

### **Liberation**

During one of his meditations, David's intuition told him that if he removed himself from his immediate environment, some important knowledge would be revealed to him. If he stepped away from his habits, his career, and his relationships that he identified with his ego, he would be able to see the Divine more clearly, and come back to the world with a fresh perspective. David decided to take a six-month trip into the Yosemite National Park mountain country to get away from his routine life and open new possibilities on his spiritual path.

Alison supported David in his plans to get away, and the owner of the grocery store at which David worked agreed to hold David's position open for him while he traveled. David fulfilled the last of his obligations, packed his gear, and withdrew enough cash from the bank to sustain him during his trip. He did not want to have to visit a bank, or have any other attachments to the world that he was leaving behind. He wanted complete flexibility in letting his intuition guide him. Alison kept David's late-model Toyota, and he went to a used car dealer and bought an old clunker Ford that would get him where he needed to go. On his last night home, he called his family and friends to say farewell, and at 8:00a.m. on the following morning, he kissed Alison goodbye and started on his journey.

David drove the Ford onto the Interstate that went from his home in Santa Rosa to Yosemite, through some of the most beautiful mountain country in the world. In the early afternoon, he turned off the Interstate and onto a minor road that ran through several mountain towns near Yosemite. He would rent a cheap, secluded motel room, and use it as his base to hike around the rugged high-country. The road wound deep into the mountains, and eventually climbed toward a summit.

David had never felt more freedom in his life, and he was released from all of the attachments to his past. This was different from trips he had taken before. He used to believe the saying, “when you take a vacation, the one thing you can’t leave behind is yourself.” He usually carried his emotional baggage wherever he went. But now, it seemed that he was able to leave his self behind, or at least he was more aware of that self so that it was not such a burden to him. He forgot the pressures of his job, and his and Alison’s long-term plans for a family and a house, and the negative habits that he usually worried about.

Just as the last of his worries evaporated, his old clunker Ford started making odd clunking noises. The front left tire was quickly going flat. At first David was angry, and he cursed at the car; but then he remembered that all experiences were Divine possibilities, and although the experience seemed bad, there was goodness in everything. David relaxed; having a flat tire was no big problem. Why should he be upset when there was no harm done to him, and he had eternity to get to where he was going? He was opening himself to the Divine presence. He smiled to himself.

David turned off the ignition and got out of the car to open the trunk. In his excitement to leave the city, he had forgotten to check for a spare tire and a jack. Judging by the condition of the Ford, he doubted that he would find a spare, but as he opened the trunk, his intuition told him not to worry. David looked under the floor mat. His intuition was correct. He heaved the wheel out of the trunk and rolled it to the front of the car. The car was on a steep slope, so he had to be careful with the jack. He placed it under a solid piece of metal on the underside of the car and jacked up the front end.

As David worked, he heard a car coming from the direction from which he had come. A white Chrysler sedan, with a flashing red light on top, was winding up the road toward him. The car stopped behind David’s Ford, its lights still flashing. David stood up, and he smiled at the woman in the white uniform who got out of the Chrysler.

The woman approached David. She was middle-aged, in good shape, with long

brunette hair. She smiled and said, "You need some help."

It was not a question, but a statement.

David was doing okay on his own. "I appreciate it, but I've got things under control," he replied. "Thanks though."

The woman walked closer to David. "You need to come back to the Home with me."

"Home with you?" David said. The woman was cute, but going home with the first woman that he met on the road was not part of the Divine journey that David had in mind. "I...don't think so," he said, awkwardly but politely. "Thanks, but I was just on my way over the pass."

The woman wouldn't take no for an answer. "Now David," she said, "you mustn't be like that. You shouldn't resist."

David felt his body involuntarily moving toward the passenger side of the Chrysler. It was like a large hand was pushing him; he could not resist, no matter how hard he tried. He remembered the horror stories that he had read about terrible things happening to strangers who traveled alone in the mountains.

"Wait a minute!" David said. "How did you know my name? This is crazy. You've got me mixed up with someone else."

"It's okay, David, I'm not going to hurt you", said the woman. "We want to help you to be happy."

David's mind whirred; what was she talking about? He was pushed to the passenger-side of the car. His hand was forced to open the door, and he sat down in the passenger seat.

"Please...stop it!" David shouted in panic. "What are you doing to me?"

The woman sat in the driver's seat and started the car. Soothingly, she said, "David, you've shouldn't have tried to escape from the Home. We've been worried about you."

"What home?" David cried. "Just hold on a minute. I'm David Solo. I live in Santa Rosa. I'm a grocery store manager. I didn't do anything. Check my id."

“It’s okay,” she said soothingly, trying to calm him down.

“I didn’t do anything,” David pleaded.

“Shh...Shhh...just be quiet,” said the woman, as she drove the car onto the road.

Her voice was soothing, and David’s heartbeat slowed. He would have to accept his position, for now. He couldn’t resist her. There was obviously a mix-up; he would straighten it out when he got to “the Home”, wherever that was.

They drove for half an hour, passing through the small town of Yosemite Falls. Just outside of town, they turned onto a private road that led through a heavily forested area. Along the road, David saw a carved wooden sign that said “Mountain View Home” in large block letters, and underneath was written “a home for the mentally ill”. Fear seized David as he pictured an isolated mountain asylum. The patients were probably kept there to protect society from their insanity. It was probably a prison for killers and robbers.

After driving a few miles, they came upon a clearing in the woods, in the middle of which stood “the Home”. The Home was a large two-story building, made of what appeared to be redwood. It fit very well into the natural landscape. At first, David thought that the place had some charm, like a wildflower in a grove of trees, but as the car got nearer to the Home, a ten-foot-high barbed-wire fence surrounding the perimeter of the building appeared out of nowhere. David blinked his eyes. When he opened them, the fence was still there, and bars had appeared on the windows.

With the woman walking beside him, David was pushed toward the building by the invisible hand. He was in no hurry to be put away for life in a crazy house, but he was powerless against the unseen force. At first sight upon entering the Home, the long white hallway that stretched from one end of the building to the other looked clean and inviting. But on second glance, David realized that there was a heavy door separating the holding and administration area, in which he stood, from the rest of the hallway, where the patients’ rooms were located. From the rooms down the hall, people were shouting and creating havoc.

A few feet from David, the woman in white was talking with a man in white, whose face David could not see clearly. When the man and woman finished talking, the man turned and walked up a staircase that led to the second floor of the building. The woman approached David.

She said, "Sorry David, but he said that you have a lot to learn before you'll be ready to leave."

"I don't belong here!" David insisted

"We're going to take care of you here. It's for your own good," the woman said.

The woman took David by the arm; the heavy security door opened, and they walked down the long white corridor. An old gentleman poked his head out of his door. "Hi, David," he said in a high-pitched voice, as he scrunched his face and screwed up his eyes.

"How did that man know my name?" David thought. Maybe he had entered a parallel universe or something.

The woman preceded David into a small room. As he entered, the woman explained, "I'm the Administrator of the Home, and the man in white back there is the Founder. We'll be looking out for you, David." She walked back out, into the hallway, and the door closed behind her.

David rushed to the door, but it was locked. He tugged hard, but the door was heavy and secure. He looked around the room for a means of escape. The windows, opposite the door, were barred.

David's furnishings consisted of a double bed against the left wall, beside which were two nightstands with reading lamps; a chair stood beside the far nightstand; on the right wall was a mirrored vanity with three drawers, and next to the vanity was a free-standing wooden closet. There was a small private bathroom next to the closet. The two windows looked onto a thick grove of tall redwood trees, beyond which was a grassy meadow. David stuck his face near the glass to get a better look outside, and two snarling German shepherds jumped at him from the yard outside. David was confused about

what had happened, and he sat down on the bed to think.

David sat in his locked room until the next morning, with no visitors and no food. Throughout the night, his thoughts alternated between how to get revenge on these people for holding him against his will, and the thought that these events must be happening for a reason. There was an odd hint of the supernatural in his experiences.

By morning, David was exhausted, hungry, angry, and afraid; but he also had the hope that something good would come from his adventure. At 8:00 a.m., the Administrator knocked on his door and entered his room. She was smiling. Maybe they had finally checked up on him and had realized their mistake in bringing him to the Home.

“It’s time for breakfast, David, I hope you slept well,” the Administrator said. “We missed you last night at dinner.”

“How did you expect me to eat when you knew that I was locked in this room,” David said. “And, no, I didn’t sleep well!” He shook his fists in anger. “Let me out of this place!”

“It’s Okay, David,” said the Administrator, trying to avoid provocation. “The doors will open when you are ready.” She reached into David’s closet and pulled out some clean clothes. “Put these on and we’ll get you some breakfast,” she said.

David was about to argue, but the strong intuitive knowledge overpowered his anger and frustration; he was meant to be at the Home.

David dressed in his bathroom and then followed the Administrator into the hallway, where the other patients walked toward the room at the end of the corridor. The Administrator led David into the dining hall, a large white room with a high ceiling. On the wall opposite the entrance, looking out into the woods, were several medium-sized windows, trimmed in light blue and gold. The windows were barred. In the middle of the room were eight round dining tables, and around the perimeter of the room were two clusters of sofas and comfortable chairs, and a card table. On the right wall was a shelf stocked with playing cards, board games, and a library of books. To the left of the entryway was a kitchen, in front of which was a cafeteria-style line of hot and cold foods.

The Administrator fanned her arm around the room and said, “When you are ready, David, you can have anything that you want.” She gave him a knowing look, as if there was an unstated secret between them.

“You’ll get three meals a day,” said the Administrator. “You can sit anywhere you like. Come and talk to me anytime. I must warn you; beware of ‘The Ego’.”

The Administrator left him alone to decipher her cryptic comments. She spoke in riddles. The doors would unlock themselves, she had said. And he could “have anything that he wanted”. What was this place? And who was ‘The Ego’? David tried to think positively about his mysterious situation, but confusion and hunger soon overwhelmed him, and he glumly joined the other patients in the breakfast line.

Breakfast consisted of scrambled eggs, hash browns, ham, sausages, and bagels with cream cheese and jam, and at the end of the food line were orange juice and coffee. By coincidence, it was exactly what David liked to eat. He took a tray, plate and silverware from the rack at the front of the line. He was very hungry, so he heaped large portions of food on his plate, preparing himself for a fast, in case he got locked in his room again.

In line ahead of David was an elderly man of medium height, slight build, bushy gray hair, and a mustache. The man was very choosy about his food. David watched him carefully scoop a small portion of hash browns onto his plate, and at the end of the line the man poured himself a glass of orange juice.

“I guess he’s not hungry,” David thought, “he must have eaten dinner last night”. David poured himself a glass of orange juice and sat down at one of the eight tables, all of which were filling up with other patients.

David sat facing the food line, and he watched as the old man approached the table and sat across from him. He glanced at the old man’s tray, and he was surprised to see a bowl of granola with various fruit toppings, a cup of yogurt, and what looked like a bran muffin with nuts, in addition to the hash browns and orange juice. Most of those items were not available on the food line. David looked at the food line to be sure. He was right. The old man must have had his food stashed nearby.

While David ate voraciously, another man and a woman sat down at the table and began eating. At David's table, there was a different assortment of food on each person's plate. A thought flashed through David's mind, "ask and you shall receive." Maybe that was what the Administrator meant when she said that he could have anything that he wanted.

The old man was deep in thought and hadn't begun his breakfast. Meanwhile, a tall, muscular, good-looking man, carrying a tray of food, approached David from the direction of the food line. The man crouched down next to David, and his brown eyes revealed a powerful virility.

"David?" the man said, extending his hand, "Hi, I'm Eric."

David shook Eric's hand.

"If you need anything, I can get it for you. Anything. Cigarettes...liquor...candy, you name it. If you want to make the most of this joint, then stick with me."

David was surprised by the sudden display of friendship. At a loss for words, he politely said, "Thanks."

Eric was friendly enough, but his approach reminded David of a loan shark sizing up his next victim.

Eric gave David a wry, confident smile that seemed to say, "I am the king of the Home." Eric stood up, and scowled at the old man sitting across from David.

"All right, Victor," Eric said threateningly to the old man, "what have you got for me today?" Victor just smiled. David wondered what mental illness would cause such a smile in this situation.

Eric raised his voice, "I said, what have you got?"

The old man maintained his smile in silence, as Eric reached onto his tray and took his plate of food. "I hope you starve, old man!" Eric said.

As Eric placed Victor's plate of food onto his own tray, David noticed that Eric's food was less than appetizing. On his plate was what looked like lumpy oatmeal, and stale bread, grub that you might expect in a high-security prison.

Eric walked a few feet to another table, where four people were already seated. Two men, both with dark hair and muscular builds, had their backs to David. A blonde woman and a brunette woman faced David, and in between them was a vacant chair, Eric's chair. When Eric reached his chair, all but the blonde woman – who must have been Eric's equal - stood up, and they sat down again only after Eric was seated.

“Who does this guy think he is?” David thought disgustedly. He did not like pomp.

David looked at Victor to see his reaction to the incident. Victor still wore a smile on his face. It was a smile of authentic joy. The old man was looking at Eric as if Eric was his long-lost son or something. David could not understand it.

Victor picked up his plate, walked to the food line, and stood still for a moment at the end of the line. He turned around and walked back to the table with a bowl of granola with fruit that smelled so fresh that David's mouth watered. Victor sat down and slowly ate his cereal, savoring every bite.

While David finished his food and drank his coffee, he watched Eric and his friends. Eric had eaten his food, but his friends had barely touched theirs. All of them had the same lumpy oatmeal and stale bread. Everyone in the room, except those at David's table, had the same lousy breakfast. They did not have what they really wanted.

Eric was talking to the four people at his table. The blonde was extremely attractive. She had intense blue eyes, long straight hair that reached to the small of her back, and a perfect body. The brunette had hazel eyes and was almost as attractive as the blonde.

“Maybe I should become friends with Eric, after all,” David thought. And then he remembered his love for Alison.

David finished his coffee as the other patients filtered out of the dining hall. He hadn't slept for twenty-four hours, and he was dog tired. He decided to go to his room to sleep for a few hours. After that he would try to solve the mysteries of why he was taken to the Home, and the hidden message in the Administrator's words.

David walked to his room and crawled under the covers of his bed. He slept for almost eight hours, right through lunch. He dreamed about him and Alison; they were

together on an ocean beach, with the breeze blowing through their hair and the sun shining down on them. The pleasant dream made David feel safe.

### **The Ego**

At around 4:00 p.m., David's slumber was rudely interrupted. Loud arguing and the sounds of furniture moving came from the room next door, to the left of David's. David covered his ears to try to go back to sleep, but the noise persisted. Five minutes later, he gave up trying to sleep, and he arose from his bed and put on his clothes. He walked out his door and into the hallway, looking cautiously down both sides of the corridor. There were a few patients walking to and from the dining and recreation room, but they seemed oblivious to the activity next door. The door across the hall from David's was half-opened, and David saw through the crack that the old man, Victor, was sitting on the floor, cross-legged. Victor was in a deep meditation, and he was completely unaware of the chaos just across the hall. David envied him his peace of mind. The noise continued; David was afraid someone might be hurt.

He walked next door and knocked. The noise stopped abruptly. David heard footsteps inside the room, and the door burst open.

"What do you want!" shouted Eric, red-faced, out of breath, and angry. His anger subsided when he saw it was David. His scowl changed to an ear-to-ear smile. "Oh, it's you. Hi, David," he said. "What can I do for you? Have you decided to take me up on my offer?"

"Not exactly." David said, unsuccessfully trying to look past Eric, into the room. "I was trying to sleep. Is everything okay in there?"

"No problems here," Eric said in a none-of-your-business tone. "Thanks for asking. Listen, since you seem like a stand-up guy, I'm going to make you an offer."

David did not want to associate with Eric any more than he had to. "No thanks," he said, "I was just hoping that you could hold the noise down."

David was about to walk away when Eric opened the door enough for him to get a good look inside the room, "Okay, buddy. For you, we'll try to keep it down." Eric said.

He nodded his head toward the room behind him, "Take a look. I told you I can give you anything you want."

David saw stacks of boxes on the floor, and one of the men and the two women who had sat with Eric at breakfast were inside the room, straightening furniture that had been displaced in the scuffle that David had heard. The blonde caught David's eye and winked at him. David blushed.

"Anything I want?" David asked, flustered.

Noticing David's blush, Eric glanced over his shoulder just as the blonde averted her eyes from David.

"Almost anything," Eric said. "I think we could satisfy most of your desires. Can we trust you?" he said.

"Well...I don't know," David said hesitantly. He should have trusted his intuition and gone back to his own room, but he was attracted by Eric's offer to satisfy his needs.

David had known types like Eric before, and at one time, he found it exciting to hang out with them, because it was thrilling to live recklessly. David had long ago realized the self-destruction involved in that lifestyle, and he had moved on to healthier living. Despite his misgivings, he was intrigued, not only by the attraction of the blonde, but also by this inside look at what went on behind closed doors in the Home.

"Come in and look around," insisted Eric, grabbing David's arm and pulling him into the room.

Inside the room, David was disoriented at first. From the hallway all of the rooms looked the same size, but now Eric's appeared to be much larger than his. Most of Eric's furnishings were valuable antiques, including a large wooden canopied bed; a vanity with gold inlay; a crystal chandelier hanging from the center of the room; and a beautiful Persian rug in the middle of the floor. Stacks of contraband sat in boxes and on shelves throughout the room. There were handguns and knives, jewelry and piles of cash, cocaine and other drugs, imported chocolates, champagne, bourbon, cigars, and other items that would please the palate or stimulate the mind, or satisfy the sexual or violent

impulse. David was impressed.

David saw that the Persian rug was displaced, enough for him to see an exposed corner of a trapdoor that was usually hidden under the rug. Noticing David's interest, the brunette quickly pushed the rug back into place.

"So, you're in," Said Eric.

"Wait a minute," David said. "I don't want to be "in" anything. I'm just looking."

"Well, you've seen too much now," Eric said. "Let's make a deal. I'll give you what you want, and you'll keep your mouth shut if the Administrator asks you anything. Right?" The other man grabbed a handgun from his belt and moved between David and the door. David didn't have a choice. He hadn't intended for this to happen, but if he played along, maybe these hoodlums would let him go. After this, he would keep a low profile and not get involved.

"Deal?" Eric said again, holding out his hand.

David looked at the man with the gun. His expression said, "you'd better do what he asks, or else."

"Well...Okay," David said, shaking Eric's hand.

"Good," Eric replied.

"Let me introduce you to my crew," said Eric, turning to the man with the gun.

"This is Harry. He's in charge of security; he keeps us all safe."

Harry nodded to David, and returned the gun to his belt. Pointing to the blonde, Eric said "and this gorgeous creature is Sheila. Sheila is my right hand woman."

"Hi David," Sheila said.

"Hi," David replied, sheepishly.

"And this," Eric said, pointing to the brunette, "is Lorraine. She takes care of administration."

"Hello, David," Lorraine said.

"Hi," said David. "Wow. She's a beauty, too" he thought.

"Well, that's the gang," Eric said. "I am in charge here. I've been here for a long

time, so I know how things work. I set up our system. We supply the other patients with whatever they desire, and we require their loyalty in return. We get the goods from suppliers from around the area. I have a lot of connections, inside and outside.” While he spoke, Eric didn’t look directly at David, but rather he kept glancing at himself in the vanity mirror. Obviously, he thought a lot of himself.

Eric looked David in the eye, “Don’t even think about screwing with me,” he said. “Harry stands guard at this door when I sleep, which is not often. We’re always ready for trouble. You want to see what happens to guys who cause trouble?”

David didn’t want to see, but Eric pushed the Persian rug aside and uncovered the trap door. Harry pulled up the trapdoor, and Eric shoved David close enough to see a stairway and darkness below. “Look closely!” Eric demanded. “That’s what I do to people who cross me!”

In the cellar, David saw the other man who had sat with Eric’s gang at the breakfast table, lying bloody-face up on the dirt floor. David now guessed the cause of the noise that had awakened him. Chills went down his spine. These people were capable of anything. He couldn’t believe that this was actually happening to him.

“You look like a smart guy,” Eric said sardonically. “You wouldn’t betray me like Jack did, would you?”

David did not know what Jack had done, but he said nervously, “No, absolutely not.”

Harry closed the trapdoor and Lorraine pushed the rug back into place. The four of them examined David closely, looking for his threshold of fear. David controlled himself.

“You can take Jack’s place,” Eric said. “You can start by distributing these guns to the other patients. We’re all going to break out of here soon. If you join us, you can get out too; and we’ll keep you happy while you’re here.”

David tried to look calm. “I...don’t think so,” he said. “I’m sure they’ll let me out soon enough.” He couldn’t resist asking, “How about just want a few beers and some

cigarettes.”

“When you join us, you can have whatever you want.” Eric said. He pointed around the room. “What more could a man want to be happy?”

Eric looked at Sheila. He knew that David wanted more than just beer and cigarettes.

“You have nice merchandise,” David said, “but I can’t join you.”

“You either join, or you get nothing,” said Eric.

David took a deep breath for courage. “I guess it’s nothing then,” he replied. “I’d better leave now.” He turned and started toward the door.

Eric stepped in front of David, close enough so that David could smell his hot breath. “Just remember our deal,” Eric threatened. “And remember what happens to rats. You can leave the room, but you’ll never get away from us. And don’t fool yourself; you’ll never escape from the Home without us.”

Eric pointed to the windows and said, “no one can penetrate those steel plates.”

David didn’t understand. He didn’t see any steel plates. All he saw were the bars on the windows. Eric was hallucinating; he thought that security in the Home was tighter than it actually was. Maybe his self-involvement and paranoia created the illusion.

Eric stepped away from David. “Get out of here,” he demanded.

Harry opened the door for David. Just before David walked out the door, he looked back at Sheila, and she winked at him again. He blushed, and his fear and desire created a warm, intense feeling inside of him.

Before he closed the door again, Harry said, “Eric, I need to go my room for a minute. I’ll be right back.”

“Hurry up,” Eric commanded.

Harry closed the door. David was already at the door to his own room, trying to forget the nightmare that he’d just seen.

“David. Wait!” Harry said urgently, but softly.

David turned to face Harry.

Harry's eyes were riddled with fear. "We need help," he said, "Eric is out of control. He killed Jack for no reason. He might kill us all if someone doesn't stop him. You could be our leader; you'd have everything you've ever dreamed of—total power and control over the business."

David's primal instinct for power was strong, but with a burst of willpower, he rejected his instinct, "I...I don't think so," he said.

Harry's body trembled. He was a big man. Eric generated enough fear to destroy any man, no matter what size.

"Please. Help us," Harry pleaded.

"I can't. I'm sorry," David said.

Harry looked around cautiously, to make sure nobody was listening. "Think about it. You'll have everything," he said.

Frightened that Eric would find him talking to David, Harry quickly ran down the hall and disappeared into a room.

Disconcerted by the turn of events and his unwilling involvement with Eric's gang, David opened his door and walked into his room. As he turned to close the door behind him, he noticed that the door across the hall was still ajar. Victor was still sitting on the floor meditating.

David closed his door and turned the deadbolt. He was very upset. Not only was he being held against his will, but he was in danger. He tried to stay calm, to think of a way out of the situation. The Administrator said that he could talk with her anytime, but David was afraid that Eric would find out if he said anything.

Just then, there was a knock on David's door. He hesitated to open it, fearing that Eric would be standing on the other side, ready to punish him for talking with Harry. He slowly cracked the door open. It was the Administrator.

David's paranoia increased. "What do you want?" he said.

"Do you want to talk?" said the Administrator.

“No.” David said, as he opened the door wide to scan the hallway for Eric’s spies. Several people were at the other end of the hall, near the dining room, but they weren’t interested in David.

“I can’t talk to you,” David said.

The Administrator smiled as if she had not a care in the world. She didn’t know what went on in the Home. She could not know that right next door there was a stockpile of weapons, and that people were plotting escape. If she knew that, she would not be so calm. Nor could she know of the objects of desire; the boxes of liquor, cigarettes, and chocolates, that were being distributed to patients in the Home behind her back. One woman and one man could not oversee all of the people in the Home. Things were out of control.

“I thought that you might have some questions about our policies here,” said the Administrator.

David had many questions, but none of them were worth getting killed over.

“It’s safe,” said the Administrator.

Despite his fear, David was reassured by her calming voice, and he opened the door and let the Administrator into his room. The Administrator motioned for David to sit down on the bed, and then she sat down beside him.

“You can talk to me. I know what you are afraid of,” said the Administrator disarmingly.

“No, I don’t think you do,” David said.

“We know all about the operations next door,” said the Administrator. “Eric and his associates want to escape from what seems to them to be a prison.”

David was silent. He was afraid that Eric would think that he had squealed.

“Eric and his associates are all absorbed in their egos. Eric and his gang protect their egos by accumulating worldly goods – the objects of desire that you saw in Eric’s room. The drugs, liquor, and delicacies give them pleasure and feed their desires, keeping them attached to their ego realities, and distracting them from the true reality. The

fascination with guns, knives, and violence is a result of the spiraling negativity of their lives. They reinforce their self-images and ego-realities with material goods, and sensual pleasures, and the more they are reinforced, the more securely they are imprisoned.

“I warned you about Eric; he’s the ringleader for most of the brothers and sisters here. He is *the* “Ego”. He is the most attached to his self-love and pride. His life is fulfilling to the extent that he maintains his self-esteem, which comes from the perception of himself as the center of the universe. To bolster his image, he plots how to attract beautiful women, and other people who outwardly revere him. He tries to control the thoughts and actions of his associates, because without their participation, his illusion would be shattered, and his ego destroyed. Eric would be nothing. He destroys those who would destroy him.”

“Destroys?” asked David. “You mean you know about Jack?”

“Jack was a threat to Eric’s ego, a traitor within his group, someone who questioned Eric’s position. Eric will go to any length to fight for complete control. He threatened you because he sees you as a new threat to him. You wouldn’t join the group. You are different from him, and he needs to put you under his thumb.”

“But how could you know all of this? Why do you allow it?” David said.

“We know everything that goes on here, David. We allow for every human possibility. We can’t suppress peoples’ natural tendencies, the acts that are done in the name of the ego. We hope that they will eventually see their way beyond the ego and out of their suffering.”

“But can’t you at least stop them from killing each other?” David asked.

“No, we can’t,” said the Administrator, “They have the freedom to act; we can only guide them when they seek our help. Until then, they will become further absorbed in themselves and further removed from the true reality of the Home.”

“You keep talking of this true reality and the illusion of the ego,” David said, “Eric’s threat to me was no illusion, and when Harry asked me to help them, his fear was real.”

“It was real,” said the Administrator, “but only in a relative sense.”

“When you walked through Eric’s door, you were brought into their world of fear, anxiety, and suffering. Before you entered that room, you may have been fearful of the unknown—having been brought here under unusual circumstances—but you were not afraid for your life. You see bars on the windows, a fence, and dogs in the yard, and other security measures that are meant to restrict your life. You, too, live in a false reality, in your own illusion. You are a prisoner.

“Eric is desperate; he sees steel plates covering the windows and a twelve-foot concrete wall surrounding the Home. For Eric and his associates, the Home is a maximum-security prison in which they must fight constantly, desperately, and violently, to gain freedom. They don’t understand that they are already free. The fear, anxiety and violence don’t exist in the true reality. Someday you will know that there are no bars on the windows, and no dogs in the yard. You, too, are free, but you must remove the barriers to freedom before you can be are liberated.”

David was disturbed by the Administrator’s words. “You’re lying,” David said. “I’m not imagining that I was taken here against my will and locked in my room.”

David looked at his windows. “Those bars are real,” he said angrily.

“Very well,” said the Administrator, standing up from the bed. “Call to me when you are ready to talk again.”

As she walked to the door, the Administrator said, “Tonight, you will encounter Virtue and Sin. You choose your own path.”

“What are you talking about?” David cried. The Administrator’s warning sounded ominous.

“Virtue is found in the wisdom of the elderly, and Sin often comes in the form of outward beauty,” said the Administrator as she left David’s room.

“Wait!” David shouted. He was going to run into the hallway after her, but he did not want to attract the attention of Eric and the other hoodlums next door.

**Virtue**

The dinner bell rang at 6:00 p.m., and David was hungry, despite his concern over the strange turn of events. He didn't want to leave his room for fear of Eric's reprisal, but he might be safe in the company of others. David poked his head out of his door; Eric and his associates were nowhere in sight, so he joined a group of people walking toward the dining hall. Victor was walking a few feet in front of David. David remembered the Administrator's cryptic message, "virtue is found in the wisdom of the elderly", and he thought of Victor. Maybe Victor was an example of virtue. Victor had an unusual serenity about him.

David picked up a tray and silverware, and followed Victor through the food line. David surveyed the fare; at first, he was repulsed by what he saw. There was a large pot of gray gruel, and creamed corn of the same dull color. David's stomach turned. He closed his eyes for a second to calm his stomach, and when he opened them, the gruel and corn had disappeared. His eyes had deceived him. Now he saw spaghetti mixed with a delicious smelling meat sauce, and there was salad and garlic bread. There were the usual beverages; soda, milk, water, tea and coffee, and at the end of the line was an ice cream dispenser and various toppings to make ice cream Sundays. David loved ice cream Sundays, but his delight was tempered by the vision of the gruel; it was a warning that he had the potential to become one of Eric's gang, condemned to eat prison food.

David was entranced by the sight and smell of the food, and he put a slice of bread, salad, and a large portion of spaghetti onto his plate. From a dispenser, David poured Pepsi into his glass, and then he remembered his mission of observing Victor. He looked at Victor's plate and saw curried brown rice with vegetables, acorn squash, and what looked like sautéed tofu.

Victor sat at the same table at which he had sat at breakfast, and David sat beside him. David and Victor had their backs to the food line, and they faced the open dining room. Victor closed his eyes and prayed silently before eating his meal. David followed Victor's example. It wouldn't hurt him to pray to make sure that he never saw that gruel again. He closed his eyes and thanked God for his spaghetti and salad. He might die

tonight from Eric's wrath, but he was eating well. David laughed to himself.

Most of the patients were seated for dinner. David looked across the room and saw that Eric was not at his table. Jack had been replaced with a short, stout blond-haired man who looked like he could break a man in half. David caught Sheila's eye, and she smiled and winked at him. David could not fight his desire for the beautiful Sheila. In his mind, he pictured Sheila in his room, just the two of them, kissing, and...

"David," said a voice from behind him.

Startled, David turned his head and pushed his chair back from the table, getting ready to stand up.

Eric put a hand on David's shoulder. "Sit down," Eric said, "I've got something for you."

Eric handed David a large paper bag. David remained in his chair, although he thought that whatever was in the bag might explode at any second.

"Look inside," said Eric, obviously pleased that he could instill fear in David.

David opened the bag, and inside he saw two packages of cigarettes, a six-pack of premium beer, a liter of single-malt scotch, and two boxes of Swiss chocolates. When David saw the items in the bag, he was comforted for a moment, despite Eric's ominous presence. David had mixed feelings; he could be locked in the Home for a long time, and the gifts that Eric gave him would give him pleasure, but he knew that in accepting the gift, he would become a willing participant in everything for which Eric stood.

"No strings attached," Eric said. "Just a friendly gesture from all of us." He motioned toward the other people in the room.

"So, they're all in on it," David thought.

"If you want to, come and party with us later," Eric invited, pointing to his table.

David felt ashamed for being tempted by Eric's bribe, and Sheila's seductive glances. He wanted nothing to do with Eric and his gang. He turned his head and looked around the room. There were seven other tables of people, and they had all joined Eric. Only David's table was not included in the group. David looked at Victor,

and Victor met David's eyes with a smile. Victor's eyes sparkled with warmth. If Victor were David's only friend, he would provide more true friendship than all of the others put together.

Victor knew of David's indecision; his eyes said "it's your decision to make, young man. I'll be here for you."

David felt the power of Victor's love flowing into him. He handed the bag back to Eric. "No thanks," David said. "I can't accept this."

"You're making a big mistake David," Eric said, as he grabbed the bag and nodded at Victor. "Don't you realize that he will poison your mind? The last person that sat in your chair, next to the old man, went insane because of the mental garbage that he was fed."

Eric gyrated his body, and he made faces and started to wail. "This is how he went mad. It's going to happen to you, too, David, if you listen to him!" He was inches from David's face.

David looked at Victor. "Is it true?" he said.

Victor did not need to respond; David saw in his eyes that no harm had come to anyone who heard his words of truth.

Sensing David's loyalty to Victor, Eric glared at Victor with rage. "You're screwing with my people again, old man. You're lying to all of us!" He reached over to grab Victor's collar but his hand stopped in mid-air. Victor smiled warmly at Eric. Love streamed from Victor's eyes to Eric. Eric jumped back, startled, as if he was hit in the chest by a strong fist.

"Nooo!" Eric wailed in response to Victor's love. "I'll get you all!" he shouted at the people at David's table. He then walked backward to his own table, glaring at Victor. He finally sat down, and began talking animatedly to his gang.

"There's going to be a showdown soon." David thought. He felt the intensity of the emotions and thoughts of the people around him.

The five people at David's table were the only holdouts, the only ones with enough

courage to oppose Eric. David was sure that some of the others were staying with Eric out of fear and uncertainty of life beyond the ego. They could not betray Eric for fear of destroying themselves. Eric's response to Victor's love showed that fear and lies can overshadow love and truth.

David had many questions for Victor, but it was not appropriate to discuss them at the dinner table. The mood was wrong. David finished his dinner and sat observing Eric's gang, while everyone else at his table, except for Victor, finished dinner and retired to their rooms. Victor finished his meal in silence, while Eric plotted against him.

"Victor," David said calmly, although his mind was in turmoil. "I have to talk to you."

"Yes," Victor replied, "I know that you have many questions. I can help to answer some of them, but the rest is left up to you. Let us sit on the sofa."

"Maybe we can go to my room," David said, "to be safe."

"No," said Victor, "I must be here for those who seek my help."

David was reassured by Victor's courage. "Okay," he said.

Victor and David moved to the sofa and sat down. Most of the others had left the dining hall, but two people were playing cards at a small wooden table near the barred windows, and six people—four men and two women—were smoking, drinking, and loudly talking and laughing at a circle of chairs nearby. David wasn't surprised that smoking and drinking were tolerated, given the freedom of choice that the patients had in the Home.

"Victor, doesn't it bother you?" said David, pointing to the loud partiers. "They hate you."

"I admit that sometimes it gets to me," said Victor, in a low, wise tone. "It bothers me that Eric and his gang are lost. It's not hate or anger that I feel, but compassion. All of us can lose our perspective of reality, and get self-absorbed in interests that harm us and other people. That's part of being human."

### **Humility**

“Virtue helps us to shift our identities. Humility gives us perspective: instead of pride in the finite, material success of our egos, we see the smallness of the ego in relation to the Infinite. The small self- and the material elements that support it- are insignificant compared to our Infinite Self in God. Our vanity is lost when we accept ourselves unconditionally in our oneness with God. We don’t care what others think of us because we are part of the Divine. We accept unconditionally all of our experiences, because they are no longer judged through the filter of the ego, by how much they benefit or harm our self-image. Our experiences are accepted because they are informed by the Love and Goodness of the Absolute and Infinite. Anger, fear, suffering, and disappointment cease to exist in our lives; they are children of the finite ego. Instead, goodness, love, and infinite bliss become our reality. That is humility.”

### **Compassion and Charity**

“I’m trying not to be more aware of the limitations of my ego, to overcome my fear and accept my experiences as Divine moments,” David said, “ but sometimes its hard to overcome my habits. I saw your love for Eric even when he took your food this morning, and when he threatened you just now. How do we change our attitude from one of anger at other peoples’ insults to one of love for all people, even those who abuse us?”

Victor replied, “All people, including Eric, are our brothers and sisters; we share a common bond in the Divine unity. We are all united in God. It is only when our egos—which create the illusion of separation—are threatened that we respond with anger or violence. We try to eliminate the cause of our pain, remove the threat to our ego. Our egos are damaged when someone tells us we are ugly, or if they destroy our property, or if they say something to us that makes us question the validity of the image that we have created with our material possessions and experiences.

“When we are detached from our ego-identities, the threats fall on deaf ears, so to speak. We may feel anger at the injustice of someone damaging our property, and we should protect ourselves from harmful and unlawful actions, but if we are not attached to

property then we won't feel pain and fear when we lose material objects. We don't need to lash out at other people for damaging our egos because we are rooted in the Divine. No matter how hateful an action seems, we can accept the action and the actor as Divine possibilities; we all make mistakes because we are human; and we can forgive and love all people as we would have ourselves forgiven and loved, because we are One.

“Genuine acts of charity occur when we realize that material goods are less meaningful than we may have thought; it becomes easy to part with objects because we are no longer attached to them as things that define who we are. We also see others as extensions of ourselves.”

David interrupted, “I've had experiences where it wasn't so important for me to get what I thought I wanted or needed. It was like I was another person. Situations that seemed threatening were not really a threat. One time I was waiting in line with my shopping cart in the grocery store, and I had forgotten to get a bar of soap. I ran to get the soap; I was gone for maybe twenty seconds. When I came back, a woman had pushed my shopping cart aside and gone in front of me. My immediate response was anger. My heart pounded. The lady had no right to cut in front of me. She had insulted my ego. I was about to insult the woman to avenge my hurt ego, when serenity came over me. I understood what led her to cut in front of me; it offends us when someone has the gall to inconvenience us. I might have done the same to her in the past. I realized that it didn't really matter; no harm was done to me. I actually smiled at the woman.”

“I said, these lines are long, aren't they? I'm in no hurry, so I'm glad you went ahead.

“The lady was angry. She had been preparing for conflict. She said, ‘If you're not finished shopping, then you shouldn't get in line.’

“I guess I could have taken that as another blow to my ego. I could have torn into her for her rudeness; but I didn't. I actually felt compassion for her.

“When I released control of the part of me that was threatened, I felt free and happy. I felt liberated. That woman didn't know it, and I didn't think consciously about it, but

she was deeply connected to me. After she had been checked out and she paid her bill, she turned to me, smiled, and said “thanks”. I could hear great emotion in her voice; it was like she was elevated into another reality with me.”

“Exactly,” said Victor. “When we are able to act through our Divine intuition, our whole attitude toward other people changes, and we change the attitudes of those around us. We are no longer opposed to one another.”

### **Veracity**

As Victor finished speaking, the noise from the group of six got almost unbearable. They were yelling loudly. It sounded like they were cheering, or singing a fight song. They were cheering on a particular man, who stood up from his chair and approached David and Victor. The man’s face was red from drinking; his eyes were glazed and his hair was black and wild.

The man stood in front of David and Victor and said, “Hey, old man? What kind of lies are you telling this guy?”

The man tried to be threatening, but he was almost comical, standing unsteadily before them and speaking with a drunken, slurred voice. Neither Victor nor David responded.

“I’m talking to you, old man!” he shouted.

David stood up, ready to defend Victor. He would get rid of this man, like a bouncer bouncing a drunk out of a nightclub.

“Please sit down,” Victor said calmly to David.

David sat down, but remained alert.

To the drunk Victor said, “I’m not telling lies. I tell people the truth, if they ask for it. There’s still hope for you young man; you are still responsible enough to know what’s right for you.”

“Shut up,” the drunk said violently. “Your lies are making us mad, old man.”

“What is he lying about?” David asked.

“It may be too late for you,” the drunk said to David. “It’ll be too late for all of us if

the old man keeps poisoning our minds, telling people that our lives are wrong.”

“I’m not telling anyone that,” Victor said. “We all make our own decisions about what’s right and wrong.”

It was no use reasoning with the man. He stumbled drunkenly toward Victor with outstretched arms, as if to strangle him, “You are wrong. You are both wrong,” he wailed. “We are the good ones.”

Before his hands reached Victor’s throat, he stumbled and fell on top of Victor in a drunken slump.

“We are the good ones,” he said again, as he passed out of consciousness.

Victor gently placed the man beside him.

David looked over at the group; they were still drinking and partying, laughing nervously about the unsuccessful mission of their friend. The man had been elected to express their common sentiments, and he was now in the camp of the enemy.

“They really hate you.” David said.

“It’s because I represent the truth - veracity. Sometimes we ignore the truth because it is too much in contradiction to our lives; we could not bear the disequilibrium between the truth and our lives, and we would have to change. Instead of changing our actions and thoughts, we repress the truth so much that we don’t realize that we are lying to ourselves. We bury our true selves further and further in lies. When we perceive the greater truth and we ignore it, then our lies become precious. When that happens, we react harshly against anything that threatens our relative reality. I am the new truth to these people – a symbol of the repressed thoughts that they hide from themselves. I am their enemy. They wish to destroy the truth at any cost. They wish to destroy me.

#### **Faith, Practice, and Grace**

“I understand,” said David. “When I see new truths, I feel that I need to change; I feel the disequilibrium. Sometimes it’s hard to change my habits. How can I know that the change will uplift me instead of destroying me? How can I let go of myself?”

Victor looked at the unconscious man beside him, “You must have faith, David.

This man suffers, David, and so do you. You both recognize the need to change, and you are afraid. Your intuition reveals the truth even when it is buried deep within you. When we allow ourselves follow our intuition and to be guided to the truth, our fears, anger, and disappointment fade, and our lives are flooded with the Divine love, goodness, and beauty.

When you follow your intuition, your actions occur with the invisible hand of Divine Grace. The virtues—veracity, humility, charity, and others—open the door to a pre-existing grace that is available to us all. Faith and certainty can be found through spiritual techniques and practice, which strengthens our union with the Divine.”

David said, “I don’t think I’m in touch with my intuition enough for it to guide me. That’s why I’m afraid. You said that spiritual practice strengthens our connection to the Divine; I saw you meditating in your room earlier today; I meditate too. Doesn’t that help to connect you to the Divine Truth; doesn’t it allow Divine grace to guide you?”

“Spiritual practice is important, David. The uncertainty and hesitation that we feel – our reluctance to let go of what alienates you from the Divine truth and your intuition – stems from barriers that can be overcome. Eric and his friends have created near-insurmountable barriers to the truth. They see steel plates on the windows, and a concrete wall in the yard. All of us have barriers, and it is tradition and practice that allow us to get around them. Through tradition and practice we shorten the duration of our suffering and illusion, and deepen our connection to the true reality. My faith is solidified as I perfect my art of meditation. I become certain of the presence of God when I see Him acting through me and in the world.”

The drunken man opened his bloodshot eyes. “Where am I,” he said.

“You’re safe,” said Victor.

“Wait a minute,” the man said fearfully. “What have you done to me?”

The man looked over at the group of partiers; they were taunting him. “Traitor, traitor,” they shouted.

The man was confused. First he looked at his friends, and then at Victor and David.

He was trying to make a choice. He stood up, and then sat down.

“Traitor, traitor,” the group shouted.

The man looked into Victor’s eyes, and his soul was penetrated by Victor’s knowledge. He reached out to hold Victor’s hand, and Victor complied. The man’s bloodshot eyes cleared at once and he sat up straight on the sofa.

“Help me,” the man said. “Don’t make me go back.”

The man had faced the truth.

Victor stood up and held the man’s hand. The man stood up too.

“David. You will be all right,” Victor said as he guided the man to the exit of the dining hall. “Remember what we have discussed. You will face challenges to your faith before this night is over.”

## **Sin**

David sat alone on the sofa, thinking about his conversation with Victor. As he sat, he looked outside the windows into the darkening night, where the shadowy figures of trees could be seen, surrounded by the glow of the full moon. And then he noticed - there were no bars on the windows! David jumped up from the sofa and ran to the window. Victor must have done something to David’s subconscious to make it look like the bars had disappeared. David rubbed his eyes, and when he opened them, the bars were there, just as before. His faith was still uncertain.

The people at the other table taunted David. He didn’t want to wait until they sent someone over to either hurt him, or convert him. He didn’t need the hassle; he had enough to think about.

David walked out of the dining hall, and into the hallway, followed closely by two of the goons who had been partying. They got closer to David as he approached his door, but he entered his room and locked the door before they got to him.

David decided to meditate in the chair in his room so that he could better hear the Divine voice that would guide him. He opened his mind to his superconsciousness, from which the Divine voice comes.

An hour later, David's meditation was interrupted by a tap on his door. It was late at night and dark outside. Even in the light of the full-moon, the darkness was thick because of the density of the forest beyond David's window.

"Who could it be at this late hour?" he wondered.

He listened for voices from next door, but he heard nothing but the quiet tapping at his door. He walked to the door and opened it a crack.

"Hi, David," said Sheila, seductively.

"Uh...Sheila?" David stuttered. Sheila was the last person he had expected. Her eyes sparkled. Her full blonde hair flowed down over her shoulders, framing her beautiful face and leading David's eyes down the curves of her body. She was wearing a thin silk nightgown. Desire overwhelmed David, but he feared that Eric was not far behind Sheila.

"David, I need to talk to you. It's urgent."

David used all of his willpower, "No," he said, "I already told Harry that I'm not going to get involved in your operation." Even as he said it, he regretted it. Sheila was so beautiful; he wanted to help her.

"It's not that. I just need someone to talk to," she said. "Please, let me in." Sheila looked down the hallway, as if she was afraid of being caught talking to David.

David opened the door and let Sheila into his room. As she passed him, he was aroused by the scent of perfume and the fresh smell of her skin.

"David, ever since I first saw you this morning, I've wanted to see you privately," Sheila said.

David's hands trembled. He wasn't usually nervous around women, but the attraction that he had for Sheila was overwhelming. Attraction was not all that he felt; from the depths of his subconscious was a voice telling him that this was wrong. Still, he was flattered by Sheila's words; she thought that he was desirable, and she was willing to risk a confrontation with Eric to be with him.

"The way you stood up to Eric today was awesome," she said. "Not many people

have the guts to deny him his wishes.” She moved toward David, and stopped just inches from him, her eyes looking intensely into his.

David was mesmerized by her eyes. His heart pounded. He took Sheila by the waste and kissed her. She responded, roughly returning David’s kiss. They embraced tightly. David closed his eyes; the Divine voice within him was loud. It was wrong to kiss Sheila. To allow this to happen, to allow Sheila to seduce him into her world, would be to regress to a past that he did not want to recreate. What the Administrator and Victor said about Eric, Sheila and their friends was true; their egos were fueled through their human and material conquests; David would be another victory for them. For him, it would be to lose the equilibrium that he was creating, equilibrium in the true reality instead of lies. This was wrong. He remembered the Administrator’s warning: “sin comes in the form of beauty”.

David pushed Sheila away.

“What’s wrong, David?” she said. She pushed David up against the bed, trying to force him down. Her aggressiveness excited him, but he resisted.

“No,” David said, moving away from the bed.

“David, you can’t resist me. You’re not strong enough.” Sheila said, moving toward him again.

“Stay away from me,” said David. “I am strong enough. I’ve got strength that you couldn’t dream of.”

Sheila stepped toward him, but she was halted by an invisible force. She struggled to come closer to David, but she was unable. She was pushed back, toward the door. The door opened by itself, and Sheila was pushed out into the hallway.

“Stop it,” she said. Her voice became shrill. “You can’t do this to me.”

Amazed, David went to the door and watched as Sheila moved toward Eric’s room.

“Nooo,” she wailed, as if in pain.

Sheila was pushed into Eric’s room, and the door closed behind her. David stared into the empty hallway. He started to close his door, but he froze when he heard sounds

—sounds of lovemaking - coming from across the hall, from Victor’s room. David was shocked. Had they gotten to Victor? There was no way that they could win him to their side.

David ran across the hall and tried to turn Victor’s doorknob. At first, it wouldn’t move. David concentrated hard. He had to save Victor. Using all of his strength, David finally turned the knob, and the door opened. He entered the room and saw that Victor was under the covers with a woman. David was crushed. This man that had seemed so wise and invincible in the strength of his convictions was a hypocrite, sleeping with the enemy. David didn’t recognize the woman, but surely Victor was being seduced. Victor said that we should love our enemies, but David did not believe that this was what he meant. He was giving in to his passion, feeding his ego.

David ran out of the room and slammed the door. He had nowhere to turn. Something ominous was going to happen in the Home. David knew it. All of the signs were there. He ran down the hall to the locked door that separated the administration area from the patients’ rooms. He banged on the door.

“Help us,” he said loudly. He didn’t want to draw attention to himself, but wanted help badly.

The Administrator came down the stairs that led to the second floor, where the Founder lived. David could see that she hadn’t been sleeping. She was fully dressed in her white uniform, and her eyes were alert as she opened the door. David did not see her turn a key; it was as if she willed the door to open.

“Settle down, David,” the Administrator said. “Everything is all right.”

“No,” said David. “You don’t understand.”

“Shhh,” whispered the Administrator. “Let’s go to your room. We don’t want to disturb the others.”

The Administrator led David down the hall and they went into his room.

“I know what happened tonight, David,” said the Administrator, “you resisted Sin. You listened to the Divine Voice and avoided actions that would have made you feel

guilt and remorse. You're making progress; if you had fallen into Sheila's trap, and ignored what you knew to be right, you would have regressed to their level."

"I think I'm the only one who resisted," David said, "They got to Victor. Something evil is happening here."

"Something will happen here tonight, but you don't have to worry. You have chosen to follow the true path. Have faith, and the Divine Voice and the grace of God will guide you."

"I don't have any faith," cried David. "Victor's ruined! If anyone here was good, it was Victor."

"Wait a minute," the Administrator said, taking David's hand to calm him down. "You don't know that he's ruined."

"But his ego," David said. "He's giving in to his desires, he's a sinner."

"David, you need to understand Divine Action. Tonight, you were tempted by desire and passion to ignore your intuition—your inner voice. That Divine Voice guides all who listen. You overcame your desires; you transcended the finite boundaries of your ego and for a moment you united with the Divine. You acted in conformity not to the passion of the fleeting moment, but to the Divine Act. The Divine Act is the action that is in harmony with the Divine Reality, not just our ego-reality

"Divine Acts do not exclude acts of sentiment and passion. You may not understand the actions of a person who is living on a different level of reality. You may see from a more limited perspective. What may be harmful to you may be a Divine Act for someone else.<sup>1</sup> The act that is borne from our Divine center, which speaks to us through our intuition, is positive, and it is accompanied by the joy of being in harmony with the Infinite.

"David, you made the right choice by listening to your inner voice. You maintained your equilibrium in the Divine. Victor is doing the same. He is acting from his Divine center, and although his act is one of passion, it is willed through his intuition. For him, it is not a sin."

## Evil

David wanted to believe the Administrator, but he was still disturbed by Victor's behavior; he was not sure if Victor had been converted. The Administrator said goodbye to David and she walked out of his room and down the hallway, toward the front of the building. David looked after her for a moment. When the Administrator reached the point where the heavy door should have been, there was no door separating the patients from the front area of the Home. David couldn't believe it. He rubbed his eyes to make sure he was seeing clearly. When he opened them again, there still was no door.

David went back into his room and closed the door. He looked at the windows; the bars were gone. He went to the window; no dogs were there to jump up at him, and the security fence was gone. His imprisonment had ended with his change in attitude. He had learned what he had come here for. He could leave the Home.

As David looked out the window, he saw flashes of lightning coming from the sky. Lightning struck the ground just outside the window and the lights in the Home flickered. The moment of the important event had come.

David heard talking from next door. He heard talking in the hallway, too. David heard weapons firing and people screaming. Eric and his gang were on the move, trying to break out of the Home. There were sounds of smashing glass and the pounding of metal on metal; they had broken the windows next door and they were trying to break through the thick steel that kept them in the Home. The sounds turned into a frenzy of screaming, pounding, shooting.

"It's not working!" someone screamed. "We'll never get out!"

David was not afraid. He opened his door and he saw that fires had broken out in some of the rooms down the hallway. He looked across the hall; Victor's door was open, but no one was in the room. David stepped into the corridor, the people were moving as in slow motion, like in a nightmare; they ran from room-to-room, with no purpose except to escape their phantom fears. Their screams were distorted, in a drawn out, low pitch.

David saw Eric running out of the room next door, followed by Sheila, Lorraine, and

Harry. Harry yelled, “We...can’t...break...through...the...metal. We’re...prisoners.”

“Nooooo,” Eric screamed.

David looked toward the front entrance of the building. There was no security door. The way was clear. He walked past the patients’ rooms; some rooms were empty, and in others people tried to break through the illusory steel covers on the windows, pounding with their fists or whatever instruments they could find. The cycle of despair had reached a frenzy; the people who had created their own impenetrable prison were locked in the Home.

David walked past the administration area, and he saw the Founder standing in a doorway, watching the mayhem. David did not get a close look at him because of the smoke, but he perceived that the Founder was smiling.

David heard a voice in his head, “One day the truth will save them, as it has saved you.”

A rush of warm air came from the front doorway, and the front doors of the Home opened. David stepped out of the building and onto the ground outside. Victor was a few feet from David, and the woman with whom Victor had lay was by his side. The man that Victor had earlier escorted out of the dining hall was there too, along with several other people. When David looked back, the Home was gone.

They were standing in the middle of the forest; a light rain had just ended, and David smelled the piney freshness of the redwood and evergreen trees, and he saw the full-moon shining overhead, illuminating everything. They all wondered about what had just happened to them, and they were concerned about the people who had been trapped in the home.

The Administrator appeared from the clearing where the Home had been.

“You made it,” she said.

“Where are we?” asked David.

“You are in a transcendent reality,” replied the Administrator. “You have freed yourselves from your prison. You will see the Divine everywhere, feel it wherever you

go, in the animals, people - in all of your experiences.”

“But what happened to the others?” said the man who was saved by Victor.

“They’re far away from this reality. They are separated from the Divine Truth, and the Source of creation. The further you get from the Source, and the truth, the more fear, and suffering you feel. Evil exists only in the farthest reaches of existence,” the Administrator said. “They will remain in their prisons of ego, sin, and evil, until they know the truth.”

“Why did the Founder let this happen to them? Why was he smiling?” asked David.

“The Founder was smiling because he was sending his Goodness and Love to all of the people in the Home. Their separation from Him is only in their minds. The Founder did not force those people to live as they do, but he allows it because all human possibilities must exist, and human beings are free to choose their own possibilities. When they see the goodness and love that is in all things, they will stand, as you do, in true freedom.”

David was tired, but he was excited to be liberated, at last. He turned and walked down the road, away from the Home. He walked for several miles, until he reached his car, in the same spot where he had left it. The left front tire was not flat. David got in the car, started the ignition, and turned back in the direction from which he had come. He was going home to Alison and his life in the city, but this time with a new attitude.

David had learned that the Divine Reality was where he stood at any given moment. He learned that his intellectual intuition would guide him to a reality in which the anger, fear, and resentment that he had carried with him for many years could be left behind. He knew that he was human, and he would make mistakes because he could not see the Infinite Truth through his human eyes, but if he listened closely to his intuition, he would be guided to happiness. In fact, happiness was where he stood at any given moment. When he could break through the bars and walls of his ego-reality, he could see the world as it really was.

When David returned to Santa Rosa, to his old job and his life with Alison, he had a new perspective on freedom. He was free when his actions, thoughts, and emotions—his life—was in harmony with the Truth. When he was conscious and aware, he could sense

when his environment or his personality was leading him toward imprisonment.