

HOW VERY PECULIAR

*I met one day upon the stair
A little man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today,
I wish that he would go away.*

apologies to Hugh Hearn

You would be wiser to stick your head into a gunpowder magazine with a lit torch than to play with psychic phenomena.

apologies to Talbot Mundy

The story I am about to tell is true as far as I know. The woman to whom the experience happened was a good friend of my mother's when I was in college. She (I will call her Marianne) told me the story at my mom's request.

I should point out two things before continuing. First, although I didn't spend a lot of time around her, I recall Marianne as being intelligent, sensible, and caring; a generally down to earth human being. Professionally, she was a teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District and, like my mother, had an administrative credential which allowed her to act as her school's principal whenever the real principal was not on campus. In short, she was a woman with a considerable amount of professional standing and responsibility; a woman who was certainly no flake.

Second, from our conversation it became evident that she had known since early childhood that she was different, realizing as a teen that she was what some would call a natural psychic. She didn't talk about it because she had learned from experience that people wouldn't understand. She had absolutely no control over it, and although it occasionally surfaced in other ways, it usually took form through premonitions--flashes of insight about people or situations that were often so apparently off the wall that not even she believed they had a chance of being or becoming true. Yet over the years she

had come to find that her insights were nearly always right--she really could see into individuals and circumstances in ways that were not normal.

So much for the preface, on with the tale.

Marianne had been divorced earlier and, after the divorce, was casting around for something exciting to occupy her mind. She talked to her friends at school. The general consensus was that she needed a hobby. She had always loved reading, so she began reading books written by people who were in the fledgling New Age community. It was comforting to find that there were other people who had the same kind of insights as herself--comforting to learn that she wasn't as alone as she had thought. She also found it interesting to read about other psychically-oriented phenomena that seemed to exist.

During that period, one book in particular caught her attention. It was written by a woman who claimed to have generated the book through automatic writing.¹ The entity supposedly "dictating" the book wanted people on this side to know that death isn't a terrible, scary thing, and that the other side was quite nice. It talked about the need to be a thoughtful, loving individual, and how qualities built into the self on the earth level had a lot to do with one's situation on the other side. In short, it was a very hopeful, upbeat discussion of existence after death.

Having been inspired by the book Marianne decided it was time to see how real *her* psychicness was, and to find a way to use whatever she had in ways that would be helpful to others. She hadn't the foggiest idea how to start, so she went with the old stand-by, a Ouija board.²

¹ It is believed by some that under certain circumstances an entity on the other side can overshadow a psychically sensitive person to the extent of being able to control the movements of the host's body. Automatic writing is written material generated by a ghostie via this process. The host sits comfortably until the take-over, then writes. The claim is that the individual experiencing the invasion does not know what is being written at the time. Whether that be the case, who knows? The point is that if there are entities on the other side and if overshadowing is possible, automatic writing is also a possibility.

² When most people think of Ouija boards, they think of parlor games. You know the story: a group of friends on a dark and stormy night sitting around a dining room table making semi-concealed booga booga moves to try to fake one another out. Most people aren't particularly sensitive in a psychic way; nobody in his or her right mind would expect such a situation to get credible results.

But as was the case with automatic writing, people who have thought sensibly about this kind of thing maintain that a Ouija board can be used as a psychic tool. Certainly, the individuals involved are motivating the puck to move around the table--who would believe otherwise--but if psychically sensitive people are involved, the impetus for the puck's motion *could* be motivated by an overshadowing entity on the other side in a manner something like that of automatic writing.

I should probably mention that when I heard this story, I was a relatively normal 23 year old kid who was still in college (my electrical engineering program took five years). As such, I possessed a tremendously inflated estimate of the rightness of my own views about the world. To say that Marianne's story didn't fit into that view was an understatement. What struck me as she talked, though, was that as strange as her story seemed to me, given my relatively conventional beliefs, she definitely wasn't a drugged out, mentally disenfranchised nut. Neither did she appear to be a hare-brained nit-wit whose over productive imagination had a tendency of taking her off into never-never land. Her sincerity and sense of humor coupled with her obvious fear that I might think her crazy made me wonder: was she the fool for trusting her instincts and personal experiences, for being open minded and inquisitive about the nature of *humankind* and *consciousness* and the possibility of *after-death experience*, or was I the fool for taking my know-it-all stance when, in fact, I really knew nothing about the possibilities? It was an unsettling question to consider.

Marianne practiced with the board for two or three weeks, each time blanking her mind totally before beginning. She knew that her muscles were providing the movement on the Ouija board; she wanted to be sure it wasn't her mind alone doing the spelling. She said it didn't take long before she, indeed, began to feel the presence of "something" other than herself involved in the process.

Who? Marianne's mother had died when she was a very small girl. As hokie as it sounds, Marianne thought it was her mother. It wasn't pure caprice; her conclusion came from the feeling she got when engaging that "something" and from the general tenor of the answers she received from her queries. She naturally asked probing questions about her childhood, some of which she hadn't answers. Everything that came back was credible. This continued for two weeks until one day when the message was short. "Mom" it wrote out. "This is dangerous. I'm coming no more!" Marianne was understandably taken-back, but asked a few more questions nevertheless. She got no response, so she quit.

That unsettling message stopped Marianne for a few days, but curiosity and fascination with the possibilities drew her back. In starting up again, it didn't take long before she was getting coherent responses from the board again. She would ask questions to test what was coming through; some answers were reasonable, some pure gibberish. It wasn't possible to tag down exactly what was going on, but she persevered.

Approximately, five weeks after she began, Marianne was sitting at the Ouija board when she got the eerie feeling she could tell what the board was going to do before it did it. Of course, that sounds ridiculous. She was ultimately the board's motivator, spooks or no, so even if there were entities around one would expect her to be at least subconsciously aware of what was about to take place.

It wasn't that simple, though. It was different. For the first, time she began to feel that she was making a tangible, mental link with something other than herself. It was a bit frightening; she initially mistrusted her perceptions. But along with the trepidation, there was an urgency to push on.

She still wasn't sure if the other side existed--not sure beyond a shadow of a doubt--but as this strange feeling grew she became sure of one thing. If it *did* exist and she *was* sensing the presence of conscious entities on the other side, she felt more and more that she could focus her mind and push through the veils that separated her from them.

What's more, that is exactly what she did.

Marianne quite literally pried open the doors into the next level--the inner worlds. She found that she could make a direct, mental contact with entities on the other side whenever she chose to "tune in," as she put it, with nothing more than her mind. And in connecting, she could communicate with them just as she would with a real person standing next to her.

It wasn't as though she was *imagining* people were talking to her. She said later that it was just like holding a conversation with someone over the phone: nobody was there in the room with her but she could hear a voice just as though someone was. The only difference was that the sensing organs were not her ears. She was having a spontaneous, coherent, verbal conversation with "someone else" through a direct, telepathic link in her mind. She was fully aware that most people would think her daft if they knew what she was doing, but she stuck with it and became not only secure but comfortable with her newly-found ability.

Over the weeks, there were a number of entities she came to recognize and make semi-regular contact with. One special male voice came through quite often, and she soon began to think of him as her guardian. Whenever she was having troubles and

wanted help, she would focus her mind at him, tune in, and he would come through. She would also tune in to whoever or whatever happened to be around whenever she had nothing better to do--a kind of amusement of sorts. She said that one day while passing a hearse in a funeral procession on the freeway, she tuned in and heard an old man's voice say, "Gee, this is amazing." Tuning in became something she did quite regularly.

There was one other peculiarity about her conversations with her guardian. After a few minutes of dialogue, the conversations would often be interrupted by the arrival of entities who were not particularly savory. She and the guardian came to call them "the bad guys." Marianne would always close down communications by *tuning out* whenever her guardian warned of their coming.

Regardless of the bad guys, Marianne had a wonderful new toy. She was as sane as you or me. She taught her school classes with the vim and vigor that had made her one of the best teachers in her district. She would still sit with friends and discuss politics, books, the newest plays and sports. And when people were in need, she would listen to their problems or take action to help, whatever was appropriate.

She hadn't changed outwardly at all. But inwardly, she was different. She had control of her mind in a way she had never dreamed possible--she could tune into the other side at will. It was as though someone had opened up a whole new world to her . . .

On a cool February night a month-and-a-half after her first contact, Marianne went to see a friend in Newport Beach. Coming home around 11:00 PM on a relatively empty freeway, she decided to tune in to see who might be around. Almost immediately, a pleasant but unfamiliar male voice came through to greet her.

Marianne was sorry it was not her guardian, but she always enjoyed meeting and talking to new individuals. They talked for a considerable time before she asked, "Do you know my guardian?"

"Oh, yes," replied the voice, "I know your guardian."

She was delighted. After a few more minutes of conversation she asked, "How long have you been friends with my guardian?"

The man's tone changed perceptibly. "You've misunderstood, my dear. I didn't say I was *friends* with your guardian. I only said I knew him."

The change of tone made the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end. Guardedly, carefully, she formed the next question in her mind. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know?" he said in an inquisitive voice.

Then in an almost inaudible whisper he added, "I'm one of the bad guys."

And with that he shattered the relative peace with the most explosive, sinister, hysterical laughter she had ever heard.

If you can imagine a hell on earth, you can imagine what life was like for her over the next few months. Not realizing it, she had flung open the psychic doors within herself, doors meant by nature to be closed and locked, and the dregs of the underworld now had complete access to her. Trying to contact her guardian didn't help.

At night she would be awakened by terrifying screams. Entities would come and speak in kind ways, only to turn like a flash and pour out hateful, venomous filth. Beings who were obviously in deep distress would come regularly and plead for help. Whole groups of voices would descend on her to hold wild, loud, angry conclaves in which she was the focus of their rage and malice. Her mind was like a giant, empty room ready to be filled at a moment's notice with anyone who wished to invade.

For two full months she had no choice but to coexist with the most deranged of souls. They could come and go in her mind at will as long as she was not focused on something that demanded her full attention. Once that focus was no longer required and she lapsed into the mentally slack state that most of us exist in for a fair portion of our lives, they would be back. She was, in short, completely out of control. She could not close the doors--she could not tune out . . . and it didn't take long before she began to fear that she had quite literally lost her mind.³

Trying to contact her guardian didn't help. Once all hell broke loose, he never came again (I wondered later whether Marianne's so-called guardian was really a *no-good* whose purpose was to lull her into a false sense of security, all the while loosening up her ability to close the doors).

As she sloshed through this cesspool of abuse and torment, she began to mentally search her memory for anything she had read that might help. She knew she could not rely on contemporary psychologists or psychiatrists. Conventional medical people would

³ For those of you who are afraid of the dark, understand that Marianne was quite unusual in her psychic perceptions AND had actively opened the way for her problem. Although drinking and drugs can thin out the auric sheathing, making it easier for a partial overshadowing, the chances of your being overshadowed a la Marianne are almost zero.

almost certainly conclude that she was crazy and place her in an institution where she would never get the help she needed. There had to be another way.

Marianne's salvation was found in her library. She remembered reading in book by Jesse Stern about a woman who, as far as he could tell, was responsibly knowledgeable about psychic problems but wasn't at all interested in attracting public attention (the woman, it turned out later, was not the least bit amused at being included in Stearn's book). He also included the city in which the woman lived. Marianne got hold of the appropriate phone book and found the woman's name and phone number.

It took two to three weeks for her new-found friend--I'll call her L--to help her back into control. Marianne was told to "visualize golden-white light flooding into the aura while pulling up the auric shielding that exists around all of us as a kind of natural protection between our waking mind and the other levels--the inner worlds." She was to do this four or five times a day.

She was also instructed to command the highest in her--L called this her *high mind*--to close the doors into the other levels and to instruct her sub-conscious mind to stand guard over those doors no matter what the inquisitive "personal self" might say or do.

"Part of the problem," she was told, "is with the personal mind's fascination with psychic phenomena. Even though such experiences are often terrifying, they are also titillating to the personal self. In part, it is that fascination that holds the doors open."

Lastly, L said she had friends with whom she meditated on a regular basis, and that she would have them focus a healing, cleansing, fortifying thought toward her (Marianne) to help her succeed in her efforts. Marianne followed the instruction religiously and, with L's help, was finally able to close out the voices.

I was told this story three years after the fact. At the time, Marianne was still mentally cleansing her aura with white light and pulling up her auric shielding three times a day. She hadn't had a recurrence, but the episode was so vivid in her mind that she was taking no chances.

There are a number of questions that naturally arise whenever I tell this story:

--Is the story true?

As it wasn't my experience, I have no way of telling for sure. On the one hand, I can't see that Marianne had anything to gain by lying. She was clearly embarrassed talking about the situation; she was visibly concerned that I wouldn't believe her; and as best I could tell she didn't want people-in-general to know what had happened . . . it wasn't as though she was going to sell the story to Hollywood or a publishing house.

On the other hand, who knows . . .

Fortunately for us, none of this speculation is important. What is important is that as far as this Eastern view is concerned, her experience is *not outside of the realm of possibility*.

--Are there people "out there" with similar stories?

I'm not sure about that either. The most recent New Age craze over the last few years has been channeling, and although nobody was talking about such things in the 60's when Marianne was having her thrill, channeling is similar with three *very big differences*. They are:

1.) Assuming the individual isn't a fraud, most channelers go into a trance before "some thing" overshadows and speaks through them. Marianne was wide awake during her experience.

2.) Channelers almost always make a public show of their abilities (if abilities they truly are), complete with expectation of pay for their performance. Marianne would have died if people knew what she had been through.

3.) And lastly, channelers usually attribute, either overtly or by innuendo, spiritual significance to what they are doing.⁴ In Marianne's case, what was coming through was definitely from the dark side.

--It is possible for people who don't want to become channels but who are psychic to develop their psychic abilities in a controlled way?

One of the main attractions to psychic phenomena is that it is a kind of proof. People are afraid of the unknown, especially afraid of death. If a person makes contact

⁴ In a way it is hard to believe that anyone would accept this. When it is time for a spiritual teacher to enter an individual's life, real teachers don't arrive via a trance medium. A highly evolved Being/teacher is not going to monkey with the karma of others in the way channelers seem to do, much less engage in activity that might hook the less astute on psychic phenomena. Given the apparent motivation of most channelers (practically none do it for free), assuming spiritual significance to their activities is really reaching.

with an entity on the other side, that means "the other side" *must exist*. It means the person has seen for himself or herself; that there is more to this place than meets the eye. Touching the other levels gives a person hope and a kind of security one just doesn't get by listening to sermons about heaven and hell.

Nevertheless, there are two big problems associated with psychic development. First, most people have neither the *mental control* (remember the *triangle* meditation?) nor the *purity of motive* (think about the Yama and the Niyama) needed to deal with this kind of development in a clear way. As the East says, *powers come and go with the breeze*. When it is time for the real spiritual powers to open fully in an individual (example: when one can fully exercise compassion in the face of the most demented provocation; when one can fully transmute the most depraved of thoughtforms into something better; when a Being can stand before the most abject negativity and in the deepest of love change that darkness to light by the very power of one's presence), then the lesser abilities--the so-called psychic powers--will naturally open almost as an afterthought. Short-cutting the process by focusing the mind prematurely on these rather pathetic, secondary phenomena does nothing in the long run except reinforce the child's *fascination with phenomena* while additionally inflating the ego to the size of a zeppelin. Whether it is obvious or not, people interested in a true spiritual unfolding have bigger and better things to do with their time.⁵

Second, and even more to the point, forcing open psychic abilities will inevitably have long-range *karmic* repercussions.

Think about it. Assume you do disciplines designed to develop your psychic sensitivity. You follow the disciplines religiously and, after years of effort, you succeed. You can sense the future; you can read other people's intentions; you can astral project; you can hear voices or whatever. You have powers and you have at the time due to your study the knowledge to keep those powers under control.

⁵ Consider the focus suggested by the real Teachers: look to see *where* you are as a human Being; look to see *what* you are; look to see in *what direction* you are going. Examine your attitudes--what are the things that you hold dear and why? How do you treat other people? What it is about the way you deal with life that karmically draws you into experiences that are friction-filled? How do *you* respond to life? Do you spend all your time focusing on how the other guy is the jerk, or do you look to see where *you* are a jerk? In short, if all you get from your efforts and meditations is a little bliss or power, you are shorting yourself mightily. Meditation is useful only if you come out of it a different, *better person*. In a spiritual sense, anything less is failure (temporary failure, but failure none the less).

Being a relatively normal human being, you use your abilities for benevolent or not so benevolent purpose, depending upon the situation, your desires, your whim (hopefully you know your child well enough to know that it almost always claims pure motives even when they're not). So maybe you secretly enjoy the notoriety that comes with being "gifted." You find the attention pleasant; you *like* being different. In short, either consciously or unconsciously your efforts become a monument to the child's *perceived needs and wants*. And what might be the consequences down the line?

There is a fairly good chance that you will come into your next life, or the one after that, or some distant incarnation, as a full-blown psychic. That is, you will bring with you the auric characteristics of someone who has access to those abilities.

Unfortunately, the motivational safeguards that should keep you out of trouble as you exercise these faculties--safeguards that attend the *natural* opening of such abilities--will not be there.

Why? Because you crowbarred the psychic powers open in that previous life. They would not have arisen if you hadn't forced them open in the first place. As such, it's probable that you will have no real control over them this time around because it wasn't right in the first place.

So where will you be? You won't understand why you are the way you are, or how you got that way. You won't be able to focus the abilities, especially if they frighten you. You might hear voices from the other side, or see astral forms, or sense lines of karma and, hence, "see" into the future. You may be super-sensitive in a way that leaves you an emotional noodle--someone who is constantly drained, rung out, wiped out . . . and you won't have a clue as to why (and neither will your family doctor).

In short, you will be thoroughly, psychically messed up . . . and all of it will be your own doing. Karma will have responded to your demands by saying (metaphorically), "It's premature, but you've insisted . . . so EXPERIENCE!"

Bottom line: Is playing with psychic development a good idea? The responsible teachers out of the East say, "Absolutely not!" Sure, it's titillating, but it's additionally dangerous psychologically, emotionally, karmically! As the quote at the beginning of the chapter said, "You would be wiser to stick your head into a gunpowder magazine with a lit torch than to play with psychic phenomena."

Two final points--

First: If skeptics are correct, psychic phenomena is bunk. If the East is correct, it's bloody dangerous. Either way, it isn't something people ought to be fooling around with. The only reason I'm talking about it at all is because the ideas are "out there." Channeling, astral projection, divination and more--it's all being discussed and tinkered with by New Age folks . . . most of whom probably haven't any idea how spooky these mental toys could become under the right circumstance.

Second: Kindly notice how naturally all of this stuff flows from the underlying beliefs that exist within the Eastern philosophies and their attendant metaphysical views. It isn't hocus-pocus if you accept the underlying assumptions.

They are: there exists an all encompassing God-with-a-purpose; a human body, like all bodies, is a vehicle for experience by an evolving bit of God-Awareness; in the case of humankind, Awarenesses have developed to the point where they can learn to deal with *creativity* and *free will* as they exist in matter; *thought* has substance, form, and energy; thought underlies all things; the inner worlds exist; *thought* resides in the inner worlds; the inner worlds is the "place" where humans "go" when the physical body dies; a human's sensitivity to these levels depends upon auric porosity (not spirituality); all manner of psychic phenomena come when Beings "run into" the other levels.

Of the topics outlined above, any one of them has the potential of seeming strange if viewed from an unsympathetic perspective, especially if that perspective doesn't look at *the system* as a whole. Put together, though, the parts fit nicely.

In short, this class is beginning to accomplish what it set out to do: to give you a feel for the Eastern tradition while also giving you some semblance of an idea from whence all these strange New Age ideas have come.

Again, you may not agree with them, but at least you are seeing why people believe in them . . .

