

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

“I

’m glad we didn’t try to go all the way around,” I said as we walked up the steps of our side porch. I didn’t bother going into the house. Instead, I settled into my favorite outdoor chair and propped my throbbing foot up on the matching ottoman.

“I’ll get your journal,” volunteered Karl as he reached for the handle of the screen door. “Is it up beside the bed?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Thanks! I appreciate it.” The door slammed behind Karl and I leaned back, closing my eyes and enjoying the warm earthy smells carried by the breeze. The sunlight painted an orange sheer across the backs of my eyelids. *It’s like night and day*, I thought to myself as I considered the enormous healing we’d just experienced.

“Thank You, thank You, thank You,” I said out loud, grateful that my prayers had been answered.

Karl opened the screen door and leaned out, one foot in the kitchen and one foot on the porch. “Here,” he said, handing me my journal. “Want a drink before I come out?”

“OK, sure!” I replied, grabbing the journal. Karl disappeared back inside. Flipping the journal open, I searched for my entry from Easter Sunday. *Just last night, I was sitting in bed feeling lonely and scared, I thought, wondering how everything had fallen apart between us. What made me go back and read everything I’d written since Easter? And how could I have recorded all the weird synchronicities of the past few weeks and not put them together?* I shook my head, shocked and troubled by the way I’d turned my back on the signs I’d so clearly seen along the way.

Startled, I gasped when Karl opened the door with a bang of his hip against the latch. “A little jumpy there?” he asked, laughing and handing me a tall purple glass that he’d filled with ice and lemonade. He took a sip from his turquoise one and set it on the glass-topped table in front of him. “Let me hear it,” he demanded good naturedly.

I took a deep breath. “OK,” I began. “I only put this all together last night,” I explained. “I was sitting in bed, writing in my journal and pretty much wondering how everything could be falling apart around me. Even Ellen has withdrawn and is only coming around when she gets spooked or is feeling bad about things and wants to be cheered up. And you know how we’ve been,” I added. “It’s been awful . . .”

“It has,” Karl interrupted, agreeing with me. “I’ve really missed you, Lis. I’m sorry.” I could feel his sincerity wrapping around me and holding me close.

“I’m sorry too,” I admitted. “I wish I could have seen what was happening sooner.” I took a sip of lemonade. “Anyway,” I continued, “nobody’s really been around for me to talk to about the things that I’ve been seeing. And dreaming. So it seems as though I kind of wrote them down and then forgot about them.” I shook my head, puzzled. “It’s just so strange that I would forget like that . . .” I said, my voice trailing off as I tried to make sense of my lapse. I brought myself back to the present with a shake of my head. “But last night, for some reason, I went back and read all my journal entries since Easter weekend.” I looked at Karl, squinting as I tried to focus on him in

the bright sunlight. "I was blown away," I said seriously.

"What? What?"

"First of all, you remember what we pretty much figured out on Easter Sunday, don't you? I mean, about psychic attack and everything?"

"Yeah. Of course I do. We smudged . . ." he began.

"Yeah, we smudged," I said. "But not very often after the first couple of days. And we certainly didn't pick up on the fact that, after a few days of not smudging, we were starting to feel angry at each other for no apparent reason, did we?"

"N-n-no," he admitted reluctantly.

"And I don't know about you but, as far as I'm concerned, as the days and weeks have gone by since my fall I've been feeling more and more fear, too. Not about anything specific, either. Just every once in a while, like as I'm driving to the grocery store, or reading a story to Max, I'll be walloped by a sudden, gut-wrenching fear in the pit of my stomach. As soon as I would feel it I'd immediately try to ignore it—and forget about it. But luckily I mentioned it in my journal several times."

Karl nodded in agreement, and I took another sip of my lemonade.

"That's how my anger toward you would hit me!" he said in amazement. "It's like I was being sent anger and you were being sent fear."

"You're right! I didn't realize, last night, that you'd been going through the same thing! That makes all of this make even more sense!" I said excitedly. "Last night, I just realized that I've been indulging in fear and anger, and getting more and more separated from you and Ellen, and I didn't even *recognize* that this is all the stuff that I'd just learned is careless and unsafe behavior. My God, it was only Easter when I learned how dangerous it is to indulge in those kind of negative thoughts!" I looked at Karl, shaken by my carelessness. "How could I have forgotten so quickly—and so completely?"

Karl returned my gaze but I could tell he was thinking about what I was saying, putting it all together for himself.

"But that's not all," I continued. "I just threw myself into my work, despite my injuries. I pretended the fall never happened. And you went along with it."

"I was running scared too," Karl admitted softly.

"I know," I said. "I'm not blaming you. I'm just observing how we each played our parts in effectively denying what was right before our eyes."

"Mm," Karl murmured, grimacing in distaste.

"And isn't it interesting that I haven't heard from Beth since that conversation on my birthday? She was going to call me the next week, she said, because she was so interested in getting together." I paused as I realized just how long it had been since I'd had any contact whatsoever with Beth or the others. "And there hasn't been any communication from Catherine, either. Not one word."

"That's OK by me," Karl said with a quick smile.

"Me too, actually," I admitted. "But something's going on here, Karl. We haven't submitted any other essays or coursework to her since our meeting in January at Beth's house. It's the beginning of May now, and we're supposed to be completing the course requirements by June. Isn't this total silence from our teacher odd? And she's psychic, clairvoyant! We know that to be true. Don't you think she probably has at least an inkling that I fell — and that I nearly died?"

Karl shifted in his seat uncomfortably. "You don't think that she—?" he cut himself off, not wanting to even give voice to his thought.

"I don't want to think it, Karl. The prospect is simply appalling." I stopped talking and just sat a moment, staring as a redheaded woodpecker furiously attacked a spot on the maple tree twenty feet away from me. "I honestly can't imagine that, knowing what she knows, she would deliberately choose to wish harm on me—or us—or anyone, for that matter. Can you?" I looked at Karl, fervently wishing he'd think of an alternative scenario that would explain our teacher's behavior.

"I don't know, Lis," he said, obviously as disturbed by this possibility as I was.

"How many times over the past couple of years have we heard Catherine repeat the warning that 'with knowledge comes responsibility?' She knows the danger of abusing power and knowledge and energy! She's lectured over and over again on the Universal Law that states that 'what you put out will come back to you ten times over.' And she has *always* stressed that the responsibility to maintain personal integrity and the highest standards is even greater if you hold yourself out as a teacher of truth!"

Neither of us said a word as we sat there contemplating the unthinkable.

"I don't want to see this, Karl. I don't want to think that Catherine could turn."

"Well, is this it? Is there anything else that's brought you to this conclusion?" I could tell he didn't want to believe it either.

"Yeah, there's more. About ten days after my fall I had a dream. I wrote it down as soon as I woke up, which was something like 4:00 a.m. or so," I said, turning the pages of my journal to locate the entry, and then reading aloud:

"I am driving down my parents' driveway. When I get to the bottom, I see a mountain lion out in the field ahead of me, lying down, but looking at me. The next thing I know, I've turned left and I'm suddenly walking down the road toward the neighbor's house. The field to my left is filled with lions, most of them either sitting or lying down. They roar ferociously at me and I'm afraid. But then I roar right back at them and I know I am safe."

I looked up at Karl.

"Interesting . . ." he commented. "But what's the significance?"

"At first I thought that it was basically a message—that if I'm afraid, I need only to roar back at those who are frightening me and I'll be safe."

"That makes sense," Karl said, nodding his head. "I get it."

"It seemed timely, too, you know? Just give it right back to them. Stand up for myself."

"Right."

"But then I looked up Mountain Lion in the Medicine Cards," I said, putting my journal on the table beside me.

"What did it say?" Karl asked.

"I only wrote down the parts that seemed to apply to me and this dream," I began, "but I can go inside and get the Medicine Card book and read you the whole thing if you want." I started to get up.

"No, that's OK," he said. "Read me what you have. I want to hear it."

"OK." I cleared my throat. "Mountain Lion stands for leadership," I said, looking at Karl.

"Mountain Lion can be a very difficult power totem for you to have, because it places you in a position to be a target for the problems of others. You could be blamed for things going wrong, or for always taking charge when others cannot. You could become the perfect justification for

the insecurities of others. Mountain Lion medicine involves lessons on the use of power in leadership. The use and abuse of power in a position of influence are part of this great cat's medicine."

I looked up at Karl pointedly and read that sentence again slowly. "Then get this," I said.

"If Mountain Lion has come to you in dreams, it is a time to stand on your convictions and lead yourself where your heart takes you."

Can you believe that? I nearly fell over when it specifically talked about Mountain Lion coming to me in my dreams."

"That really is something," Karl agreed. "But the part about the use and abuse of power in a position of influence," Karl paused. "That's so on point . . . it's uncanny."

"And then I forgot about it! Blip! It was out of my consciousness as fast as it came. You were traveling, so I couldn't tell you that morning, and then when you got home that night," my voice trailed off as I tried to recall why I hadn't told him that evening. "Oh, I don't know, I think you may not have gotten home until late, and then you either fell asleep right after you ate or we just weren't talking to each other. Then, just yesterday, I came across that article again."

"What article?"

"The one that was in Yoga Journal."

"Yoga Journal?" Karl asked, sounding perplexed.

"Yeah, just a second," I said as I slowly got out of my chair. "Elaine let me bring it home a couple of weeks ago, remember? Let me get it." I hobbled into the kitchen, found my briefcase, and took out the magazine, returning to the porch.

"You got it at Elaine's?" Karl asked, referring to our friend, a massage therapist who had been doing therapeutic touch and some light massage on my battered body. "Oh yeah!" he said, finally. "Now I remember!"

"You've got to read this again," I said, handing him the magazine. "I think the synchronicity of having this article surface again, right in my face, pushed me over the edge. It made me realize that we have to seriously consider the possibility that Catherine has decided to play for the other team."

Karl laughed a little nervously at my attempt to make a joke. This wasn't funny; both of us knew it. But again, it just seemed impossible. This had to be a bad dream.

I sat back in my chair and closed my eyes while Karl re-read the article. My brain was tired; I didn't want to think about any of this stuff anymore. I tried focussing my attention on the birds singing in the trees surrounding the house, and faintly heard the chatter of Daniel and Max's Saturday morning cartoons filtering out from the living room.

Eventually, Karl looked up from the magazine. "This is disgusting," he said, grimacing. "I remember it now. Discrimination and discernment. It's so incredibly ironic. Catherine always emphasizes the importance of listening to our internal knowing above all else. How many times did she tell us that if something doesn't feel right or sound right, we can always vote with our feet and walk out? How many times did she lecture us about the importance of using discrimination in our search for spiritual truth and exercising discernment in deciding whether to believe anything we are taught?"

"I know," I said. "That's what makes this so hard. It's like we're being asked to use the very same tools she drilled into us as part of our metaphysical education to decide to walk away from

her.”

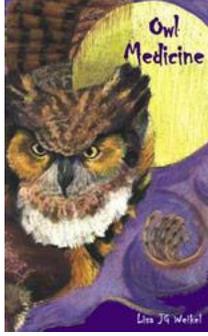
“But we can’t judge it, Lisa. You know that,” Karl said gently. “You read about the teachers in this article and it’s not like anybody is saying that the teachings that made the person popular and powerful to begin with are a bunch of crap. Some of these spiritual teachers have had a pretty profound and positive impact on a lot of people,” he said. “It looks like the power just gets to them eventually, because they’re human. They’re not perfect. Somehow or other they end up thinking that Universal Laws don’t apply to them and that they can bend or break them every once in a while and get away with it.”

“You’re right,” I agreed. “It’s not for us to judge. They may have come into this life precisely to experience the lessons involved in facing the temptations that power provides. Who knows? They *may* have mastered all the other facets of living a human life . . . but just have this one little wrinkle to overcome.” A profound sense of acceptance filled my heart. I didn’t have to understand why this was happening or why certain decisions were being made by our teacher. Maybe the whys weren’t for me to know. I just needed to honor what I was seeing. Believe in myself. “But the students who willingly give away their power, or allow their teachers to take their power without question, are also learning a lesson. They’re learning the hard way that, no matter what, the ultimate responsibility for their safety lies with themselves.”

“Exactly. It’s all about paying attention and personal responsibility.” He looked at me a moment, then stood up. “I love you,” he said, leaning over and giving me a kiss. “I’m sorry I’ve been so difficult. Thanks for writing all this stuff down. I’m sure I never would have put it together if we hadn’t talked it out like this.”

“I’m just glad we finally talked. I love you, too.”

“Well, we’re in this together, you know. This is a wild ride, isn’t it?”



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