have much time.

Why do you say that? We both may live many more years. But it is true I do not know much about your world, and I should like to know more.

I am tired. And I am afraid.

And I feel there is an urgency.

And then she is gone.

Not easy to write down what she shared with me then, She felt something was changing in her world. People were behaving differently. More traders come to her village, armed bandits — my word, she gave the image of armed men, some with guns, but not belonging to an army. Everyone is apprehensive, some people have even moved away. To the city, she snarles (vague image of a dirty place with mud, stink of shit, crazy people, lots of buildings).

What can I say, other than expressing concern. And agreement. I too feel my world changing around me, and changing faster all the time.

Where will it end, she asks?

I don't know. I really don't know.

We talk for quite a while, until she interrupts again, curtly: I have to go.



For almost a week I did not hear from Growl, and she did not answer when I tried to reach her. Then, in the middle of the night, she came to me. At first I thought it was a dream, but she kept repeating, wake up, wake up, we have to talk.

We talk.

She is probably right, there is not much time. Her anxiety and fears arouse my own apprehension. In the end we agree on a sort of schedule. We talk with each other at dawn and dusk, because of the time difference.

Her name is not Growl, of course, that is just for writing about her. Names are not important in mind to mind communing, certainly not with a very dear friend.

We have known each other for quite some time now, but from the first it was as if we had known each other always. She is real, she is a living breathing person. She heals with herbs and with her hands, in the village on whose outskirts she has a small hut that leaks sometimes, and is neat as a pin inside. Bundles of dried plants hang from sticks she has stuck in the thatch of the roof. By the entrance there is a big pot where she keeps water. The water looks dirty, she says, but it is cool, and that is important. When she calls it is still always, Hey you! Sometimes I think we dream each other—or, I should say, we day dream each other, when we are both awake. We do not have all that much to say to each other, but it is comforting for both of us to be together. Usually I try to be outside in the early evening and she calls as she wakes up. She tells me that she must wash her face and take care of bodily needs. She cannot talk while she goes outside to piss, and before she has wrapped something around her. We both sit quietly, being together. It feels 'right'.

I don't know why I think she is tiny, maybe five feet tall. I have never seen her, of course. But the way she feels, decisive and quick, makes me think she is small and very thin: little more than skin and bones. She does not eat much.

She says she is not hungry, but I think it is because she has little to eat. People do not pay for what she does. Someone may give her a piece of meat (and it is often old and almost rotten, she adds). She finds roots and something like potatoes, I think, to eat. There is a woman from the village who brings her a bowl of gruel now and then that does not seem very appetizing; she eats that very slowly, as if it does not taste very good, but she knows she needs sustenance. She is alone, as I am, much of the time. She envies me my children and grandchildren: Oh, you are rich, she says. You do not even know how rich you are! That is true. I am embarrassed by my riches. I would gladly share what I have with her. But when I say something like that, she burst out in that cackle that I imagine coming from her. We live in different worlds, she gasps. You would not survive even one day here with me, and I would probably not survive in your world either. True, that is true of course.



For a time we had this strange friendship; what else can I call it? There were times when I felt we were almost lovers; she felt that as well. Sometimes I could feel her skin. She used to say she can feel my penis rising. I am fairly sure I can smell her—smell has always been important to me. She cannot smell me, she says, but she can sense Tiger behind me.

She does not know what a tiger is. Lions she has seen, and a smaller lion (a leopard, a cheetah?), but not like your animal (Tiger). Maybe he is only for you, she said one time. I assured her that tigers are very real, although now there are very few of them in the wild any more.

Are you that old, she says hesitantly, that you remember?

Yes, I am that old, old to remember how much the world has changed. I am frustrated because we cannot share daily events, 'what are you doing today?' Our worlds are too different. Our experiences are so incredibly different, as if we lived on different planets. I had to learn, slowly, about who I call the People. With Grawl I never had to learn. We knew almost nothing about each other's worlds, but we knew each other as humans. We are far apart: not in space, but on this planet.



In the middle of the night she calls me frantically.

Hey, wake up — as usual without any introduction or warning.

They are here, she says.

Who, who are there?

Men. Many men. Not from here (not from the village, I understand) They have weapons. Maybe they are drunk. Or...

In my mind I try to see who she is facing. She does not give me images of the men, I hear what she thinks but cannot hear what she says.

Not from the village, I ask foolishly.

They have guns and sticks. I think they are bad. Not drunk, but bad. She fades. I cannot be sure what she is saying any more. I can sense that we still have a connection, she keeps her mind open, but she does not talk to me. She argues with the men. I sense that she stands up. It is as if I can feel the sparks coming from her eyes. By now I am wide awake, even though it is just barely after midnight here. I search for her, for what is happening where she is. I can sense her, very faintly, even though she is not 'communing' with me. We have been so close that even if she does not 'talk' I am with her.

I get out of bed, put water on to make tea. It is cold and damp here, I shiver. I consider whether I should get dressed, or just put a sweater on. Cannot find the sweater; put a towel around my shoulders, waiting for the water to boil. Look at my teas. What to choose? None of them appeals at midnight. I get some dried mint leaves, and half a teaspoon of coffee, finely ground. I make the brew without much thought. My mind continues to be with Growl, who I can sense somewhere vaguely in the background. I hear, sense much arguing. She remains calm but fierce, it is obvious that she is tense. Frightened? No, I do not think so. Mad, angry!

Suddenly a sort of scream in my head. I feel her head hurt. She is dizzy, sits down hard. One of the men has hit her. Hit her with a stick; or a gun. She moans, I can feel her more clearly now. Her head hurts badly, there is blood in her mouth. She spits it out. Then I lose the connection. Suddenly I am alone in my head, shivering in my dark little house. I turn on another light, sit down with my coffee/tea, sipping slowly.

Are you there? A voice from the People.

Yes, I am here, I am awake.

"Do you want to talk with us?"

Yes, of course, do we have to go through that little dance again? But I am worried, very worried, my good friend Growl (I give them the gestalt I have for her) is in trouble, and I do not know what is happening, and... All my thoughts are rushing out in a tumble of images and feelings.

"We know, that is why we talk to you. She is in great pain, she is being attacked we think. How can that be, they are her own people?"

I tell the People (which group is this?) that it is quite possible for 'her own people' to do her violence. I sense the confusion of the People.

They repeat, "Her own people? But how is that possible?"

Get out of the way, I say. I cannot explain the strangeness of my kind. I want to be with Growl, I cannot talk with you now. I am getting impatient,

Silence, but the contact is still open.

After a few minutes, a soft question comes from the People, "your friend is in great pain, can you handle that?"



My thoughts flash to the individual of the People who had been damaged in the Shaking, and who was 'in great pain'. We dampened her pain for you, they had said then.

Yes, I can handle this, I say. This is Growl, my dearest friend. She called me, I have to be with her. I take a breath. Yes, I must handle this. It feels as if I raise my voice when I say that. I feel a sort of desperation. I do not want to be sidetracked, distracted. I have to be with Growl!

"We shall stand aside, but we will be ..."

With a rush like a thunderclap Growl is back in my awareness. Now she is screaming, her mouth is bleeding badly (they must have knocked out some teeth), and she is holding her stomach where another great pain is located. Her pain reaches me in waves. I cannot think. I cannot feel anything except her pain, her anger. All I can think is: I must be there for her, I must hold her in my arms, I must comfort her. I try giving her comfort, but know that my mind is not calm enough for that. And yet I must send her healing. I collect myself enough to access what I think of as 'the source' of healing. I force myself to take deep breaths, be calm... be still... With an effort, I hold my breath, then breathe as slowly as I can without losing contact with Growl. Deep breaths, breathe deeply I am telling Growl.

Breathe deeply.

I increase my efforts to at least slow myself down, breathing slowly, not thinking of anything except my intense desire to comfort her, heal her, be with her. Gradually I gain enough fortitude to send comfort to her, giving her calm, perhaps even some healing. I send her my caring, my deep love. Her pains continue, now I am getting through to her. Her screams have stopped. Her body is in great pain but somehow she is able to detach herself a little from the pain. She cannot talk, but she whispers something to me, which I understand as acknowledgment of my sending her strength. Her inner voice is faint. In my mind I hold her in my arms, I rock her gently, very gently. I allow her pain to flow into my mind: searing, as if something very hot is piercing my brain. Her chest, her stomach are burning! Hold on, I tell myself. I stay with her. I am talking out loud in the silence of my night, Growl, I love you, I am here but I am also with you, I can feel what you are going through, my heart aches for you, and I am sending you what strength I have...

And I hear her whisper, Yes, yes, yes, you are with me, yes...

I cannot stop, my voice drones on, saying wordless words, floating them on some invisible thread connecting us in that other dimension the People talk about. I talk while at the same time dealing with the pain in my head, my chest, my stomach. I feel that one leg is useless, broken I think, my arms are broken, an ear is dangling by a thread. How can a body be so damaged and still feel and live...?

I feel her life force fading, sliding away. Time has lost reality. I feel weak and nauseous from the effort of being open and remaining with her while she is

dying. It is clear to both of us that she is fading, going away, although occasionally there is a burst of sharp pain and a cry that cuts through my heart. She whispers again but no words or thoughts that I can understand, not even feelings that I can feel — she says good-bye.

Through the tight contact between us I sense a murmur of the People. They are helping her, I imagine. They can do more than I. Briefly I think of the harmony the People have. Again I see the vision of the broken individual of the People as part of that amazing harmony, and then the broken body drifting down... Are they killing Growl?

I call, as loudly as I can in my mind: Growl! Are you there? Are you... I was going to say, are you all right, but that is stupid. She is dying. I know that. We both know that. What can I tell her other than that I am here. And that I love her.

Suddenly her voice comes through clearer than before: Dear heart (that is what a friend used to call me; now it is Growl), we have been perhaps the love I never had, or had so late. You are with me. I am going now...

The contact breaks.



I sit on an uncomfortable chair, hunched over, my head almost on my knees, holding my stomach. It is not my stomach that hurts, my heart is broken. I can hardly breathe. I reach for the tea. It is cold and endlessly bitter. I drink it down to the dregs.

A gentle touch of a voice in my mind, "we are here."

The People. I sit up a little straighter. I cannot talk with you now. I... There is nothing to say. They can see in my mind, in my heart. They know how Growl's death has hit me. I died with her. When she died I died a little. No, not a little. I almost died myself. I feel I could have died. I wanted to die.



Later that day I got dressed, made the bed, tried to eat something. Did not answer the phone. Empty, squeezed of all feeling, and very alone.

I've sat by the bedside of other people dying. With them I had felt that dying was like a birth, a sort of pressure going through a dark passage then coming out at the other end of a tunnel of light, renewed, whole again. But I did not feel that about Growl's tortured, excruciatingly painful dying. I had been there, part of her when she died. Did she break the contact, or her death? Does it matter? A few times I actually tried to call her, but of course there was no response.

For a few days I think I lost my hearing. I could not hear the radio when I turned it on for diversion. I went to the post office and could not hear the en-

gine of my car. Perhaps I did not see either. I walked around my garden and did not see the plants. I have almost no memories of those days. Perhaps a whole week lost. I cannot remember eating, sleeping, doing this or that. Days gone. I did not know whether the sun shone or whether it was raining. A week of nothing.

Until one morning I hear the People, very softly, "Are you there, can we talk?"

Yes, I guess we can talk. But before we can complete the little ritual giving each other permission to come into one another's minds, I gush out feelings I did not even know I had — I wish you people had never taught me to hear, you taught me to talk with other humans, and now she is dead, killed, murdered, tortured, and I was there... If it had not been for you, I would not have known. I feel as if I was killed. And on and on, much of it repetition and most of it nonsense of course. I am mad, I am angry, confused, and most of all I hurt as I have rarely hurt before...

For a long time they let me ramble and rave and rage. Finally a voice breaks into my raging confusion, "we know, we know. We were there. We do not understand, but we know your pain."

Had they helped her die, as they had killed the woman of the People whose back was broken after the Shaking? No, they had not, they say, and I believe them.

"But we made the harmony for her; do you remember the harmony?"

During that week of nothing but awful pain and almost dying with Growl I had thought about my new ability to commune with some humans as I communicated with the People, those strange beings from another planet, somewhere in the universe. I had wondered why we had forgotten, or lost that ability as a species. No, the harmony, I had not thought of the harmony. Now, with the people in my head again, I said, Oh yes, how could I forget the harmony!

"Let go," they said. "Let us put you in the harmony."

Again I feel carried in their arms (and again I think, briefly, how can that be?) and I hear the music, what I can only understand as music, although I know it is not sound of course, it is also colors, but not seeing. For a long time I let myself be rocked in the ever-changing harmonies of sounds and colors that went around and up and down and inside and all over me. Slowly I become aware of one strand of the harmony that was Growl, now a wrinkled thread of gold and black and bright colors, but also earth. This earth, my earth, our earth. She was definitely of our earth, not the strange world of the People. I follow the thread that was Growl until it broke with a snap. Where the thread has broken there is a small hole in the harmony, a syncope of the rhythms, a gap in the weave. And a sunburst of colors and light: her fierceness.

Now I can cry, sob, mourn for a friend I knew so well although I never knew her in the flesh.



Later, another time, I ask the People where they learned the harmony. Or, perhaps, I ask how can I find that harmony.

A pause, as always. There is no easy answer, of course; I know that.

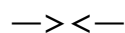
In the end one of them says (more and more often, there is one individual of the People — that makes me wonder), "You, humans know, or knew, the harmony." Sounding tentative, "mind to mind can only be when there is the harmony. Our talking and the harmony belong together."

Yes, that sounds right. Of course we humans did know the harmony a time ago. I remember hearing something like the harmony in the little wordless tunes the Aborigines sung, sounds that moved in the wind and wrapped around grasses, colored rocks and reached from the dirt between the trees to the highest clouds, a harmony that struggles to survive in the very essence of our earth, waiting to be rediscovered. I see the harmony in wild places that have not been touched by humans yet. I hear it in birds, dolphins. A wild harmony in the shrill screams of chickens

That is what we have lost. Thrown away, I think bitterly. The harmony is all the colors of the rainbow and then some. It is the chaos of nature in the raw, untouched by human hands. But, how else? We, each of us, a thread in the tapestry. A whole of individualities, lives intertwined, Why, how could we forget? It is hidden behind concrete, steel, plastic, and hidden behind a world imagined by the greedy power-hungry fools who think they can create another reality. We're overwhelming the harmony with our mechanical noises and artificial colors.

The little green bird is in the harmony; even when he weaves a bleached white thread into his nest that also is the harmony. We have forgotten that without the harmony we cannot live. Our own constructions are castles in the air, smoke and mirrors. The harmony is the ecology of the planet; it is a flower. Having is poverty; being is the wealth of this harmony: living, dying and always now.

SPIRAL...



on the island called Hawai'i, 2002, 2009, 2011