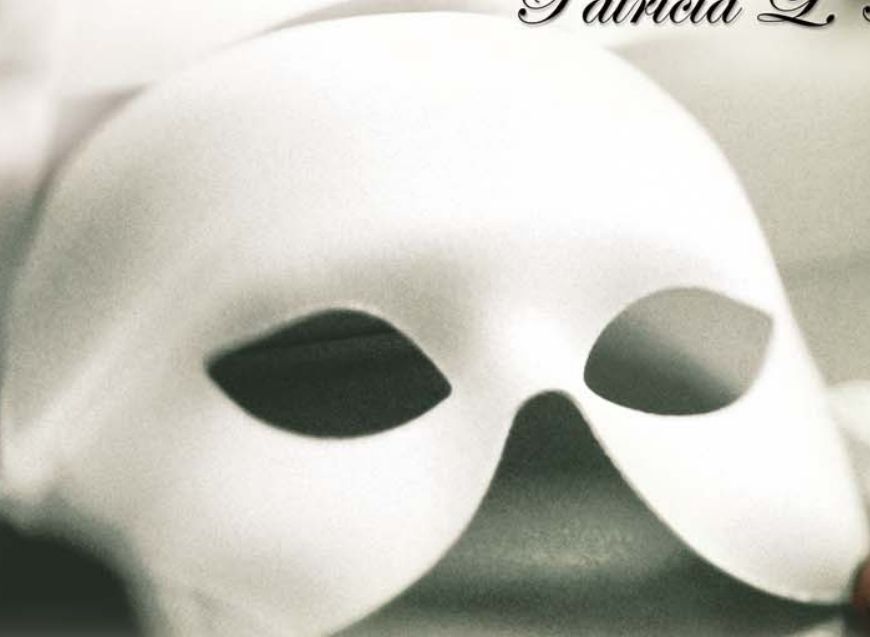


**EARTH** *Is the* **MOTHER** *of All*  
**Drama Queens**

*Unmasking the Truth behind Our Life Stories*

*Patricia L. Arnold*



**EARTH IS THE MOTHER  
OF ALL DRAMA QUEENS**

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*Unmasking the Truth behind our Life Stories*

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To Maiysha and Ellen-  
And all my angels  
Who've showered me with love and direction,  
On stage and from the wings.

I love you, heart and soul.

In loving memory of

**VERNON D. JARRETT, Ph.D.**

Award winning syndicated columnist, civil rights activist, TV talk show host, radio newsman, consummate historian and scholar, educator, mentor, motivator, humorist and dependable friend who lovingly demanded that we dedicate ourselves to excellence, and passionately seek and report the Whole Truth.

We miss seeing you on the stage, Vernon.  
You are beyond our footlights,  
but your commanding presence  
and powerful legacy remain forever.

# Prelude to Drama

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts;  
His acts being seven ages.

AS YOU LIKE IT, William Shakespeare

I remember the first big story I covered as a TV news reporter. A girl had vanished from her quiet Twin Cities neighborhood in the dead of winter. My cameraman Duane and I shadowed the police for more than a week as they searched for this child.

Duane, the kind of newshound who slept with police and fire radios blaring, wasn't optimistic that she'd be found alive. As the mother of a two-year-old, I was confident that this story would end happily ever after. For good measure, I prayed.

One evening after we had abandoned the search, the news director walked to his office door and announced to the newsroom that they had found the girl's body. One of her neighbors was in custody. He directed me to grab a cameraman and rush to the parents' home.

Huh? Was I really expected to impose myself on this child's family immediately after they'd received such heartbreaking news? Would I want a lawn full of reporters waiting for a sound bite if I had just gotten word that someone had snatched the life out of my baby's body? Would he?

“What am I supposed to say, ‘Cry into my mike?’” I asked him. I refused to go.

Not quite sure that I’d ever learn to emotionally detach from the human pathos of news events, I began to rethink my new profession—my second, after teaching high school in inner city Chicago. In the classroom, caring not only mattered, it was required. I doubted that I was emotionally equipped for the news business.

That job went downhill from there, but I’m glad I didn’t quit the business. For the next 20 years, my assignments gave me as many emotional highs as lows. I was among the press corps greeting Nelson Mandela when he arrived in the United States soon after his release from prison. I interviewed famous luminaries such as Alex Haley while he was writing *Roots*, First Ladies, governors, big city mayors, captains of commerce, Cabinet members, a sitting president, and presidential hopefuls. I also covered airline crashes, drive-by shootings, and serial killings—and I was as likely as the tragedies’ survivors to scream, “How could God allow this to happen?”

I’m convinced that we ask that question because we don’t understand the nature of God. But, of course, how could we? After all, we’ve been told that God expresses His displeasure with us through violence, pestilence, genocide, and even torture. Revered leaders portray us as filthy rags, unworthy in God’s sight because we carry the stain of someone else’s ancient sin. They warn that God has favorites, and most of us are not among them; we will be left behind. *Be afraid!*

Oddly enough, the same people tell us that God is Love. Is Love violent, unforgiving, and vengeful? Does Love forsake or kill? In time of inexplicable tragedy, we don’t know what to think. Did God do it? Why didn’t He prevent it? What’s up?

What’s real and what’s drama? Were we created in God’s image, or was God created in ours? Something urged me to

investigate; but once again, I felt ill equipped to tackle the story. For five years, I stubbornly refused to do it.

One day, I was given the option of accepting this assignment, or losing the miracle of the quest. I got busy.

After poring through countless texts, web pages, transcripts, audio and videotapes, I noticed that some credible themes surfaced repeatedly. They came from unrelated sources such as the apostles James and Paul, scientists Galileo, Einstein, and Shakespeare the bard. In different ways, each said the same thing: Reality is not what we believe it is.

Hmmm. It occurred to me that our “reality” has shifted through the ages. At one time, Earth was believed to be the center of the Universe; the moon and sun revolved around it. The Bible writers depicted it as a flat planet covered by a dome through which God peered down on us.

Of course reality itself hasn’t changed. Human understanding of it has changed, sometimes resentfully. Remember when Galileo Galilei’s telescope affirmed Copernicus’s heliocentric theory that Earth revolved around the Sun? The Church was outraged. They imprisoned the man for heresy, and didn’t exonerate him for 350 years. Luckily, times had changed a bit when Einstein challenged “reality” with proof that solid matter is merely invisible energy.

It makes you wonder: what’s real? Shakespeare poetically asserted that Earthlings are merely actors on an imaginary stage. The apostle James insisted that no matter what circumstances look like on the surface, we should regard it as a good thing.

Like Einstein and Galileo, did they know something we don’t? Could Life be simpler than we realize? I guess it depends on how we define “Life”. Science is not my beat; but it doesn’t have to be for me to know that Life is not a breathing body. Life is *inside* the body; it’s invisible.

Our five senses can detect things that have Life within them—but we can't see, smell, touch, taste or hear Life itself. Many of us think that anything we can't see or touch isn't real. Does that mean Life, as we currently understand it, isn't real?

What if Shakespeare's theater metaphor is valid, and Earth is simply a place to act out melodramas, murder mysteries, sci-fi adventures, tragedies, and love stories—and then move on?

Who knows? The buildings in which we are sitting right now could be merely elaborate props. The people who play major roles in our lives could have agreed a long time ago to share this stage with us right now to add some tension, lessons, comic relief, fear, romance, or even denouement to our daily dramas. Zooming to a tighter shot, this new "reality" portrayed a fascinating picture: physical bodies are merely costumes; our personalities are simply roles, characters we're playing right now. The real you and I are the souls inside the costumes. Interesting hypothesis, but could I prove it?

Journalists and other investigators rely on two principal resources: primary (original or first-hand) data and information collected by previous seekers. There was a wealth of scholarly and theological research that preceded my quest, but I sensed that this exercise was intended to be more practical than theoretical or scholarly.

And that brings me to one of the reasons I refused this assignment for so many years: the primary research. Along with some of my most hilarious real life dramas, I'd also have to bare some of my most humiliating. Having strangers laugh with me was OK, but laughing at me? *Why me, Lord?*

It wasn't until I neared the end of my task that I fully understood why I was such a perfect fit for this assignment. This was a story that only I could report; a story so spellbinding that an editor from a major publishing company suggested that it would make a great novel.

There was just one problem, that pesky disclaimer: “All of the characters and events are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.”

The events and characters in this book are not fictitious. However, in the spirit of the theater, I took poetic license and changed the names and pertinent details to protect the identities of the souls who played villainous roles in some of my evolutionary dramas.

Although it reads like a novel, *EARTH Is the MOTHER of All Drama Queens* is technically classified as a memoir. What you’ll discover, however, is that this really is not my life story; it’s yours—viewed through my lens and performed on my stage. You also may find my research methodology to be a bit unconventional. However, this set of investigative tools was quite effective in unmasking the Truth I was assigned to find.

It took 20 years; but now that I’ve gathered the pertinent data, confirmed and analyzed the details, I can boldly report these findings:

1. Life is *always* fair.
2. God is *never* far.
3. Death is not *THE END*.
4. Absolutely *nothing* is unforgivable.

These “realities” may be difficult for you to accept; the good news is that you don’t have to. I’ve been a journalist long enough to know that a dozen reporters could be dispatched to a scene, and each might return with a different interpretation. To quote Nobel Prize winning biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgi, “Discovery consists in seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought.”

Consider this as merely my personal discovery, unmasked

during my spiritual sleuthing expeditions and studies. Examining these same data, your conclusions might be quite different; that's OK. I'm not trying to convince you that my interpretation is the only one, or even the correct one.

My desire is not to mold opinion, frighten, or manipulate you into accepting a different reality. However, as you sit in the audience of my life dramas and witness the revelations that unfold during the various scenes, you may finally be able to understand why some of us don't seem to get what we deserve or deserve what we get; why prayers and affirmations don't always give us the results we want; and why, despite it all, we should "count it all joy!" as the Bible suggests.

What can be seen is temporary,  
But what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

# 1. Oh, So Moving

I would have to say that the curtain rises on most of my real life dramas with the same scene:

*Setting: Chicago. Tastefully furnished living room with comfortable seating. Contemporary artwork covers every wall. Room is warmly lit. In front of a large bookcase, a tall, slender woman is crouched over an open box.*

I'm moving. Again. What's up with that? I must have been a nomad in a previous life. Or maybe I spent years in solitary confinement, and now I can't stand to be in one place too long. I haven't figured it out. What I do know is that by the time I was 30, I had lived in 18 places. No joke, 18! And those are the homes that I can remember.

When I look back at what seems to be a very unsettled life, it's very clear to me that, starting with Home 19, someone (or something) else hand-picked my new home and sent me there for a very specific purpose. In fact, I'm so convinced of it that when I get the signal that it's time to move—and believe me, the signs are very clear—I simply wait to be led to my next place.

I've begun to trust that. After a while, it's always revealed why the new home was selected for me. When that purpose has been fulfilled, the curtain rises on another moving drama.

*Talk about drama!* The move to Home #19 was laced with it.

I had a dispute with my landlord, and he threatened me with a five-day notice. *Bully me? I'll teach him!* I cleared out of his place in four days!

The only thing that bugged me was that I had lived in that lovely Hyde Park townhouse only five months. That's the record for the shortest time I've lived anywhere.

My hasty decision to move was risky; but a newspaper listing, describing an even more beautiful place in South Shore, pulled my butt out of the fire.

*Another move!* Thank God, my daughter, Angel, was visiting my ex-husband for the summer. I don't think a five-year old—even one as mature and precocious as my little Angel—could handle two moves within six months.

The logistics of the move flowed smoothly, as usual, partly because I'm a Virgo and can't stand chaos, and partly because I absolutely hate the moving process. As a result, I strain to keep each room so orderly that only an experienced eye can detect that there's a move in progress. Moving completely sets the stage for what I call my "ultimate Virgo snit."

My snit goes something like this: First, I measure every piece of furniture in my home. I know that sounds goofy, but there's method to my madness. See, I create a floor plan on graph paper, *to scale*, of the new place. Then I make little cardboard cutouts of each piece of furniture. Next, I arrange and rearrange the pieces to determine their placement in the new home. (Angel always loved that part, because it was so much like playing with paper dolls.)

Finally, I tape the "furnished" floor plan on the door of each room so the movers can set the furniture exactly where I want. Hey, it's a move-me-now-or-move-me-later thing. I'm a girl! I don't want to drag furniture from one side of a room to another after I get into the new place!

My 100 moving boxes, chock-full of stuff, are another issue,

but I've pretty much solved that problem, too. I take every precaution to assure that each box lands in or near its designated room in the new place.

I smack a big, laser-printed, neon-colored label on each box that coordinates with the color I've assigned to each room. That way, I can tell—even from a distance—if the movers are putting the boxes in the proper rooms. I don't want to have to move them later, either. In fact, I have the movers stash as many boxes as possible into the closet of the designated room so that the boxes don't create any clutter in the room itself. Then I can pretend—for as long as I want to—that I didn't move. Again.

It's not until I empty my bookcases that anyone ever suspects I'm in the process of moving. I'm a writer, which naturally means I'm a reader. I have hundreds of books, in bookcases all over my home.

I have no intention of picking up a heavy box of books and schlepping it somewhere out of sight, so I pack the book boxes close to the empty bookcases. In plain view. For the whole world to see. *Hate that!*

I have to admit, as much as I hate moving, I do love decorating a new place. When Angel was young, my number one priority was restoring her bedroom to its original condition. While her father and I were divorcing, our marriage counselor advised me to minimize the changes in Angel's life, and to keep her surroundings as familiar as possible.

Well, since I couldn't seem to stay put too long, I figured the least I could do for my baby girl was to minimize the changes in her personal space. The morning of a move, Angel would hop on the school bus in front of the old place. By afternoon, she'd return to find her room almost exactly as she'd left it—but in a new home.

Give me a week and it would look as if we had lived in the new place for years. I would have hung the window treatments

(and wallpaper, if allowed) and repainted the rooms, if necessary. I might even have changed the lighting fixtures.

Looking back, I don't recall that Home #19 needed any major changes. To tell you the truth, it changed me more than I changed it.

What a great place it was! I wasn't expecting it to be quite so wonderful when I spotted the ad for it in the newspaper the day after receiving that goofy five-day notice.

Like they say, the best revenge is living well! Home #19 was a much larger three-bedroom apartment than #18. The rooms were huge. It had sunrooms in the front and rear, a large dining room and an eat-in kitchen. It was on the first floor of an impeccably maintained building on a lovely, tree-lined street. I even had my own garage.

The apartment's previous occupant was the building's former owner, a man in his nineties. He had just passed a few weeks earlier. All of his belongings had been moved out of the huge apartment, except a few dozen books that were left in the built-in bookshelves in Angel's room. Many of them, I tossed. Others, I simply couldn't—books about alternative medicine, metaphysics, and natural healing. I generally associated books of this type with folks much younger and a lot more hip.

I wasn't sure what to make of the metaphysical classics in the collection. There were several by Ruth Montgomery, a couple from Jane Roberts's *Seth* series, Joel Goldsmith's *Leave Your Nets*, and Allen Spraggett's *The Case for Immortality*. I relocated the books to the master bedroom.

As the weeks passed, some of the titles would catch my eye as I walked by. *Later, later*, I kept telling myself. Finally, one quiet summer weekend before Angel was due to return home, I couldn't stop staring at one of the titles: *A Search for the Truth*. How compelling—especially for a journalist who relished investigations.

When I pulled it from the shelf, the book jacket was even more intriguing: “Did you know that when you grieve for a lost loved one, you can hold him Earth-bound? Or that Jesus and other saintly spirits can be summoned to this plane for rescue missions, and that we are all particles of a perfect whole?” Then, the clincher: “Find out your reason for living.”

I discovered that the author, Ruth Montgomery, also was a journalist, but on the print side. She was a syndicated columnist in Washington, D.C. whose earlier book had chronicled her political coverage of six American presidents.

In true journalistic fashion, Montgomery was a skeptic when challenged to investigate the world of psychics. After exploring the field and its practitioners with the tools of an inquisitive reporter, she discovered some charlatans. But to my surprise, she also uncovered indisputable evidence that there is a continuum of life after what we call death and that there are ways to communicate with those who leave the physical world.

Frankly, I wasn't sure how I felt about this revelation. Something more than I can touch, see, hear, taste, and smell? Life after death? Communicating with the departed? Only a credible journalist could have brought me this news, and I wasn't sure how to digest it. Yet, I devoured every page of Montgomery's book, and another. Before I knew it, I'd read seven of them. With each new book, I tried to keep my mind as open as Montgomery's, when the spiritual mysteries began unfolding in front of her.

The more I began to understand psychic phenomena, the more suspicious I became that this collection of metaphysical books had not been left in this apartment by mistake. I began to wonder if the argument with my landlord and my irrational decision to move hadn't been orchestrated to deliver me to that apartment at that time. But what in the world was I supposed to do with the startling information I'd discovered in these books?

Was I supposed to do what Montgomery had done: communicate with spirits?

It made me shudder. I had bonded with her as a journalist, but not that much. She had become so trusting of spirits from the other side that she practiced what they call “automatic writing”; she allowed her angels to take control of her hands and write the amazing content that filled her books.

That was a bit too spooky for me, but I was immensely impressed with Montgomery’s due diligence. She researched and verified every fact her angels had written before printing it, and she was amazed by the accuracy of their historic and pre-historic claims.

So was I.

## 2. “Out of the Box”

I wondered: Was I supposed to try my hand at automatic writing? Is that why these books had landed in the lap of this journalist?

I decided to find out. Early one Monday morning, as soon as I saw the school bus door close behind Angel’s Catholic school uniform, I walked into the dining room, lit a candle and prayed for God’s protection from any dark spirits that might have been lurking about. Then, with a pen poised over a pad of paper, I closed my eyes and waited. And I waited. There wasn’t even the slightest tremor in my right hand.

*How long should I do this?* I wondered. I decided to give it 30 minutes. Following Montgomery’s directions, I tried it at the same time for the next few days. By the fifth day, I’d lost patience—not to mention interest.

“OK, guys, this is it!” I announced. “I’m going to try this just one more time. If you have anything you want to say, come on with it!”

I sat at the table, lit the candle, said my prayer, picked up my pen, and held it directly over the paper. After 30 minutes, the only marks on the page were dropped there when my wrist tired and I inadvertently let the pen get too close to the table.

That was it. I figured, if my guides hadn’t spoken up in five days, they were just going to have to hold somebody else’s hand, because I had better things to do than to be in suspended animation for 30 minutes a day.

Clearly, automatic writing wasn't my calling, but I felt I had embarked upon a path, and there was no turning back. I was ready for more answers. I searched the small library I'd "inherited". Another title called to me: *Seth Speaks*.

*Whoa!* Montgomery's books about psychics, séances, and stand-ins were children's primers, when compared with Jane Roberts's in-your-face adventures with a disembodied spirit named Seth. I initially had found it a little bizarre that Montgomery would allow spirits from the other side to take control of her hands and type entire books. But Roberts's channeling—allowing a spirit to take control of her entire body and speak through her vocal chords—took it to a new level. Just thinking about it made my throat tickle.

From what I could gather, spirits that have something urgently important to say find that channeling is a pretty cool way to pontificate with those of us on the slower side of the vibrational divide. Seth, it seemed, was on a mission to help those of us trapped in physical bodies to understand why we're over here, and how we fit into the Big-Picture.

Seth's messages, which were recorded by Roberts's husband while she was in trance, were so complex, so puzzling and so fascinating that I damn near had a brain cramp trying to grasp it all. I felt as though I'd been living my life in one of my cardboard moving boxes, totally unaware of everything else in the Universe, and completely clueless about the many dimensions of my own being.

I tried to think outside of the box. I attempted the exercises Seth suggested, to expand my view of reality and embrace more of the totality of life—with a capital L. I tried to see no separation between myself and other living things. I tried to envision being "one" with a blade of grass, a tree, or a flower. I strained to see myself as part of the same Life that gave them life. I wanted to believe that everything was part of one spirit, that there really was no separation between us.

Whew! It wasn't easy. Try feeling "one" with everything in nature when you're on a crowded bus. Of course, it might have been a bit easier if I had followed Seth's other direction: Try this while out in nature. But who had time for that? I had to delve into the spiritual realm on the schedule of a working mom. The ride to and from work was often as much time as I could spare.

I closed my book as the express bus stopped across the street from the television station where I worked. As I walked to the corner and waited to cross the street, someone called.

"Pat?"

I turned around. Oh, my God, it was Ellen! How many years had it been since I'd seen her? It felt so good to hug my high school friend again! Of all the times for me to run into her, I didn't have time to talk. We quickly exchanged numbers.

"Are you reading *Seth Speaks*?" she asked, looking at the book in my arm.

"Girl, I'm trying to," I sighed.

"Me, too." She cocked her head quizzically. "Do you understand it?"

"His concepts are way over my head, but I'm so fascinated."

"Me, too!" she said. "I tell you what: Let's figure it out together!"

"What a wonderful idea! I've got to get into the newsroom; I'm running late. I'll call you tonight."

Another hug, and I ran across the street.

Wasn't that something, running into Ellen after all these years? And she was reading the same book! I didn't know a soul who'd even heard of *Seth Speaks*.

"Hey, Carrie!" I called to the security guard, as I darted through the lobby.

I tried to think back to the point that I'd lost contact with Ellen. We'd been in a YWCA club together when we were in high school and had kept up with each other afterward, even

though we'd attended colleges in different cities. Mentally flipping through my wedding pictures, I couldn't remember seeing her at the church or at the reception.

We'd been married three years when my husband Ed graduated from business school, and we moved to Minnesota for his first job as a food company brand manager. Minutes after I started grad school, I became pregnant. In the drama surrounding those events, I lost touch with most of my childhood friends, until my mother organized a baby shower to coincide with my holiday visit to Chicago.

I smiled, remembering that shower. Ellen had unintentionally upstaged me by bringing her infant son, Joshua. All the attention shifted from the small bubble in my belly to the beautiful bundle in the blanket. Josh must have been about four months old.

For the life of me, I couldn't recall seeing Ellen after that day. I knew she'd earned a degree in psychology, and I recalled being surprised when I heard later that she was pursuing a music career. I'd never known Ellen to be musical, but everyone said she had a spectacular voice.

As I stepped off the elevator and walked toward the newsroom, I couldn't wait to get home and fill in the blanks from all those lost years.

That evening after our nightly "hug time", I tucked Angel into bed and headed for the phone.

"Ellen? It's Pat. Is this a good time?"

"Yeah, Josh has been out like a light for about a half hour. Second grade can wear a little guy out, you know."

"I've heard," I laughed. "Catch me up. What are you doing these days? What did you do before that? I feel like I'm missing some major pieces in your life."

"Well, I tried social work for a little while," she said, "but my real love is my music. I really want a career doing that. I've done

a few gigs with some bands, and I'm doing backup stuff in a recording studio. The work's not steady, but I love it! On the side, I've started a little bakery business."

"Girl, there's nothing better than loving your work," I assured her. "Ooh, and I remember how much you loved baking, too! You gotta hook me up with some of your goodies."

"No problem. I'll bring some of my white chocolate chip cookies down to the station one day. Pass them around. Once they taste them, I know they'll want to order more."

"Deal! So tell me, how did you discover the *Seth* book?"

"I can't remember, really. I was just led to it. I've been doing a lot of spiritual exploration. It seemed to be the next thing that was put on my path."

"Hmmm," I said. "That's interesting. I'd almost have to say that the book found me, too. What other stuff have you read?"

"Whew! Where do I start? I've got a whole bunch of stuff around here. I pick up more books every time I go to a workshop or spiritual retreat."

I was stunned. I didn't remember Ellen being interested in following a spiritual path. Of course, we were younger then, and much more interested in having fun. We were mothers now; times had changed.

"Wow!" I said. "You're really into this stuff!"

"Without a doubt. I don't know where you are on your path, but you'd probably like going with me to the Institute for Spiritual Healing in Evanston. I don't get up there a lot because I don't have a car, but I really enjoy it."

"The Institute for Spiritual Healing?" I asked. "Sounds...a little deep for me. Not sure I'm ready for that."

"It's far from deep. What I like about the folks up there is that they don't take themselves seriously at all. In fact, humor is a large part of their ministry."

“Huh?” That hardly seemed possible. Nothing I’d read had put spirituality in a humorous framework. Seth, for sure, was dead serious.

“It’s hard to explain,” Ellen laughed. “They work with energy.”

“Energy?”

“Yeah. They do energy readings and spiritual healings. I don’t know if any of the stuff you’ve read so far has explained to you that on a quantum physics level, *everything* is essentially energy.

“I don’t know if I’m explaining this correctly. This is actually Einstein’s theory. He was quite a spiritual dude. The way I understand it, the speed and configuration of the molecules really determine whether a clump of energy is seen as a table or a human body,” she explained.

“O...K,” I said, not fully understanding or accepting her explanation. In fact, I wasn’t sure what to make of this energy thing. Then, something occurred to me. “Wait a minute! Is that what Seth is talking about—that we’re all essentially the same thing?”

“That’s the way I’ve interpreted it,” she said. “We’re all energy. We’re all spirit. We’re billions of different manifestations of the same thing: energy.

“Have you ever walked into a room and just *felt* the energy?” she asked.

“Yeah.”

“Or have you been near a person, and you could just *feel* his vibe? That’s his energy vibrating.”

I’d never thought about it before, but I was anxious to find out more. Within a couple of months of moving to Home #19, my entire perspective on life had taken a dramatic shift. I was edging toward the belief that Earth is a miniscule part of the living Universe, and that life in this body is a small part of my

total existence. Ruth Montgomery certainly had presented solid evidence that we outlive our bodies.

More than anything, I was beginning to wonder whether my reunion with Ellen, at this juncture in our spiritual explorations, was destiny rather than coincidence.

### 3. Let's Get Metaphysical

I create another drama as infuriating as moving. Maybe it's more maddening because it happens more frequently. It's my "stuff 10-pounds of activity into a five-pound bag" drama. There's always so much to do and never enough time.

I worked on the evening news shows, so I didn't have to go to work early in the morning like most worker bees. That deluded me into thinking that I could squeeze in a project or a chore before heading out of the door. The result was always the same: *Damn it!* I was running late for work. Again.

When I burst through the revolving door, Carrie greeted me warmly, as usual.

"Good morning, Pat! How's everything?" she asked with a big smile.

"Great! How's by you, Carrie?" I asked, as I impatiently waited for the elevator door to open.

"Good." Then she looked at me intently and said, "You know, you need to pray more."

My neck snapped. *Huh?* Where in the world did that come from? Oh no, I hoped Carrie was not a religious fanatic. I didn't want a sermon every morning.

The elevator came to my rescue. *Say something!*

"You know—I think, you're right," I called out, as I quickly stepped onboard. The doors closed ever so slowly before the elevator whisked me up to the newsroom. *Whew!*

My close friend Debby was the only person in sight when I walked into the newsroom. She was busily banging out a rundown for the five o'clock newscast when I arrived at my desk; she barely noticed that I was in the room.

Deb and I had met at the University of Minnesota School of Mass Communication when she was a senior and I was a grad student. She was the first person I had told that I was pregnant, although I hadn't intended her to be.

I'd gotten the news from the campus health service just before I was scheduled to meet Deb for lunch. I had stopped instantly and called Ed, but he wasn't at his desk. Since I didn't want to leave such an important message with his administrative assistant, I decided to wait.

On my way to meet Deb on the West Bank of the campus, I stopped at the bookstore and picked up a few books on pregnancy and childbirth. By the time I saw her, I was so excited that I blurted it out before I could say hello.

Debby was the only friend to visit me while I was in labor and the first person to baby-sit for my beautiful baby girl. After we graduated the following year, we worked at the same Twin Cities television station. I was a news reporter; her interest was in behind-the-scenes production. My marriage dissolved and I moved back home to Chicago. Her job in the Twin Cities imploded, and I helped her get a writing job in my newsroom.

A gifted writer, Debby's professional life was utterly joyful and fulfilling. Her personal life? Well, let's just say it was neither of the above.

Debby was a beautiful, shapely young woman with the longest, thickest eyelashes I've ever seen outside of a box in a drugstore cosmetics section. She had a head full of thick, shiny, dark brown hair that fell halfway down her back.

With Deb's brains and beauty, you'd think she'd have her pick of really great men who absolutely adored her. But, Jiminy

Christmas, each man she attracted into her life seemed to bring more grief than the last.

Debby was a very private person, although she often confided in our close friend and executive producer, Bev, and me. Often, I wasn't much help. I had a pretty sorry track record, too, but Deb could always count on me to be the first to arrive, and the last to leave her pity party.

When we went to lunch later that day, I discovered that Debby's pity party guest list was growing. She'd taken our security guard into her confidence.

"Carrie?" I squealed in disbelief. "Are you kidding me?"

"Uh-uh. To tell you the truth, I didn't say a word to her about anything," Debby explained. "A couple of weeks ago, she said something to me. It was like she already knew about the chaos in my personal life, and she offered to help. I'm telling you, she has been wonderful."

"Back up! What do you mean, she already knew? How the hell did she already know?"

"It was like she had read my mind or something." Debby lowered her voice and leaned toward me. "Promise not to tell anyone what I'm about to tell you?"

"Of course!"

"She's psychic."

"What?"

"Carrie has spiritual gifts."

Well, you could've bought me for two cents. I had known Carrie for almost five years. Why didn't I know that? A psychic, right in the lobby of our building!

"I don't know how many other people around here know, so don't say anything."

Deb didn't have to worry about me uttering a syllable; I was too speechless. Jiminy Christmas, I'd been greeting an actual psychic every day!

After that, I had a sense of fascination about Carrie. Whenever I passed her, I tried to act normal, but I always wondered if she were reading my mind. Did she know I knew? Would she be mad at Debby for telling?

"It's OK," Deb told me a few days later. "I told Carrie that you know."

*Whew!* I could relax.

"How about coming to lunch with us tomorrow?"

"Absolutely!" I said, delighted at the thought of actually having a conversation with a psychic, and eager to find out if Carrie was legit or a fake.

The next day, the three of us walked out of the station, hunting for the perfect lunch spot. I was uncharacteristically quiet, not sure what to say. I didn't want to take advantage of Carrie's spiritual gifts, but I had so many questions to ask. Had she tried automatic writing? Did she see spirits? Could she hear them? What was her take on the meaning of life?

Our lunch conversation skirted all things psychic, tilting in favor of talk about men. I mumbled something disparaging about the guy I was dating and casually said that I really thought it was time to call it quits. Carrie put down her fork and looked me in the eye.

"Don't do that," she cautioned me. "It could be the biggest mistake you ever made in your life."

My mouth fell open. If she had said that a week earlier, I would have laughed it off. But now, this was Carrie the psychic talking.

I recalled Ruth Montgomery relating a story in which a psychic told her sister-in-law not to take a trip she had planned. Her sister-in-law ignored the advice. On that trip, she was in an accident that demolished the car in which she was riding. Her collarbone was broken, and she and the driver narrowly escaped the car before it plunged over a mountain crest.

Carrie had my attention. I'd pretty much made up my mind about bailing from the relationship. Now, I wasn't so sure.

"So I should hang in there, huh?" I asked, sadly.

"I'm telling you, now is not the time," she said.

Deb gave me a sympathetic pat on the arm. She knew how dissatisfied I'd been with my relationship with Bill. He was a very nice guy and a very successful businessman, but he was quite inattentive. And I was quite sick of it. The thought of staying in the relationship made me even sicker. But did I want to ride in a car that was careening toward a mountain crest? Nah.

Deb had the utmost faith in Carrie. "There is a time and a place for everything," she said softly. "Carrie's just saying that now is not the time."

I desperately needed a second opinion. That evening, I took my problem to Ellen. She seemed to know a lot of spiritual stuff; maybe she would give me different advice.

"I'm not sure what to tell you, Girl," she said. "I've had lots of spiritual readings over the years. Some were right on the money; others completely missed the mark. Just like anybody else who gives you advice, some of these angels know what they're talking about. Others? Child, it's anybody's guess where they get the crap they're feeding into the psychic's ears. I think some of them are just practical jokers. Maybe they just tell you what they think you want to hear.

"And let's not leave out the possibility that the so-called psychics ain't hearing a thing; they're just making up stuff as they go along!" she laughed.

"Yeah, right," I snickered. "I don't know which is the case with Carrie, but I certainly didn't want to hear what she said!"

"Well, I'd rather be safe than sorry. I know you don't think Bill is Mr. Right, but something or someone could be coming to you through him—just not right now. You never know."

Time dragged. Every week or so, I'd ask Carrie, "Is it time?" She'd flash that sparkling smile and shake her head. "No, not yet."

One night on the phone a few months later, Bill said something like, "Gee, I never said we were in an exclusive relationship."

*What was I thinking?* I'm a relatively intelligent woman. For nearly two years, Bill's enthusiasm for the relationship had come in spurts. What part of that had I not comprehended?

Duh. If it's possible to be relieved and hurt at the same time, I was. I responded to the news quite stoically, though. When I calmly suggested that we not continue the non-exclusive relationship, Bill appeared to be surprised and confused. He hadn't anticipated that response.

As I went to bed that night, I suddenly was overwhelmed with sadness. I didn't cry often, but sometimes, you know, it just feels good to have that release.

I wasn't sure why I was sad. I couldn't have been mourning the loss of the pitiful little relationship; I truly had grown weary of it. My best guess is that I had sunk into that pathetic "Why can't I have a really great relationship with a guy who treasures me?" space. I boo-hoed myself into a lavish, down-home pity party. After a while, I sat up in bed, knees to my chest in the dark, and sobbed, "Somebody, help me with this!"

Almost instantaneously, a spirit of calm washed over me. One moment, I was sobbing so hard that I could barely catch my breath; the next, it was as if I hadn't been crying at all. Then, near me, in the darkness of my room, I heard a kind, grandmotherly voice. I was startled, but not afraid.

"Everything's all right, Dear. This is just an opportunity for you to grow. Bill has been unfaithful to you on two occasions. You need to forgive him. This is so important. Bless him. Forgive him. Can you do that?"

Bill had been unfaithful? Twice? I wasn't sure how I felt about that. Forgive him? It was opportunity for me to grow? It was important?

All I could say was, "Yes. Yes, I can do that."

I sighed deeply, stretched out and instantly fell asleep.

When I awoke the next morning, I couldn't remember if I had dreamed about the voice or if it were real. But it was easy enough to find out.

I couldn't wait to get to work. The moment I saw Carrie, I broke the news that Bill and I had broken up. She wasn't surprised. She just nodded and smiled, "It's OK now. It's fine. Everything's all right."

Bill continued to call every evening. In fact, I think I heard from him more frequently after we broke up than I had before. I guess he thought that nothing had changed since I hadn't had a fit after learning I was his main squeeze—but not the only.

Wrong. I had agreed to forgive him; that was a big enough leap. But it certainly didn't mean I wanted to talk to his butt everyday! Clearly, we needed to have the "How will I miss you if you don't go away?" talk.

I invited Bill to come by so that we could exchange whatever memorabilia we had given each other during the two years or so that I was deluded into thinking we had been a couple. Sadly, it also meant that I had to return the Mercedes convertible he had loaned me after my car disappeared. Sometimes you have to suck it up and take the bitter with the sweet.

Bill was the picture of innocence when he arrived the next evening. I went into the kitchen to get some of Ellen's cookies.

"Bill, do you mind telling me something?" I asked, as I put the plate of cookies on the cocktail table in front of him.

"Not at all," he said, taking a bite. "Wow, these are incredible cookies!"

The brother did have good taste. Ellen's butter cookies absolutely melted in your mouth, but I was not going to be distracted by his food review.

"I have it on good authority that you were unfaithful to me on at least four occasions. Is that true?"

Bill froze, his eyes popped. "No! That's not true! It was only two times!" he protested.

*Gotcha!* I almost laughed out loud.

A spirit really did speak to me! I wasn't imagining it! I was so excited that I almost reached over and kissed Bill, but I quickly snapped to my senses.

After another half hour or so of small talk, I handed Bill his pile of trinkets—and his car keys—and hugged him goodbye.

He continued to call sporadically for a few weeks, even though he had absolutely nothing substantive to say. Then, one day he surprised me.

"Hey! I have a really nice guy I think you'd like to meet," he said.

"Great! If he's really nice, I definitely want to meet him."

Bill arranged for the three of us to meet for lunch the following week. As I walked through the lobby to greet him, I whispered to Carrie, "That's Bill."

Her eyes twinkled and she smiled, "Yes, I know."

I giggled. What was I thinking? Of course, she knew!

In a few months, I had evolved from reading about psychics to actually knowing one. And, for the first time, I realized that prophets didn't stop walking the planet after Biblical times.

Further evidence that Carrie may have been a modern-day prophet came moments later, when Bill introduced me to the man who would catapult me onto the greatest dramatic stage of my life.