

## Chapter Eight

The ceiling fan in the bedroom whirred overhead, forcing the air around in hot little flourishes. Seth lay on the bed in a T-shirt and frayed pajama bottoms, telling himself, *Just relax. When you've quieted down, you can figure out what to do.* The thought kept him from becoming hysterical, but did nothing to alleviate the dread that overwhelmed him. He sought some rock to cling to that would ground him in reality, but found nothing. The one idea that haunted him was how helpless he was in the face of what he'd seen.

Fatigue and the sticky afternoon heat brought him to the brink of sleep. After drifting in and out of consciousness, he slipped into a river of slumber. The sky was so close he thought he could touch the orange clouds and blue firmament overhead. He soared through the heavens like a disembodied spirit, flying so fast his eyes teared and his stomach reeled. He remained weightless as long as he kept his eyes focused on the horizon. But the instant he looked down, a sickening vertigo seized him, and he spun out of control. Spiraling to earth, he saw not ground, but a swirling vortex below. As he plummeted toward the black maelstrom that opened to receive him, he cried out from the depths of his soul, "Save me, Jesus!" He awoke as he was about to be sucked into the whirlpool. "Save me, Jesus!" he mumbled. "Save me, Jesus!" he continued against his will.

*Where did that come from?*

He lay prone on the bed, astounded that he'd called upon Jesus. Yet his plea had a calming affect; he'd unlocked a door that let in a single ray of light. His intuition told him that if anyone could save him, it was Jesus, not the stern Jewish God who didn't hear anyone's pleas, and who wouldn't necessarily respond if he did. He roused himself and sat against the wooden headboard, surveying the bedroom cluttered with Martin's rumpled clothing. His body flushed hot as he saw himself as the drowned man, an image on some ill-fated Tarot card, who briefly glimpses the Divine and perishes. *Only dying men are desperate enough to open themselves to the Divine. They're blinded by the dazzling light of God and die.* As the drowning man, he would be pulled into the whirlpool just as his arm broke the waves and reached towards heaven.

He relaxed into the damp bedclothes and fell asleep. Keta appeared in his dream holding a carved yak-bone staff with a Yin-Yang medallion at its crest. "Balance is the law of the universe," the guide informed him. "If nothing balanced the disparate forces of nature, the Earth would fly apart and be scattered across the galaxy. The ghost's negative energy has its opposite—God, Goddess, Jesus, Buddha, Allah—whatever you wish to call it. Male and female, good and evil, positive and negative, black and white all exemplify the attraction of polar opposites that hold the world in place. Each extreme balances and defines the other in a perfect equilibrium of opposing energies. In each opposite lies a tiny piece of its inverse, since the inverse determines, through sheer opposition, what it essentially is."

Keta held out a polished black box with a small white dot on its lid. Seth reached out and accepted the gift. He lifted the lid, and in a leap of faith, sought to discover the spark of Divine light that would pull him to higher ground. As he peered inside, the dream faded to nothingness.