

Chapter 1, Enter: Me

I was born July 11th 1963 7.45 a.m. in Copenhagen – this time around. I chose my parents for this life, because we had shared a life in Africa once, where we had not treated each other very well. We needed to work out things between us. This was very welcome information to me in my forties, because most of this life until then I had focused on the difficulties in our relationship rather than the love that was also there.

My mother was only 21 years old and my parents had been married for 6 months when I was born. Those were the good old days before birth control! I know that she was very unhappy and scared about having become pregnant, but I also know that my dad was more than happy to marry her.

My mother was born in 1942. She grew up in a family of three children. They did not have a lot of money or a lot of room. The three girls shared a bunk bed in a two room apartment, and her parents worked hard to make ends meet. Her biggest dream was to be a ballet dancer, but nobody truly considered the recommendations of her ballet teacher. Ballet is a really prestigious career in Denmark with a more than 100 year old tradition. Her parents did not consider it a suitable career for a working class girl short of money, and they didn't have any way to finance it. She was allowed to finish the equivalent of high school, and she would have loved to study further but again there was not enough money for that. When I got in touch with her after her death, she was still talking about her dream of doing something creative with her life. I really hope she gets to make that choice sometime in the future.

She had studied German and English and had trained as an office worker, when she went to Heidelberg in 1962 to learn more German. This is where she met my father. He was Danish too but he was working at the American base in Heidelberg. He had travelled the world, seen very many adventures, and she found him very fascinating. What she didn't realize at the time was that he was very much like the father she couldn't stand.

They had a fling but she decided to break it off as she was going back to Denmark. When he was at the train station to receive her as she arrived in Copenhagen, she melted completely. Very romantic! A few months later she got pregnant, and they decided to get married. They always told me that they would have married anyway, and I believe them. I do wish they hadn't stayed married, but that is another story.

My father was born in 1934. He had chosen some really serious challenges for this life. He was the only child of a mother and father who were dysfunctional, to say the least. From the age of 5 his father used to beat him regularly, sometimes daily I recall him telling me. His parents got divorced at one point but neither of them wanted him to stay with them, so they fought somewhat over that. I think he ended up at an orphanage part of the time.

He told me a lot of stories while I grew up and there is a lot I don't remember anymore. I know that he joined a ship at an early age and once stranded in the USA with no money. This memory of how tough life could be in America never left him. He also lived in Norway at one point, succeeding in bluffing his way in as a waiter in a very posh restaurant. Eventually he became a waiter on an ocean liner, so he actually told me my first stories about Americans long before I ever met any Americans myself.

He told me how he tried to commit suicide when he was around 20 years old (obviously he didn't succeed). He told me how to disarm a shell and how to stop bleeding to death from a shell wound by blocking it with your fist. This he learned when he was stranded with the Fidel Castro guerrilla in Cuba. I remember that if he was sleeping, you should never wake him by touching him. You should only call him to not risk being hit by his reflex defence.

To try and protect me he also told me that I should never trust other people. I should keep my distance because they would only hurt me and let me down. Need I tell you that my parents did not have all that many friends? It took me quite a few years to learn how to make friends, but I never really believed that he was right.

I was pretty lonely as a child. I was always a bit different. Since I was the only child and my parents had no other experience with children, they soon took to talking to me pretty much like an adult. So I was quite precocious. I remember being teased by the other children when I was only in kindergarten. Kids just know these things. They could sense the conflict between wanting to be like everybody else and being proud of being different a mile away.

In school I never wanted to be part of the in-crowd. I never took well to peer pressure. I did have playmates but it was usually whoever was excluded from the popular group at that time. Frankly, I preferred to talk to the guys. We could discuss math assignments and other interesting things, and they didn't try to get me down.

I loved books. Reading was my escape from the world that I never really felt at home in. I could – and still can – dive into a book and completely forget time and place. I studied a lot too since I didn't feel like hanging out with the crowd anyway. I must have been such a pain! Using adult wording. Having adult opinions. Always the teachers pet. Always doing the right things. Always knowing the answer. Always doing my homework. No wonder the other kids didn't like me that much! I wouldn't even have liked me very much. Fortunately we are here to learn and to improve ourselves.

My best friends were my parents. When somebody from school would try and make friends after all, my dad would make sure to warn me against them. Why would I need anybody else but my mom and dad?

One day they weren't there for me anymore, though. When I was 14, my dad had an operation for kidney stones. For some reason this was what finally plunged him into a depression lasting about 15 years. By the time he came up for air, my mother was so worn out with the pressure and strain, that it was her turn to go down.

In addition to these depressions, my dad started having false attacks of kidney stones. Having a kidney stone is apparently one of the most painful inflictions around, so he was either in unbearable pain or stoned for most of those 15 years. He took very strong painkillers in form of pills and injections on a daily basis and became addicted to most of these drugs. My mother started taking a lot of medicine and sedatives for her nerves, and none of them could sleep without sleeping pills.

I remember when I was 16 and she almost died from an accidental overdose. I remember when I was 22 and my dad practically set the house on fire, because he was smoking in his chair, almost unconscious, before he went to bed and dropped the cigarette in the chair. I remember a lot of things.

If you feel the pain in my description of my childhood you are quite right. I so much wished for them to be the people they would have been without the pain and hurt. But somehow I got through. There was love too. They did the best they could. They treated me as an equal. They shared their values and ideas with me. They shared their passions in life with me. They taught me a lot about a lot of things. Through it all I was able to retain empathy and love. I think that is what saved me. I would dull the pain by escaping in my books. I never dulled the pain in any other way. That was another test passed.

Now, this is where you might think that I am going to tell you that I talked to angels. Nope. Not a single tiny little one. I believed in nothing. The whole family was atheist to the core. My dad never liked the established church. Myself I never felt drawn to a God, the need for a life after death, a longing for an explanation. Also I have personal recollection of a past life where I was tried for a witch because I was always criticizing the

bigotry of the small religious society I was living in. I passed the test by dying. I feel strongly that it has not been the only time an established religion had accused me of witch craft. Maybe that explains my resistance to any kind of formal religion. So I was perfectly happy in my little box with the lid closed – well, as happy as could be in a dysfunctional family...

The only small crack was that I was terrified of ghosts but I didn't believe that they existed. I never saw one as a child, but the mere thought scared me so much. One of most stupid things I ever did was read a book with "real" ghost stories. I think I was 16. I slept with the light on for the next two years! I think I must have been involved in some pretty bad witchcraft in some former life. Strangely enough, now that I have met one, they no longer scare me, but it was one of my worries when I started embracing the concept of reincarnation. You can't have souls and not have the spirits.

Ok, so there I was, 16 years old, believing only that we are born and we die. We are responsible for making the most of our lives because we only have this one. And here I am at 44 writing a book claiming to be the Angel of San Francisco. What happened?