



MASTER AND THE
GREEN-EYED HOPE
JOHANNA KERN



CHAPTER 1

THE MASTER, THE STUDENT, SANCTUARY, THE POWERS



Welcome, Daughter,” said the Master.

And that’s how it all began.

I was facing the Highest Priest, and he was looking at me. Deep, intense, real. I felt his eyes searching inside me, and beyond me.

Now I’ve done it — I thought. How am I going to get out of this one?

I’m eternally curious. Passionately and joyfully curious. And so, I often end up in “situations.” And here was one: I was standing in an ancient temple, immobilized by the Highest Priest’s power, my will captured and melting away.

Great — I thought. Exciting enough for you, my dear?

No, I had not invented a time machine. Even if I believed in them, I wouldn’t have had enough brains to do that. And I had not experimented with drugs or hallucinogenic substances of any sort. Not my cup of tea.

What brought me here, to the ancient home of High Priests who had mastered matter and soul, was beyond my comprehension. I was a regular person, and I perceived myself as reasonably well behaved. I was thirty-two years old, my life was very busy and I had no room or time for any magical or mystical nonsense.

My husband, my son and I had recently moved from Europe to Canada, and that had put a lot of stress on all of us. Everything was different here and I had to learn all the logistics and rules from scratch. I had been a professional actress with steady employment back there. Now I was learning the language of my new continent and hoping for more acting gigs.

Now, looking into the Master's eyes, I felt as if nothing mattered anymore. Not my dreams, not my goals, not even my life story.

I had met my husband in a fine arts school where we both were studying, and it was one of

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those romantic teenage stories. His blond thick shoulder-length hair, blue eyes, perfectly white teeth and slender body made him look more like a young movie star than an aspiring painter. He was always surrounded by pretty girls, with their eyes moist and full of desire while they watched him do whatever he wanted to do.

I didn't watch him as they did, since I didn't like him that much. And I didn't like the fact that there were so many girls around him. I felt he was arrogant and good for nothing. A womanizer — that's what I thought of him.

But then he came to my house one day, along with one of my friends. Stayed for half an hour and made a mess on my desk, leaving peanut shells all over.

"See you tomorrow?" He looked me in the eyes as my friend and he was leaving.

You bet you won't! — I thought to myself.

But I was wrong. I did see him the next day. And the day after, and then after that as well. He dropped all the girls and stuck around till I made up my mind. It took me a while to realize that I was spending most of my time with him. It took me a while to realize that I actually enjoyed him. He never looked at other girls, he played rock-and-roll records for me in the dark and combed my long hair. He had nice friends and I had fun. Everyone liked us. We looked good together, we had fun together, and we had dreams.

I married him on the last day of June. I was scared, and childlike. My long wedding dress was made of real French lace and gave me, in my opinion, a truly adult and sophisticated look. I even had dyed my hair black for the occasion, so that there would be a nice contrast to the white dress. I used a washing-off coloring shampoo, and my hair went back to its usual color several weeks after the wedding.

We exchanged vows in a church. Poland was a Catholic country, and the religion had been given to us at birth. The church was fully packed, not only with our family, but also with our friends and schoolmates. Our wedding, because of our youth — I was eighteen, and he was nineteen — seemed to be quite an event in our town.

The ceremony felt a bit overwhelming to me, too stiff, too serious. I was praying for it to be over soon, so that the stunning young man in the grey suit standing by my side and I could have a few laughs. Throughout the ceremony I was imagining us running barefoot, together with our wedding guests, in a soft meadow filled with blooming flowers.

Well, that would be a much more appropriate wedding — I thought — for such a sunny beautiful day.

"Do you Jacob...? Do you Johanna...?" The priest was dully reciting the usual formulas. He

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almost made me laugh, so bored he seemed with the whole thing.

Our guests had fun at the wedding reception, which we found too long and uninteresting. So we sneaked out, after few hours, leaving the party to itself. We invited our close friend, the redheaded Victor, to our new place, and the three of us laughed and talked till dawn, the entire wedding night. I thought life was fun. And it was.

Our son Matthew was born the same year, in the local hospital. I did not make a sound during the whole process. I bit my lips, hard. Very hard. And that helped me not to scream. I decided that my son needed to feel welcome in this world.

After all, childbirth is a perfectly normal thing to happen to a woman — I thought. I didn't see it as a violation of my body, but as a privilege granted to me by Mother Nature.

My mother in law put my hair in braids, so that it wouldn't get messy. Yes, it did help. But it made me look even younger and I noticed the doctor and nurses were curious about the child who was giving birth to another child, surprised at my dignified behavior.

I, on the other hand, was looking at them with astonishment since nobody really seemed to know what childbirth was about! Yes, of course they were very good at reading the instruments and taking care of my body. Yet, no one, I sensed, knew that the birth was not just about delivering the body of the child. It was mostly, I believed, about delivering the child's presence, the soul.

They don't know what they are doing — I thought to myself. I guess it's all up to me now.

I didn't want my child to be born into a heartless hospital room filled with screaming, hurry, and detached medical procedure. And so I did the best I could, inexperienced and young as I was. I opened my heart wide and tried to forget about the pain. I concentrated on the love for my child, and let him slip into that love as he was entering the world.

Finally, Matthew was here. Overwhelmingly powerful. A magnificent presence in his tiny body. He had bushy dark hair, and his skin color was rather intriguing, almost orange. I found out later that it was normal for a newborn to have that color, since they were still red after the birth, and if they developed, as my son did, a kind of jaundice, then their skin color would be quite orange for a while.

I couldn't fall asleep that night, and the morning found me wide awake, thinking of my orange son, his tiny beloved face, his tiny beloved mouth which hadn't smiled at me yet.

My hair, indeed, remained perfectly tidy. The braids did the trick!

Now, the three of us were trying to fit into the new environment in North America, the best

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we could. Each of us had their own set of obstacles to overcome. Matthew, like myself, had to learn English from scratch, and catch up with the rest of his class. Jacob, whose English was already fluent, was managing a high-rise apartment building in Toronto. I was helping him with the administrative work, while pursuing my dreams of making it as an artist in North America. There were no quick resolutions, and I knew that if I were to achieve anything, I had to be fully dedicated, always alert and ready, working hard and never giving up.

I tried to get rid of the stressful thoughts and find more inner peace, to concentrate better and stop worrying. That had led me to use a self-relaxation technique. One of my friends had learned it from a self-help book, and she had sworn by it, claiming that it had greatly improved her life by easing some of the usual tension. The method had seemed simple enough to me.

Following the instructions, I had lain flat on the carpet and started to relax all of my body, counting my breaths from one to twenty. It felt as if my thoughts had drifted away, and that my mind was working in slow motion. Then I had visualized a flight of stairs and climbed them. Next, according to the instructions, I had to find a favorite place, in a serene landscape, and make it into my sanctuary. It had finally worked! I had visualized in my mind a beautiful oasis on top of a mountain, always sunny, pleasantly breezy, inviting.

I had continued to use that method for several weeks and learned to return to my oasis when I needed to find more strength and peace. Indeed, the self-relaxation technique seemed helpful — just as my friend had claimed.

One day, I found I wasn't alone in my secret place: I had visitors. I was startled at first, since I surely had not visualized them! Yet, as usual, my curiosity had taken over and I quickly forgot my concerns.

Three men were standing in front of me, their feet just above the ground, as if they were floating comfortably in the air. They were wearing sandals, long white robes and had friendly identical faces, with their hair combed back. One could not tell them apart. Identical triplet-monks? — I thought. How about that?

I stared at them in disbelief. Somehow, I sensed they were not a threat. And I even felt as if I had known and recognized them from somewhere, a long time ago. Weird — I thought. Is this the next step in the technique? A more advanced level type of thing?

“We brought you a gift,” said one of the friendly triplet-monks. “The gift of ‘Five by Three and Three by Five’.”

Uuuuhhh. That truly sounded like an adventure. I was beginning to enjoy myself.

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“Yup. ‘Five by Three and Three by Five’ is just fine,” I said. “Go ahead. I love gifts.”

At that moment I noticed three white balls of opalescent, smoke-like energy. Before I opened my mouth to ask about that, the triplet-monks sent the energy balls to me. Just like that! The white balls floated in the air and started entering me, one by one, together with a growing feeling of peace and happiness. Unlike my usual sparkly joy, that happiness was calm, yet powerful.

I looked at the place in my body where the white balls had entered. Somewhere between my chest and my belly. Mmm, everything looked normal.

“What were they?” I asked.

“Pentacles,” they said.

For several days afterwards I tried to understand what had happened to me. What on earth was that all about? I had never heard of such a thing in my life.

Triplet-monks?! Pentacles?! A “Five by Three and Three by Five” gift?! Am I losing my mind?

I didn’t know what to do. I decided not to talk with anyone about my weird experience. Not even with the friend who had shared the self-relaxation technique with me. I didn’t know her well enough to discuss such a story, and I didn’t even know how to explain or describe it. If that ever comes out — I thought — they will put me in a mental hospital or sedate me with heavy drugs. Oh, no. I’m not telling anyone. Over my dead body!

I wanted to keep it all a secret, at least for now, and somehow look for the answers myself. Maybe I would be able to come across something that could give me some sort of a clue.

More days had passed, but I found no answers. No clue, not even a tiniest hint. Should I go back to using the technique and see what happens? — I asked myself. Perhaps the triplet-monks would return and explain everything to me? I have nothing to lose — I thought — since I’ve probably already lost my mind anyway.

I kept using the technique and visiting my inner oasis for a while but, again, I found nothing. Yet I still believed something had to happen, sooner or later, and I discovered another meaning of the word “trust”. The new meaning was: “learn a whole lot of patience and wait till they get back to you. At their own convenience, of course.”

Finally, someone got back to me. The Master who was now in front of me, mesmerizing me with his power.

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He was wearing sandals and a long white robe, just as my previous visitors, and his hair was combed back in the same manner as theirs. His face seemed to be ageless. I had no idea whether he was young or old. And I couldn't quite tell his eye color, although I was staring into them. Blueish? Greyish? The intensity of the color seemed to change from second to second. I found him rather handsome. His ageless face had an interesting "inner" glow.

"I'll be teaching you," he said.

Speechless, I realized that I no longer was in the usual place I had visualized before, the oasis on top of the mountain. Instead, I stood inside an ancient building. I didn't know how I'd gotten there, since I definitely had not visualized anything like that. The last thing I remembered, I'd been taking deep breaths, with my eyes closed. And now I was facing the Highest Priest of some ancient temple.

Its walls were made of white stone, its floor was stone as well. There were no windows that I could see anywhere around me. The place was lit by burning oil in a cresset standing on a white stone pillar, perhaps four feet tall, in the middle of the strange ancient room. Nothing else was there. Only the Master and myself, as if captured in a stone world. I couldn't take my eyes from the Master's face, and I realized that my mind was working very slowly, empty from the shock.

"We'll start when you're ready," he said.

I noticed a thought crystallizing somewhere in my mind. I focused on it, with difficulty.

"I'mmm... ready," I whispered.

"Good," he nodded and pointed around. "This is the Chamber of Seven Powers."

"Powers?" I echoed.

"The Seven Powers that create and rule the world," he explained. "Your chores, to begin with, will be to take care of this chamber. Make sure you maintain the proper balance between the Powers."

The next thought coming to my mind was so quick and firm that it almost knocked me down. The joyful puppy inside me took over.

"Piece of cake," I replied, standing still and looking him in the eye.

"I'm glad," he said. "Before you start your duties, you need to receive another gift from our Priests."

"Oh, those triplet-monks were your Priests?"

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Suddenly, I felt that my body was somehow shifting. Surprised, I found myself floating horizontally in the air. I was lying on my back, comfortably drifting.

“You will now receive the gift called ‘Seven by Five and Five by Seven,’” I heard the Master say.

I was wondering how it would be done. I was wondering if the Master would multiply and turn into seven Priests who would send me the energy balls, just as the triplet-monks had done before.

Nothing like that happened. Instead, I watched seven white opalescent energy balls come from inside my body, one by one, and disappear into thin air.

Funny, — I thought — it still feels like I’m receiving the energy, not giving. I closed my eyes. And then I heard some voices chanting.

“Priests?” I asked and opened my eyes.

There was nobody there, except for the Master.

“Attend to your body now,” he said, “and come back tomorrow.”

He left, or rather disappeared. I looked down, trying to remember what my body was like. I was now standing again, not floating, in the middle of what he had just called the Chamber of Seven Powers. There was a set of beautiful gold bracelets around my wrists, and anklets above my bare feet. I was wearing a little green skirt, embroidered with gold. They sure looked pretty, but it wasn’t the way I usually dressed. My body... I whispered, surprised, and fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

I woke up hours later, curled up on the floor. I sat up straight and looked around. The sun was beaming in through the window. I was sitting on the beige wool carpet in our living room. Yes, that was our furniture. The same beige couch, the same coffee table whose top was skillfully inlaid with marine blue ceramic mosaic.

I pinched my thigh and hissed from pain, quickly rubbing the sore spot underneath my blue jeans.

Oh, boy - I said to myself. An ancient clan of evil magicians is chasing me through time and space. They want to brainwash me and use me for their sleazy plan: taking over the world and ruling it with Seven Powers, I concluded. I’m in deep shit.

Later at night, I was sitting in my bedroom. Lights off, pleasant darkness embracing me. Not

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a sigh, and not a word. I had already calmed down after the unusual experience.

I still couldn't comprehend what had happened to me. Just as I couldn't comprehend what was happening with my entire life, as I knew it. Nothing seemed to work recently, and all that had been familiar to me didn't fit into what I was beginning to feel. Everything had become insignificant, empty. My husband seemed distant, unreal, not able to understand me or ease my rising discomfort with the life I had known. I began to feel like a stranger in my own environment. I didn't know what to do. I only knew that I couldn't go on with the old ways. I had to move on, I had to face what was coming.

With a sudden decision, I reached for the phone in the darkness. I wanted to talk with one of my new friends, a Yoga teacher. John was Canadian with Polish background, like myself. He spoke my mother tongue and, yes, I told him about the ancient temple and the Master. For some reason, I imagined that Yoga teachers must be a special kind of people who know things.

John was more excited about the story than I had expected. He told me that what I had experienced was trance, and that I had had a vision. He advised me to continue the adventure, and try to fall into trance again. He said it was a profound experience and that I needed to embrace it.

At first I was pissed with John, I thought he wanted to experiment with other realities at my cost. I actually told him so.

"Trances and visions are nothing but mind games for crazy people who don't have anything better to do with their lives," I said. "I have enough problems as it is. I don't need any further distractions on top of that. I want to resolve my problems, I want to find clarity and focus on what's truly important to me."

"And what is truly important to you?" asked John.

I sighed. "It looks like it isn't what I thought it was. And now I have to find out what it really is."

"Seems like a big task."

"No kidding. But I can't go on like this anymore. It feels like my life is just as pointless as spinning around and chasing one's tail. I can get dizzy from that and I try to stay on my feet, not to fall down. It keeps me busy. But I'm still getting nowhere."

"Hm," he said. "I wouldn't agree with that. I believe that the trance and vision you had is a sign that you have already started an important, liberating process."

“Yep. Crazy people have the freedom to do whatever they want to do and be whoever they want to be. I give you that,” I concluded.

“Then perhaps being crazy is not a bad thing at all?”

“Maybe,” I agreed. “Maybe not.”

The next morning was cloudy and cold, and I woke up restless. The dim light through the window made the room seem shapeless and ghostly.

The bedroom was furnished sparingly. Beige was the dominant color, just as it was in the rest of the apartment. The bed took most of the space, and a tall standing lamp with a cream colored shade had always given this room a warm feeling. I couldn’t help thinking that now, in the dim light, the room looked almost as mysterious as the Chamber of Seven Powers.

I lay quietly, thinking, with my eyes open, for about an hour before I was ready to get up. I decided it was time to make changes in my life. The urgent feeling was stronger than my fear, or my reason.

There was no breakfast that morning. Instead, I had a long conversation with my husband at the wooden kitchen table. I pointed out to him that we had lost the happiness, that the joy, the meaning had been gone from our relationship for several years. It seemed that we had nothing to give to each other anymore, it seemed that he and I now had totally different needs and goals.

He looked pale, and his blue eyes seemed cold, like steel. He listened silently, and I couldn’t tell whether he had really heard me. There wasn’t much expression on his frozen face. He kept still, and I kept talking, and crying.

I told Jacob I wanted to split with him. I said I had felt it was better to remain friends, than to perpetuate our unhappiness and finally start hating each other.

He only nodded. Then he said he had no time for further talking, and if what I had said was my final decision, he would accept that. Just like that. He didn’t want to argue or stop me from leaving him. Then he went to work.

After a few hours I was finally able to calm down a bit. I was proud of myself for speaking with him. For being honest, true to myself. The feeling was a mixture of relief and anxiety.

I phoned a legal advisor. Now it truly felt final.

I had no idea how it was going to be, and wished for a quiet divorce, for compromise and understanding. And I had no idea how to support myself after the marriage was over.

I closed the door to my bedroom. Letting out a deep breath, I looked around, as if trying to imprint in my mind the familiar, the steady and real. For a moment I examined the painting on the wall: a single drop of water, falling into the unknown.

I lay on top of the covers, and closed my eyes. I'm ready to go, I'm ready to go — my body was “singing”.

Then I started to relax my muscles, and count my breaths. I went into trance, before I knew it, and found myself in the temple.

The Highest Priest was already waiting for me. And I felt relieved that he was there. Just as before, my thoughts left me quickly and all I remembered was the longing for his presence.

“Welcome, Daughter,” he said.

“Welcome, Master. You wanted me to come back.”

Slowly, I moved forward and looked into his eyes. I felt brave, daring. His power mesmerized me again, but I wasn't just giving in this time. Instead, I was participating, letting myself be hungry for what was to come. Whatever it was.

“I told my friend John about you,” I said.

“That's right,” he nodded. “Remember, you will learn things that you'll be able to share with your friends, but you'll also learn some that you'll keep to yourself. Do you understand?”

I agreed, nodding.

“You said there were Seven Powers that create the world.” I wanted to get down to business right away.

“The First Power is the Law.” He wasn't wasting his time either.

“The Law?” I repeated. “What Law?”

“The Universal Law,” he said.

“Are you talking about the Law of Karma?” I paused, disappointed. “What else have you got?”

“I'm not talking about the Law of Karma, I'm talking about the Universal Law, or the

Cosmic Law, as it is also called,” he replied.

“And that’s different?”

“Yes, it is.”

I suddenly noticed that we were not alone in the Chamber of Seven Powers. There were some mysterious figures in there, many figures. I was both scared and curious. I walked past the Highest Priest trying to get closer to them. He saw what I was up to but didn’t stop or try to help me. He just watched me in silence.

“They are statues,” I said, surprised.

I examined them closely. They were made of grey stone, seven of them on the right and seven on the left side of the Chamber of Seven Powers.

They were perhaps seven feet tall, their faces had no expression at all. Their hair was shoulder length, and their eyes were bigger, longer than human eyes, almost touching the hairline on the sides of their skulls. Their arms were crossed upon their chests, and I noticed that each of them was wearing a ring. Yet each statue was wearing that ring on a different finger than the other ones. They had no clothes on, apart from the skimpy scarfs around their hips. Their most striking feature was that they seemed to be genderless and, if not for the rings, they all would be identical, as if made of exactly the same mold.

The group on the right was standing in a row and facing us in the middle of the room. Those on the left were standing in a line facing those on the right.

I looked at the Master questioningly.

“They represent the Seven Powers that create the world,” he said.

I looked back at the statues. “There are fourteen of them. Not seven.”

“That’s right,” he nodded, and came over to the seven figures on the right. He touched the first statue. “This one represents the Universal Law.”

I pointed to the first statue in the group on the left.

“What’s on the other side?”

“Also the Law.”

I suddenly felt that I was getting it: the Seven Powers on the right must be the good ones, and those on the left must be the bad guys! I felt a cold shiver along my spine.

“So, the bad guys have their own Powers as well?” I asked.

He hesitated. “Yes,” he said slowly. “Those forces represented on the left have their own Powers too.”

“What?” His confirmation made me even more scared. Now I really didn’t feel good about the whole adventure.

“As I told you,” he said, “there must be a proper balance between the Powers.”

“You mean, they are equal?”

“Yes, they are equal.”

“But it is important that the good defeats the evil. That’s how it is supposed to be,” I said firmly.

“Not quite so,” he smiled. “The ‘good’, as you call it, isn’t supposed to defeat anything like ‘evil’. However, sooner or later, the forces will merge. Those Powers which you call ‘good’, represented by the Statues on the right, will transmute those which you call ‘evil’, represented by the Statues on the left. At least, that’s how it’s always been done. Until then there needs to be a proper balance.”

He looked me in the eye. “And you have been asked to maintain the balance in the Chamber of Seven Powers, haven’t you?”

I looked at the Master, silent and astonished. I wasn’t sure that I really understood what he was saying. But somehow I felt that I was ‘getting it’ on another level. Not through my mind, but somewhere inside me. I sensed that he was telling me the truth. At least, I wanted to believe him.

“All right,” I said. “I give up.”

“All right,” said the Master. “We can move on.”

I looked at the first Statue on the right, and then looked at its twin brother on the left. In the dim light of the burning oil, in the quietness of the ancient temple, and in the presence of the Master I suddenly felt their holiness, and their equality. My mind seemed to stop working for that moment, and I felt no resistance, no need to assess or reason anything. Then some words came to me. And so I let them flow.

“I respect and pray to you, Law of the Universe. I am grateful for your creation and blessings upon the world,” I heard myself saying.

With my arms spread, as I was talking, I became something of a symbolic link between the first Statue on the right and the first one on the left. Then I went to the cresset, and noticed many small bronze cups placed on the edges of the pillar on which the cresset was standing. With surprising skill, I poured some burning oil into one of the cups and created a small candle for the First Power.

It all seemed so natural, and somehow familiar. As if I had done it all my life and every day. It was a good feeling, being there and doing whatever it was that I was doing. I decided not to think too much about it right then.

The Master was watching me, and I was peaceful. I crossed my arms upon my chest, and bowed to the first Power: the Law. I felt like repeating the little prayer I had said before, and when I did so, I noticed that now I was holding insignias in my hands, as if I were an ancient Priestess.

“Thank you, Daughter,” said the Highest Priest. “You’re free to go now.”

“Where would I go?” I asked, a bit confused.

“You’ll attend to your body now,” he said, “and come back tomorrow.”

I suddenly remembered where he wanted me to go. I felt sadness and was delaying my departure. I didn’t want to go back to the empty shell that I had recently become in my life.

“You’ll be O.K.” He had probably guessed my thoughts. “We will take care of you, I promise. There is nothing you need to be afraid of, and our Temple will protect you from now on. It is important that you arrange to find your own sanctuary, a peaceful place to live.”

“How can I afford my own place? You don’t know how hard it is. And I have no means to move anywhere. I need to find a job, or something.”

“No,” he said, “you need to remain my student, and that’s a full time job. You will find your sanctuary and we will provide for you. We’ll give you everything you need.”

Yes, of course it felt just like a fairytale, but somehow, being there, still in his world, I believed him. I had no doubt that the Master was very powerful.

“Before I go,” I said, “could you explain to me the meaning of the gifts I received from the triplet-monks and yourself? And why did you use the numbers in the names of both gifts? There was the Three, the Five, and the Seven.”

“The gifts you received, were certain energies which will help your soul’s evolution. The

numbers we have used describe the quality of the energies, and the direction of the evolution. They are the symbols of the energies and the processes which have started to take place.”

“I see,” I said. “So there is a certain numerology system that you use to symbolize some processes and energies.”

“Yes, you may say so,” he nodded.

“Uh huh. And what can you tell me about the Three, the Five, and the Seven?” I wasn’t giving up.

“Three represents Parting. Five means Progress. And Seven means Life.”

“Parting, Progress and Life,” I repeated. “It sounds great, but I still don’t get it.”

“The number Three is the symbol of Parting,” he said. “Parting means that one is taking leave to penetrate, infiltrate, to get to the core and find one’s own way. To search one’s heart. Parting is both leaving and coming. Who parts from the Illusion, is coming to the Truth.”

I liked that.

“The number Five is the symbol of Progress,” he continued. “Progress means penetration, infiltration. Progress happens when one allows for permitting, pervading to take place, and that leads to further development.”

I liked that too.

“And the number Seven is the symbol of Life. Life means loving and being,” he concluded.

“Life is loving and being?”

“Yes,” he said, “Receiving Life is becoming Love: being-in-Love. Life equals Love, and is symbolized by the number Seven in our Temple.”

“And you say that the gifts you gave me were the energies that are supposed to help me in the process of parting from the Illusion, progressing in my soul’s evolution, and receiving Life which equals Love. Is that so?”

“Yes, it is so,” he confirmed.

I still didn’t quite understand all of his logic. And he saw my confusion.

“Ask your friend, the Yoga teacher. Perhaps he knows?” he smiled. “That’s all for today.”

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He turned around, not waiting for me to leave, and disappeared.

I looked at my bare feet, decorated with anklets, and sighed. As I was leaving, he came back and watched me go.

“Trust me, I will keep my promise. You’ll be all right.” I heard his voice just before I came back from my trance.

THE STUDENT

It was already late afternoon and I was still in my bedroom. No one had come here to disturb me or to find out what was going on. The apartment was quiet, empty. I felt a heavy sadness, and tears filled up my eyes.

I was washing off my tears under the shower when the phone rang. I ran out of the bathroom naked, leaving small puddles all over the floor, and grabbed the receiver just in time, before the caller gave up.

“Yes!” I yelled into his ear, out of breath.

“I have good news for you,” said my legal advisor.

I learned from him that I would be taken care of financially, for the next six months after leaving my husband. Now I could move out and find my own place. Just as the Master had said, I didn’t have to worry about getting a job or supporting myself. I had six months ahead of me, six months of full financial support.

All right — I said to myself. Now this is getting really spooky.

John, the fit and slim brown-eyed Yoga teacher, took me for a great East Indian dinner that night. I liked the décor of the quiet yet elegant restaurant in the West End. The mango colored tablecloths, the dark wood door frames, the sculptures and carvings portraying some historical figures or perhaps Indian gods. The waiter’s moustache seemed to be bigger than his own face, and I wondered how heavy such a moustache might be, and if it was difficult to carry around like that.

The food was way too spicy for me, but I liked the scent of the sandalwood incense being burnt in the restaurant.

John was drinking water, and I was indulging in the house red wine... oooops, one glass too many and there I was, revealing to John the secrets of the ancient Temple.

I had promised myself not to tell anyone about the figures in the Chamber of Seven Powers. I wasn't sure if they were some sacred ceremonial figures and if I was supposed to keep it secret before told otherwise. I wanted to be the best student, and I wanted to do everything the right way. Now it was too late, and I had to take responsibility for my goofiness.

"I'm taking responsibility," I said to John.

"That's great," he said. "What do you want to be responsible for?"

"The Temple. I want to be responsible for its secrets and I'm not gonna reveal them."

"Very good," he nodded.

"May I have more wine?" I asked, and he poured some for me.

And so, getting tipsier and tipsier, I couldn't help discussing with him in great detail the interior of the Chamber of Seven Powers, the Statues, and my first lesson. When I came to the point in the story when the Master assured me of the Temple's protection and asked me to find my own "sanctuary", as he called an apartment, John stopped me.

"Hold on. He promised to take care of you?"

"Yes," I said. "He wants to teach me and says not to worry about paying my bills."

John took my hand and looked me in the eyes. "Do you know how serious it is? Do you know that this might be the most significant thing in your entire life?"

"Oh, I know it's damn serious," I admitted. "Especially that somehow the realities merged and my bills will be paid, indeed, for the next six months."

I told him about the phone call that I had received right after I "came back" from the Temple. And I told him about my concerns: what if I was being influenced by some dark powers taking advantage of my present desperate situation? What if my vulnerability and emotional state had invited some evil magicians to control and use me as their tool? After all, the Master just taught me that good and evil were, in a way, equal for God's sake!

"I understand that you're scared," John nodded.

"What would you do?" I asked.

"I have been praying for such guidance as you just received, my entire life. And guess what?"

"What?"

"Never happened to me. And you don't even know how enormous is the gift you've been

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given,” he said.

I looked at his gentle, almost angelic expression. Hmm... What if he was right? That man had spent most of his life in meditation, studying various belief systems, travelling to monasteries, consulting with masters all over the world, teaching and praying. He must have known something, that’s for sure.

“Pray for me,” I said quietly.

“Always have,” he said.

John proved to be invaluable when I asked him to help me understand the weird symbolic numerology used by the Master and the triplet-monks when they were giving me their gifts.

“Their numerology is quite ingenious!” he exclaimed. “And really easy to understand. Listen to this: ‘Five by Three and Three by Five’. It means ‘Progress through Parting and Parting through Progress’. Do you get it?”

“No, I don’t get it,” I admitted.

“Really? Well, how about this: ‘Progress happens because one is parting from the Illusion and coming to the Truth — AND — Parting from the Illusion and coming to the Truth happens because one has started to make Progress’.”

“Oh,” I said. “Now I get it. They sort of happen at the same time, and each is causing the other?”

“Uh huh,” he nodded.

“And what about the other gift they gave me?”

“That’s easy too. ‘Seven by Five and Five by Seven’ means ‘Life equal to Love through Progress and Progress through Life equal to Love’.”

“Yes?”

“Receiving Life equal to Love happens because of the Progress — AND — Progress happens because of receiving Life equal to Love.”

“You know,” I said after a pause, “it all sounds intriguing, I agree. But to me, it’s still just a bunch of mystical nonsense. Especially since I have no idea what Life equal to Love might be. And yet, I am going to go along with it. If only to find out who the Master really is and how far I can go with this crazy, you hear me? — crazy adventure. And I drink to that!”

I clinked my glass against his, rather vigorously, and that created an interesting wine and water puddle on the mango tablecloth.

The moustache attached to the friendly waiter was more than understanding, and John gave him a rather fat tip.

Then they called a cab. John decided to ride with me, to make sure I got home safe with no unexpected incidents. And there weren't any. Except, when it came to paying the fare, I happily told the driver that once Life equals Love nobody uses money to pay for a cab anymore. The driver insisted on being paid, and he wouldn't open the door and let us out until he got his banknote.

SANCTUARY

I found my “sanctuary” the next day. Just like that, easy. I phoned a couple of places that advertised apartments for rent and went to see one of them in the afternoon. And there it was — my “sanctuary”.

It was located on the second floor of a charming little old building only three stories high, right downtown, on a surprisingly quiet street garnished with tall trees and a tiny park. The attractive, though a bit shabby here and there, one-bedroom apartment had somewhat antique dark wood arched doorframes and large windows. The white walls were a nice contrast to the dark wood, and the maple floor gave the place a cozy feeling. It was really quiet there, peaceful.

I loved it! And I got it. I don't know why they decided to rent it to me since there were more than twenty people applying for that space, and most of them had applied before me. I guess the superintendent liked me. It was her last month in that building, as she was moving on to a better paying job. She let me have my “sanctuary”.

I was scared. I had never been alone before. My husband had always been in my life, ever since I had married him at eighteen.

Over the years I had learned how loving and caring Jacob was. He had felt solid. And we had a lot of good times together. But somewhere, somehow, our paths had split. No common goals anymore, no common dreams. Where I was going now, he couldn't yet join me, and our bond was broken. Or maybe, initially, the splitting had already begun when I wanted to become a professional actress and he didn't understand why I had to do it. I couldn't live with someone who didn't support my dreams. Not then and not now. Even if the new dreams were still in a mist, just beginning to evolve. Even if I didn't quite know what was to come, it was still stronger than anything before. I could sense it, deep, in my

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soul.

Whatever it was that made me go, was stronger than any of my fears of the unknown. I was leaving my husband. And I really had to go.

Matthew, who was now thirteen, was to stay with his father for the next year. We all decided that it was the best thing to do. My husband needed him more than I did. And my son knew that I was going to be OK.

I didn't go back to the ancient Temple for a while. I was packing, crying and being silent. Somehow I knew that the Master would understand and forgive my absence.

Jacob drove a rented white van to my new apartment. We were both silent, with our eyes fixed on the streets covered with the late February snow. Grey and sad snow.

I didn't have many things, I wanted to travel light and start new, fresh. I didn't want any of the furniture we shared, no memories.

He brought my things inside.

"Do you want me to stay and help you a bit?" he asked.

"No." I shook my head.

We looked at each other in silence.

"You know, it might be just for a while." I tried to comfort both of us. "I might come back. In a year, maybe..."

"No. You will never come back," he said.

He left and I cried for many hours. I fell asleep among cardboard boxes, right on the floor.

I went out hunting for some furniture the next day. There was an ad in the paper advertising antique pieces and used furniture up for quick sale. I got them for next to nothing. The most beautiful piece was the bed, over a hundred and eighty years old, oak wood, ornamented with oak leaves carved on the head and foot boards. It came with a matching six-drawer dresser, though I didn't think the dresser was as beautiful as the bed. Then there was a large marine blue wool carpet, still in great condition, and a plush khaki green couch with a small armchair, a maple coffee table, and three matching bookcases. I also bought a maple dining table with four chairs. I decided to use it both as a table, and my desk. A couple of standing tiffany style lamps came free with the furniture. I considered the whole thing to be quite a gift!

Still silent, and sometimes in tears, I was organizing my “sanctuary”, preparing for the new life. I was ready in five days. I didn’t see anyone during that time and didn’t want to talk on the phone. I wanted to be silent, and I wanted to be alone.

I lay on my back and closed my eyes. It was early in the morning. I hadn’t slept most of the night, and finished arranging the space around dawn. Then took a long bath and had a piece of toast. Now I was lying flat on top of the covers on my antique new bed. The apartment’s walls were still empty, and I decided to make a few oil paintings myself. Later.

I filled my body with breath, I filled my mind with peace. The quiet February morning started to drift away.

THE POWERS

“Welcome, Daughter,” said the Master. And I was again facing him in the Chamber of Seven Powers, in the ancient Temple.

I looked at his ageless face, lit by the burning cresset. His presence made me feel calm. I realized that there was also some other feeling beginning to rise in my heart. Was it hope?

I wanted to ask him about my life. I wanted to ask him how to deal with all the new events, but suddenly decided not to. Here, in the Chamber of Seven Powers, nothing from the outside was important anymore. Nothing had any meaning.

I concentrated on the first meaningful thought crossing my mind. “Progress,” I said slowly.

“Yes,” said the Master, “You’ve got it right.”

“Why Progress?” I asked.

“It is the Second Power that creates the world,” he said. “Progress happens as a natural and harmonious evolution.”

I didn’t understand. It seemed too simple.

“When something infiltrates into the Universal Law, an evolution takes place, in a harmonious and natural way. And such evolution is the true Progress,” explained the Master. “Progress is represented by the number Five in our Temple’s symbolism, as you already know.”

“Five,” I repeated.

“Yes. Further, Progress, as the harmonious and natural evolution, becomes the foundation for the next stage in the creation of the world. And that next stage is called Parting,” said the Master.

“Hold on,” I said. “We were talking about Parting before.”

“That’s right,” he said.

“And you said that it was represented by the number Three.”

“Yes, I did.”

“And when you say that Parting is the next stage in creation of the world, then it must be the Third Power, right?”

“It is the Third Power, but it’s not today’s topic,” said the Master.

“Wait a minute.” I wasn’t giving up. “Parting is the Third Power and it has a symbol, the number Three. Why then is the Second Power, Progress, represented by the number Five and not the number Two?”

“The meaning of the numbers in our Temple’s symbolism does not correspond with the sequence of the Powers,” he explained. “Although Parting is the Third Power, and although it is also symbolized by the number Three — it is not the usual case. As I told you before, the numbers in our Temple’s numerology stand for the qualities of the energies, and the processes taking place. That’s all.”

“That’s all,” I repeated and took a deep breath. “I want to be sure.”

“Right,” he said. “You don’t need to figure it all out at once,” he added. “Simply take it as it is: the numbers symbolize the energies and processes involved in each Power. That’s all you need to know for now.”

“All right, all right,” I said, and sat on the stone floor.

He hesitated for a split second, but then he sat down too. We were looking into each other’s eyes for a moment.

“Then Progress...?”

“Progress, the Second Power, is represented by the number Five,” he repeated patiently.

“Progress, the Second Power, the number Five.” I was imprinting the message in my mind. I pointed to the grey figures. “I understand that the second Statue on the right represents the

Progress of the good. Then what is represented on the left?” I investigated.

“I already told you how important is the balance between the Powers creating the world,” he said patiently. “None of the Statues here represents ‘evil’ and none represents the ‘good’. Those are only your concepts. The second Statue on the left also represents Progress. That is how it works according to the Universal Law.”

“Are you saying that to maintain the balance, both good and evil must progress equally?” I said after a pause.

“Forget the concepts of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’” he said. “There are no such things. All there is, is the manifestation of the Highest Vibration, which you call God and some call Goddess. The Highest Vibration (God/Goddess), keeps manifesting itself as what you call Spirit, and as what you call Matter. The Highest Vibration is the source and the parent of both Spirit and Matter.”

I kept listening. He definitely had gotten my attention. My Catholic upbringing was far removed from examining God, giving him different names, or trying to explain his nature. God simply was. He did as He pleased. We had to be good if we wanted to go to heaven. That’s all.

Now, what the Master was saying was something new. And I was always curious about the new.

“During the manifestation there are also other energies being created,” the Master continued his story. “Imagine a small explosion in the air, like thunder. The explosion causes ripples in the airwaves, so the energy of the air changes, vibrates, and you can hear the thunder growling. There are now more vibrations, more energies in the air.”

“It’s like a small big-bang!” I interrupted. “Just like the big-bang which caused those ripples, rings of energy spreading.”

“Yes,” nodded the Master. “Those ripples of energy are the by-products of manifestation. They vibrate with love for the parent, that is the Highest Vibration, and for the manifestation. However, some of them vibrate more with love for Spirit, and some vibrate more with love for Matter. Those energies that vibrate with love for Spirit you tend to call ‘good’ And those energies that vibrate with love for Matter you tend to call ‘evil’.”

As I was listening to him, I felt something shifting inside me, as if someone had opened a big window and the fresh air was rushing in. Centuries of pain caused by condemnation, persecutions, and endless battles in the name of “good” quickly poured through my mind. I imagined the pain of those involved, and understood their confusion.

Spirit and Matter have an equal place in God's heart — I thought. But various institutions, and many humans, decided to condemn everything that is related to Matter, and believe to be holy only what is related to Spirit. And so the war between “evil” and “good” was created in the human mind. Why do we think that only the soul, and not the body, is holy? Why do we think that loving life is a sin that will never lead us to the other, better world? And what do the institutions gain when they let us perpetuate such beliefs?

“What do the Statues represent exactly, if it's not good and evil?” I said out loud.

“There is a pattern, a way in which the manifestation takes place. And there are forces involved in that manifestation. Those forces are the Seven Powers that create the world, and the Statues represent them.”

I looked at the figures on the right.

“So the Statues on the right represent the forces involved in God's manifestation into Spirit.”

“That's right,” he confirmed, “they represent the Powers creating the world on Spirit's level. And those on the left represent the Powers creating the world on Matter's level.”

I was quite for a moment, processing what he just had said. Then I got up and walked to the Statues.

Powers that create the world, — I repeated in my thoughts, — are the forces involved in God's manifestation into being...

“And you call that ‘Spirit’ and ‘Matter’,” said the Master, as if finishing my thought.

I quickly turned around and realized that he had been standing right behind me. “Are you listening to my thoughts?”

He smiled. “No, but I can hear them anyway.”

“I don't like you hearing my thoughts,” I said.

“Only if you have a reason to hide them.” He looked me straight in the eye.

“I don't really have a reason, but I want my privacy. I want to keep my thoughts to myself.”

I kept looking into his eyes, firmly and daringly.

“All right,” he smiled again, “that can be arranged.”

“Thank you,” I nodded.

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I walked slowly to the Statues on the left. The Master came closer too and stood beside me. In silence, we were both watching their grey stone faces.

I was still mulling over his definition of what we call “evil”: the energies that vibrate with love for Matter. I’d never heard anything like that before. Something bigger than my own perception of the world was now beginning to open in my mind.

“The second Statue here,” continued the Highest Priest, “represents the natural and harmonious evolution of Matter, Progress of Matter. While on the right we have the spiritual evolution, the natural and harmonious Progress of Spirit.”

I slowly touched the grey Statue representing the Progress of Matter. Motionless and powerful, it emanated strength and authority.

“Matter,” I said. “God manifested Matter.”

I walked to the figures on the right and touched the second one on that side.

“Spirit. This one here represents the Progress of Spirit. God manifested both, Matter and Spirit.”

“Matter and Spirit are only your concepts,” said the Master.

I looked at him quickly.

“What do you mean: Matter and Spirit are only my concepts?”

He shook his head. “No. You won’t be ready for such a lesson for a while, trust me. That lesson will be given to you later.”

I nodded. I suddenly felt tired. It felt as if the Chamber of Seven Powers was spinning under my feet. I looked down at the golden anklets.

“They are really pretty,” I said. “Thank you.”

“It’s time for you to go back,” I heard the Master say. “We will continue today’s lesson later”.

“You never told me your name,” I said just before leaving.

He said something that I didn’t quite understand.

“Rhami-yata,” I repeated his name. “It sounds very nice. What does it mean?” I asked.

“The End of Dream,” said the Master.

I fell into a deep, dreamless sleep and woke up hours later. It was already dark and the moon was shining into my bedroom. I couldn't believe that I had slept most of the day.

I got up from my bed and walked around the apartment, touching my new furniture, basking in the moonlight.

So this is the material world — I said to myself. And I'm here, alone, and it's dark.

I looked out the window and noticed, again, how surprisingly quiet was the little street, downtown. Right in the heart of Toronto.

I was asked to live here — I thought — and spend the next six months in trance, receiving teachings from a Master who doesn't even have a material body that I can relate to. And who tells me that good and evil are only my concepts... Have I gone nuts?! What am I doing with my life?! Oh, God, if you don't help me now, I will indeed end up in a mental hospital.

I went to the kitchen and opened the fridge. I didn't find any bottled water left. Thirsty, I poured a glass of cold water straight from the faucet.

Well — I thought looking at the glass, and suddenly feeling rebellious. If there is nothing that is really bad, then the tap water shouldn't hurt me!

I finished drinking and turned on the lights. Too bright — I turned them off quickly. The moonlight was enough.

I went to the living room and sat in my khaki plush armchair. The softness of the fabric felt comforting, and made me think of teddy bears. I always had liked teddy bears. I saw them sometimes being disposed of, abandoned, when they were no longer needed.

Perhaps there should be a shelter for the retired teddy bears? — I thought. They do deserve something like that. For always being loyal, and patient.

The phone was in front of me, on the coffee table. A strange feeling rose in my belly. Fear? Loneliness? I looked at the phone and didn't know if I should make a call.

And then it rang. "Are you answering calls yet?" asked John.

"No," I said, "but it's good that you called."

"How are you doing over there?" he asked.

“I’m sitting in the dark with a funny feeling in my belly.”

“Can’t sleep?”

“I just slept. Most of the day. It was good.”

I told him about the lesson. I told him about my fears.

“He says that good and evil are only my concepts. He also says that Spirit and Matter are only my concepts.” I was happy to be able to share my doubts.

“Are you ready to accept the fact that there really might be something else to explore besides your old beliefs and point of view?” he asked.

I was silent for a moment. And he patiently waited. Yes, I did want to explore the new. The old had not worked for me at all. Definitely.

“What do you think I should do?” I asked.

“I thought you already made that choice,” he said.

I went for a long walk that night. It was very late but the streets downtown were alive.

So many people are still out — I thought. I walked fast, not looking at anyone. I felt a bit scared, uncomfortable. I had heard so much about crime in large North American cities. Well, yes, the stories I had heard were mostly related to New York, not Toronto, but the fear was still the same. Yet I really needed that exercise, and fresh air. Nobody tried to stop me or talk to me, and I thought I was lucky.

My thoughts soon drifted to my son. I imagined him being at home with his father, asleep and peaceful. I knew Matthew was all right. Ever since he was a few years old, he had gotten used to my long absences. My acting job back then was with a touring puppet theatre, and it demanded a lot of absence from one’s own family and friends.

I circled a few times around the block until I felt a pleasant fulfillment in my body. Then I knew I was ready to go back, and ran upstairs. I reached for my key thinking how good it was to be back, safe, in my “sanctuary”.

I closed the door behind me and stood motionless, feeling the moment, soaking in my new home. I had never lived alone before and didn’t know what to expect, how to integrate myself with that empty place. Then I realized that it didn’t feel empty at all. It was filled with my own presence. For the first time I realized that it is possible to feel one’s own presence. There was also something else I could feel. I couldn’t put my finger on it.

I went to the bedroom and stopped at the door. There, I could sense it stronger now. Suddenly, I knew what it was. It was the Master's presence that I sensed.

I sat on the bed and closed my eyes. I realized that I could smell the scent of the Temple. The burning cresset, the holy oils, the crisp air of the ancient world. I could sense the other Priests, somewhere, perhaps meditating in the many rooms of the Temple. I opened my eyes quickly. My home had now become a part of the Temple.

Mmm, being alone isn't so bad — I thought. Not at all. I think I'm going crazy. But really it is rather a pleasant feeling.

I got under the covers and breathed slowly, trying to force myself to sleep no matter what. I wanted to go back to the more natural rhythm of sleeping and waking hours. Yes, the night walk was thrilling, but the night felt too dangerous to be on the streets.

I woke up a few hours later, fully rested and feeling strong. Now I knew that I could handle the trance, the lessons, the whole madness that was happening to me.

I was not planning to have any social life. In fact, I didn't want any. I felt it would only be a distraction from my work with the Master. And I wanted to give it my full attention. I had always believed that anything worth doing was worth doing it to the max — or not bothering at all.

“Yep! Let's go crazy this time. Why not?” I mumbled to my mirror image while brushing my teeth.

END OF CHAPTER 1

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