

October 30, 1982

After a difficult day that had left me feeling rather strangely, I packed a suitcase and headed the car up the coast to Santa Barbara. The early morning air was bracing and felt good against my face when I stopped for my morning cup of coffee.

I was looking forward to the next three days, which would be spent at a place called the Center for Spiritual Renewal, which, despite its non-sectarian name was actually owned and operated by the Catholic Church. Situated on ten acres in an extremely exclusive enclave in Santa Barbara County, it was once a western home for the DuPont family. The Center boasts meeting rooms, prayer halls, churches, dining areas and other facilities, with the old mansion itself as the centerpiece of the estate. This is where visitors spend their time in individual spiritual retreats away from the main body of the grounds.

Although I am not Catholic, the nuns who are in charge of the Center didn't mind and I didn't mind them or their dogma and rituals, so it seemed to be a platonic marriage made in heaven. The sisters are wonderful souls and they could not have treated me more kindly.

The rules governing retreatants are few and simple. No talking, no undue noise, no one from the other areas of the compound are allowed into the mansion and those staying there may be left completely alone if they so choose. Guests take care of their own meals, except for dinner, and all in all, it is a fine place to get away from it all and recharge one's batteries.

Immediately upon arrival I knew I was in for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, whatever it turned out to be. I unpacked and took a stroll around the grounds. The late afternoon sun had almost completely set and the evening would be beautiful. Passing a gray marble fountain in the rear of the mansion, I caught a sideways glimpse of someone standing nearby. This was hardly unusual; I hadn't expected to be the only retreatant on the estate. I was just about to bid my fellow speaker a good evening, when a closer look proved him to be a spiritual, rather than human, being, and one who told me I was welcome.

I had dinner alone in my room rather than join the others in the dining room. I was tired and not really in a mood for socializing. All I wanted was to meditate and then have a good night's sleep.

The following day began with a visit to one of the meditation chambers where I called my energy to myself. Although still fatigued from the previous day, I was able to marshal my concentrative faculties and focus on Shiva, the Hindu god of transformation and destruction, a psychological symbol for human passion and tension.

The day before, in the aftermath of what was probably a seizure, I had had a vision of a volcano spewing lava that regenerated and created anew even as it destroyed. The blue sky (in the

vision) contained a rainbow linking the sun and moon with great cohesion. I found the vision stimulating.

As I watched, a blue curtain, or veil appeared before me, the fabric undulating gently. It did not look like cloth but appeared to be constructed of what Hindus call *chitta*, literally, “mind stuff.” I had the distinct impression this sheer blue veil was comprised of bits of consciousness, of being, of reality, all woven together into this curtain acting as a barrier between me and another plane of existence.

My intuition told me that today the curtain would be rent and I would continue further in my personal journey, the latest phase of which had begun yesterday with the volcanic vision.

Seemingly responding to my wish, the veil parted and I went through, finding myself freely floating in the air. And I was not suspended in some random, unrecognizable place but directly over the volcanic terrain I had already witnessed. I was attired in a cloak-like garment bearing some sort of symbols and billowing out behind me in the wind that carried me through the sky.

I was just acclimating myself to this jaunt over the fiery scene when my body began to break up, each piece in turn breaking into smaller pieces. Then I saw the cloak was embroidered with the outline of the landscape I was flying over. To the right, over the rendering of the landscape, was the sun, the moon on the left. The images of the trees and mountains were also clearly discernible. It was though I were wearing the landscape that was being broken up by the volcanic activity.

The splitting up of my own form continued. Black stars appeared and illuminated my expanding field of vision allowing me to witness my own breaking apart as a spectator in an unmistakable example of bi-location. As in a dream, I was both participant and observer. I finally completed my fracturing into multiple sections and then I, myself, was no more.

The next act was thousands of winged creatures soaring as butterflies but manifesting the shape of humans. It was as though butterflies were metamorphosing into humans when suddenly they burst free from the cocoon midway through the process. These interesting creatures gracefully formed a circle, then arranged themselves in a pattern along the spiral lines of a seashell that wound down into itself. I found myself flying in amongst them.

The next change in the vision was the landscape, altering from a vulcan appearance to one of blue ridges, yellow mountains, and rolling green meadows. It was breathtakingly beautiful.

The butterfly people led me away to an unknown destination. I wasn't bothered; it was a truly joyful experience and I was not concerned where I might be taken. My flying companions were in a state of reverie, intoxicated with the sheer joy of gliding through the clear skies. They formed themselves together and took another heading, prompting me by the touch of their soft wings toward a new destination.

We seemed to be heading in the general direction of a hill beneath us, a mound displaying a rather fascinating turquoise-like color. The butter-humans began to swirl around in a riot of color, then melted into a vortex of energy into which we were all drawn with extraordinary force.

I was now alone in the spiral through which I had been taken an unbelievable distance, or into an entirely new dimension. Wherever I was, my view was dominated by a castle with a yellow glow shining from its turrets and parapets. The castle looked to be covered with moss, but a most unique one as it was moving upon the castle walls. A closer look confirmed its status as an ambulant form of life and for some reason the thought of a plant that could move like this was somewhat fearsome. My uneasiness was overmatched by my desire to reach the castle, however.

Then the vortex, or spiral, or wormhole or whatever my means of conveyance was, opened up and revealed a road, orange-yellow in color with red shadings throughout. I was now standing on that road. Traveling along the path, a brilliant light came at me from my right hand side, out of which light the butterfly people exploded in a cloud of radiant glee. I felt any remaining fear melt in the comforting glow of their rapturous joy and I once again directed myself toward the mossy castle. Strangely, the closer I got the further away from me it seemed to recede. Frustrated, I felt I would never reach the castle nor, for some reason, return home. Then the road dead-ended; I could proceed no further.

A large crevasse appeared between the castle and myself, one I knew I could never span. I was stopped in my tracks.

The first thing I was aware of as my mind emerged from a red haze was the hard surface of the meditation hall against my hand. Initially I had no memory of where I was but after a couple of minutes I became clearer. As usual, I felt dizzy and disoriented and experienced the typical difficulty of remembering. Then the pieces assembled themselves and the pattern of the morning events was available to my reasoning.

I focused on the road that had ended so abruptly, signifying what? I tried to pull myself up but was unable to stand. My legs were as rubber, my skin soaked in perspiration. After a lengthy period I was able to get back to the mansion. It was already late afternoon when I entered the fine old home, lightheaded but fairly well under my own control.

I went to my room to try to put some meaning into the last few days, but nothing substantial would come. I was far too tired to pursue the meaning of the day's vision any farther, I just needed rest. The revelation would have to be postponed until later.

But within a very short time the meaning of it all would be made all too clear to me.