

CHAPTER FIVE

Escape From Bondage by Judith Ingram

Having been raised to abide by God's laws, I never considered that I would ever break my vows, yet, when one's mind is so distraught, so utterly destroyed, the pressure of desperation can cause anyone to do anything. And I discovered just how true that was.

When Kenny had got John off the drugs, and drinking less, he was much better to cope with. It was almost like he was the man I knew from so long ago. Kenny spent a lot of time hanging out with us. He was an attractive man with blond hair, blue eyes, and quite tall. One day he brought a few of John's old High School friends around. One of them, Mike, told us about an Indian burial ground his class had found in the El Dorado hills near Placerville, California. Mike had taken an archeology class, and showed us a handful of beads he dug up – beads made from animal bones. As he told the story, it sounded intriguing, and I really wanted to go. The next weekend we dropped Lea Ann off at her grandparents and we all headed out on this mysterious adventure. On the drive, which was more than an hour away, Mike seemed excited to return, hoping to find more beads. The beads he had were quite interesting, some were dyed in a faded red, and one was a beautiful blue glass.

When we got to the area, and parked along the side of the road, we had to cross a bridge, where the river ran down below. We followed a path along the cliff, way back into the wildness. Finally, we reached the site, but it didn't look like anything but mounds of dirt and weeds. We dug around but didn't find anything there, and I had wandered off a bit to explore the area. When I stumbled upon a rock wall, that was very old and falling apart, I felt an eerie vibe ... and I wanted to leave. The wall was made out of big rocks, and looked like it had once been a circle. Something just felt bad there. The guys wanted to stay and continue digging for beads, so I headed back to the car, alone.

I was kind of bummed that I didn't find any Indian beads, but I was very delighted that Mike gave me some of his, in which I made a choker necklace and had hung it around my neck for a while, before stashing it into my keepsake box. They had a special meaning to me, for some strange reason, which later I discovered was not special at all, but rather a curse.

We only saw Mike and the others a few times after that, and one day they stopped coming to see us. But Kenny stayed, and we spent a lot of time with him. Soon thereafter, John started taking drugs again, and he started drinking heavier. Our marriage was getting worse every day, and yet, I managed to find survival in loving my little girl. He didn't spend much time with Lea Ann, and I even began to think John was jealous of her.

John really liked having Kenny around, someone he could shoot the breeze with, talk of old times, and lots of fishing trips. This is when I learned to love fishing, and I enjoyed all the fishing trips we took. Kenny and I grew closer over the months, and at times when John had passed out, Kenny and I found ourselves getting too close. Before I knew it, I felt I was falling in love with him, and he too seemed to feel the same. We started

sneaking moments to hold hands, that led to much more. Eventually, I started sneaking out of the house in the middle of the night, while Lea Ann was at grandmas, and John was passed out. I would drive a half hour to Kenny's apartment, where we made love, and I snuck back in unnoticed – though I was always fearful he would be awake and catch me.

The affair went on for months before Kenny said he wanted to end it. I was deeply hurt, especially when he announced he had a girlfriend, and a while later they got married. That's when Kenny walked out of our lives, although John had seen him a few times, I could never bring myself to be in his presence ... he tore my heart apart, and I had to pretend otherwise, although I was crying inwardly. I really hated him after that. I could not tell anyone, keeping my secret for as long as I could.

We had moved again, this time into a neighborhood duplex. I really hoped the change would improve our situation. It was then that I brought up the idea to have another child. I had hoped if I could give John a son, he would be happy and our perfect family would grow. He had said, a time or two, that he wished he had a son. I remember the disappointing look on his face when he was told 'it's a girl.' He had his heart set on a boy named Lee Joseph. After talking to him about it, he was in agreement. It wasn't long after, I stopped taking my birth control, and I was pregnant. My focus was on having a boy, and a boy is all we acknowledged. Everything was blue and yellow.

John and I were well into three and half years of marriage when I conceived my second child. It felt, by then, a decade. So much had gone on in our life in such a short time. I just wanted life to settle down, be content, and raise my children. And, things seemed to be going okay, up to a point, though not much had changed with John. But as long as I said nothing about his drinking, we kept from having any big fights about it. He was king of the household, and that was constantly being made clear. And, as long as I didn't speak of the Bible, or mention the Lord, we got along fine.

Lea Ann was also three and half by then, and she was full of life. It was a joy taking her with us everywhere ... and it seemed John was finally embracing fatherhood. John seemed to really enjoy having his little girl to show off, while bragging about his new son on the way. Lea Ann really enjoyed attending picnics at the river, dinner at friends who had kids, camping trips, and even a cross country vacation to Death Valley, but mostly she loved being in her daddy's arms.

John was put back on day shift at the railroad which left me with a lot of free time at home alone with my little girl. I used to put Lea Ann in her stroller and take walks to the park and the playground. I watched her splash around in the backyard kiddy pool and play with her dolls. She seemed very happy that she was going to have a new brother, maybe a sister, I told her, explaining how we really didn't know, we wouldn't know until the baby was born. She said she would like a baby sister, too.

One day I was suddenly caught up in a moment of faith, and I began to realize how far I had drifted from God. I reflected back to how far into darkness I had fallen. Spiritually, I

felt depleted, and I became consumed with reconnecting to the Lord. I found myself praying again. I missed my Bible, and decided to get it back out. I would only read it when John wasn't around. I prayed a lot, I prayed that our life would be fulfilled with the son John wanted. That was the only hope I had to save my family.

As time went on my pregnancy got harder and harder, and that meant little to no sex for John - around mid-term - and from there on. His behavior was getting strange. He would come home very late from work refusing to explain his whereabouts. Then one day, and the entire night, he didn't come home at all. Again, he refused to offer any explanation. I suspected he was 'getting it' elsewhere, but I dared not make such an accusation without proof.

I was about five months pregnant when John didn't return from work that day, that night, that next day and next night. On the third day when he still hadn't returned, I started calling around trying to find him. I didn't want to alarm his folks, but on the third day I decided I better let them know. They put out a missing person report, and contacted his job at the railroad. He hadn't been to work in two days. We all were getting worried by then, and then, on that third day, late in the day, he walked into the duplex as if nothing had happened.

His parents were there when he came in, and they were very upset and demanded an explanation. He said he fell asleep in his car and was sleeping there the entire time, saying he thought someone slipped him drugs and was knocked out. He refused to answer any other questions, and got defensive when pressured, cussing and swearing at them. He then went straight to the bedroom and shut the door. His parents then left, taking Lea Ann with them at my request. I knew he was lying and I feared he was with another woman, but I wasn't going to say anything, at least not then. When I went into the bedroom, he was already crashed.

We didn't talk about it again until one day we got into a fight over him getting ready to go somewhere, and when I asked where, he said the store. I knew he was lying, watching him getting all spruced up, and in that moment of uncontrolled emotions, I boldly accused him of having an affair. He said I was crazy, as he went into the bedroom to get his wallet and keys. I followed him, insisting he tell me the truth. He tried to push me out of the way, so he could get through the doorway, but I wouldn't give up. Finally, he grabbed me and threw me against the wall, then punched me in the belly. It hurt so bad I bent over and knelt down, crying, calling him a bastard.

He walked out of the bedroom, and was going down the hallway, just then I was able to get up and start walking toward him. As I passed Lea Ann's room, I saw her kiddy scissors sitting on the dresser as I glanced in. I quickly grabbed them up and started running toward him, screaming, and when he saw me coming at him with an object in my hand, looking crazed, he turned to run and tripped over the kitchen rug, losing his balance and falling into the sliding glass door. His entire body slammed against the glass so hard it broke and shattered, as he went flying out and landing on the concrete patio. I feared he

was going to kill me, and I ran into bathroom and locked the door. A few minutes later, I heard the front door slam. He had left without another word.

I called the landlord and explained what happened, and he sent someone right over to fix the sliding glass door. It was a very costly accident. I was just relieved that Lea Ann was at her grandma's that day. It was a weekend, and John had weekends off. That weekend, he left Saturday morning, and he didn't return home until Sunday evening. When he finally did return, he was being very nice. The door was fixed, Lea Ann was home, dinner was cooked, and life just seemed to go on. I was relieved that he wasn't hurt. I could not imagine how it felt to go through that glass ... and I felt pretty bad about it, and perhaps he felt bad for punching me.

Reaching my 8th month, Lea Ann had just turned four years old. Only two months to go before our little bundle would arrive. The last month of pregnancy was the hardest of all, and every day I prayed for relief. I found myself walking up and down the hallway at all hours of the day and night, hoping it would advance my labor, but I was forced to wait until its time. When the time had finally come, I was ready to go. We took Lea Ann to my mom's, and headed directly to the local hospital. I was relieved I didn't have to go back to that horrible country hospital where Lea Ann was born - John's job at the railroad provided good insurance.

I had refused any treatment for the pain, as I wanted to have a natural child birth. I did it before and survived, (with no choice in the matter) so, I felt prepared to do it again ... and this time I was going to do it better. I had read books on how to breathe and relax, and just about everything else on child birth. However, as the contractions got worse and worse, until then, I had forgotten how horrific they were. At that point, I began to beg for something to stop the pain. But, by then, it was too late for the doctor to get to the hospital in time to administer the epidural procedure. By then, the time had arrived and the nurse was wheeling me into the delivery room, just as the doctor rushed through the door.

John had stepped out to have a smoke. When he returned, it was over. We both had the same reaction when told, 'it's a girl.' I couldn't believe it, I had to ask the doctor, "Are you sure?" I felt a sudden rush of disappointment, a deep feeling of sorrow came over me, but when they brought her to me a few hours later, my heart sunk with such guilt. She so was beautiful. No longer did I care if John didn't get his son ... I had another precious baby girl.

John was bummed, but he didn't appear greatly disturbed about it. At least, he didn't show anything other than accepting what is. The signs came later, though, through his actions.

When it came to naming our baby, John had insisted on Jessie Lee, when we believed we would have a boy. Like Lee Joseph or Lea Ann, he wanted it to be Jessie Lynn if we had a girl. Every time I held my baby, and gazed into her eyes, that name didn't set right with

me. I didn't like it at all, and insisted on naming her something else. John said, "Fine." He didn't seem to care that much, and I was relieved.

I had my mom bring me a book of baby names, while I was in the hospital a few days, and she brought Lea Ann along to see her new baby sister. I poured over that book, and I prayed for the right choice. When I saw the name 'Karey,' it jumped out of me. That's it, I thought, and Karey Lynn just rolled off my tongue as natural as could be.

I was very relieved that Karey didn't suffer from the colic like Lea Ann had, which made things much more pleasant. Lea Ann took to her baby sister immediately, and she wanted to be a part of everything. She would help me dress her, change her, feed her, and even rock her to sleep. It was so very sweet, but it was disturbing that John paid little to no attention to her. His disappointment in not getting a son seemed to slowly turn into bitterness. He spent less and less time with us, working long hours, sleeping a lot. It became me and my two little girls.

My dad wasn't around then. He had been sent to Washington on railroad business, and had been there for about a month. It was about four months later when my mother called, crying so hard I could hardly understand her. She had just been served with divorce papers.

It came as a shock to her, but not so much to me. The reality of her situation left her numb, frantic, and suicidal – she had no education, no work experience, and no income. Although my own marriage felt practically hopeless, I found myself putting personal issues aside to help my mother through her hardship. For the next month, I spent a lot of time with her, giving her something to live for ... her two beautiful granddaughters. Finally, she got the strength to move on. She sold the house and rented an apartment. Eventually, she found a job at the bowling alley snack bar, before working her way into a lasting career at the Depot, and she found her true partner in life ... for the rest of his life (he passed away at the age of 91). Sam was grandpa to my girls, and they adored him.

In all the time John and I had been together, I portrayed a picture to everyone that things were wonderful ... a happy little family ... but the truth was far from that. I feared ever telling anyone what I lived with, because his threats that I keep our business OUR business, haunted me. He had warned me many times to keep my mouth shut. His image was important to him, especially the image he wanted his mother to see. I felt I had no one to talk to, who could I trust? I knew I couldn't trust my own mother, after she had once betrayed me.

The next six months were the bitterest time ever. The worst six months of our entire five-year marriage. It was my fault, I suppose, I had given John the hope I would bring him a son, and when that didn't happen, something dark came upon him. He was changing day by day. Just before he was to leave for work one morning, he came into the kitchen and started ranting and raving about God. The girls were still asleep in their room, so I went to shut their door. His voice got louder while he continued cursing God, and "His God Damn Son Jesus Christ." He spoke with such vile, calling them despicable names.

Terrible words kept spewing out of his mouth, like a demon. I got chilling vibes, and spoke not a word. He then warned me that he never wanted to hear me speak about that fucking shit again, nor ever see a fucking Bible in his house, or he would piss all over it. I had never seen him so angry, so hateful, and so mean as I did then. After he had his rant, he left for work. I stood there, wordless, frozen, disturbed at what I saw and heard. I wondered what made him lash out like that.

John had become utterly evil those last few months, and there was no other word for it. His eyes were near frightening to look into. e hardly spoke to each other as he came and went doing as he pleased. I felt like a sex slave while he continued to force me into submission. But it got worse when he started placing pornographic magazines next to my head, while he rammed me. The entire ordeal was so sickening, as I kept my eyes firmly closed, and laid totally lifeless waiting for it to end. The act never did last that long, but surely, I always felt dirty and disgusted for a long time ... just the way he intended me to feel.

While engaged in his lust, he would shout out things like, “Jesus Christ fuck you,” and “Christ can suck my dick,” anything to disgrace my Lord and me. I focused on other things, to keep my mind sane. I prayed a lot. Many times, I heard him in the shower masturbating, and talking in ways that rang of a deep creepy tone ... really eerie, like that of satanic worship. The fear I began to feel led me back to seeking God’s protection.

After John proclaimed he had given his soul to the devil, I began to read my Bible every chance I could, praying for him, praying for us, praying for my two little girls. For the first time in our relationship, I clung to my faith above all else, trying to find peace, for that was all that kept me from crumbling – it was all I had to hang on to.

One drunken night, he forced me into bed and ripped my clothes off. I had just put the girls down and was trying to be quiet, after it had taken so long to get Karey to sleep. It was useless to fight him, but I had no love left for him, nor could I even fake it any longer. He had never tried to butt fuck me before, though he had mentioned many times he wanted to, and which I absolutely refused. But it was upon this night he violated my refusal and held me face down. I tried to escape, and wiggled all around, making it difficult for him to succeed. Suddenly, he jumped from the bed and threatened me that he was going to have me branded with a tattoo on my ass, that read BFD, telling me that stood for “butt fucking devil.” He sinisterly proclaimed he was the BFD, demanding I was his property. I managed to escape from his grasp and locked myself in the bathroom until he fell asleep in his drunkenness, then I went to Lea Ann’s bed and curled up with her ... as I had upon other occasions.

The next morning, I got up to get his coffee and get him off to work, as was my job. He said nothing about the night before, and neither did I, trying to keep things calm for the children’s sake. In all the times I had been sneaking to read my Bible, I was always fearful he would catch me. Sometime later, quite a bit latter, when one afternoon I had put the girls down for a nap and got out my Bible from its hiding place, I laid in bed to read. John wasn’t expected to be home for several hours, but when I heard a noise, and he

came rushing in, he scared me. Suddenly, I jumped, while trying to hide my Bible under the pillow, but he caught me. Immediately he started cussing, coming at me like a mad man. I grabbed my Bible and ran into the living room, as he chased me down. He was yelling and cussing, face turning red and eyes blazing. I quickly opened the sliding glass door and ran into the backyard. As he was coming toward me, I threw my Bible into the neighbor's yard so he couldn't get it. He dragged me into the house, he was furiously crazed. I heard Karey crying but he wouldn't let me go get her, and when Lea Ann came out to see what was going on, he yelled at her to go back to her room.

John threw me on the couch and shouted madly that he never wanted to see that piece of shit again. He then left, and I knew, he had planned that attack. He waited to catch me. He knew. After he was gone, I went to the neighbor and asked if I could get my Bible in her backyard. The lady was very nice, and mentioned she had heard us fighting, many times, and said I was welcome to come over whenever I needed to get away, if I needed an escape, she would protect me. That gave me a sense of relief.

John didn't come back until very late that night and when he returned, he staggered in drunk and passed out. Lea Ann was quite shaken by what happened, though it wasn't the first time she had seen us fight. She clung to me all day, feeling my emotional pain. All I could do most of the day was sit and hold Karey, with Lea Ann next to me, and pray for help. I felt so alone and scared.

A few days later John didn't come home from work. That night as the girls slept, he showed up with two guys from work. They were all drunk and laughing as they came through the door. I was sitting on the couch reading my Bible when he surprised me. I quickly slipped it behind me, but he saw, and he immediately asked what was I hiding. I refused to tell him so he started to approach me, and I grabbed it, holding it tight. He shouted at me to give him that goddam fucking book, that piece of shit, threatening to piss on it, as he started to unzip his pants. I threatened him that I would call the police if he didn't leave, ordering him to get out. His friends grabbed John by the shirt and dragged him outside, saying 'Let's get out here.'

I ran and locked the deadbolt so he couldn't get back in. He kicked the door a few times really hard and then he stood out in the front yard and yelled loudly that I was a fucking cunt, a fucking bitch, a fucking slut, a fucking horror, until the man across the street came out and yelled at him to shut the fuck up. John had woken the man up and he was very upset, as it wasn't the first time. John got very angry and started running toward the man, yelling he was going to kick his ass. The man rushed into his home, and John's friends pulled him into the car and they drove away.

Any hope I may have had at that point of our marriage, which was very little, had vanished that night. My faith remained strong knowing in my heart and soul the trap that had been set before me, the trap I had fallen into, the knowing without doubt that God did not join us together. Every day I prayed for help, for some way to escape the bondage of hell it felt I was living in.

It had been a long time since I had heard from my dad, and I was taken by surprise when he called and said he had moved back to town, telling me he had remarried, and invited us to dinner to meet his new wife, Loren. I was hesitant at first because of what I had lived through with my mom. I wondered if I could forgive him, or if I could accept my new step mother. After contemplating his invitation, I decided to accept.

John was on his best behavior that evening, trying to be impressive, while I tried to pretend everything was wonderful – as I was used to doing - but Loren picked up on the situation. There was no hiding the pain in my eyes, the emptiness in my spirit, and the fake smiles that had no shine. When she started taking time to spend with me and the girls, we grew closer over the next few weeks. Soon she was able to break my silence. I felt the Lord had brought me someone I could trust, someone who cared ... someone who knew what I was going through, because they too had been through the same experience ... and Loren had. For the first time in five years, I was able to cry in the arms of another and pour out my pain.

Loren helped me find my strength to stand up for myself and my girls, but the day I did was very frightening. Karey was six months old by then, and on that day Lea Ann was with her grandmother on a shopping trip. When John arrived home from work, he was in a bad mood. His tone was harsh as he demanded I fix him something to eat, while asking what the hell I did all day. He seemed more disturbed than usual and started pushing me around, accusing of me of doing nothing, saying I was worthless and used up.

Karey was in her crib crying and I went to get her. As I was holding her and patting her on the back, trying to get to stop crying, John kept pushing me around. “Stop,” I yelled, “You’re going to hurt the baby.” He wasn’t concerned about the baby, accusing me of using her to protect myself. I tried to walk away as he continued to push me and he pushed so hard that I lost my balance and fell down. I was able to protect Karey from hitting the floor, and when I got up, I ran into the backyard as he chased me. I ran around and back in the house heading for the front door. I could feel him right behind me as he chased me through the house in a rage, cussing madly. The second I got out the front door I ran as fast I could to the lady next store, just praying her door was unlocked. Just as I took hold of the door knob and rushed in, I heard a loud crash against the outside wall that only missed me by inches. Thank God her door was unlocked. John had taken a heavy piece of pottery by the front door and threw it so hard across the front lawn at me that all I could think of was, he could have hit Karey – he could have killed her.

When I came flying through Jill’s front door, she was sitting at her kitchen table and leaped to her feet in surprise. When she realized what was happening, she rushed over and locked the door. John stood outside yelling for me to come out or he would kick the door down. Jill yelled at him to go away or she would call the police. He finally got in his car and drove away. When I was calmed down, I went back home and called Loren, in tears. I packed a bag for the girls and I, knowing Loren was taking me to stay with her and dad. Lea Ann was still at her grandmother’s, but when Loren took me to pick her up, I didn’t say a word to her about leaving John. While John was at work the next day,

Loren took me home to pack everything I needed, and I knew then I would not be coming back.

John had called my dad's house and Loren spoke to him, letting him know we would be staying there. He tried to demand she bring us home, but she handled the situation in a civilized manner, taking the reins of the matter. I lived with my dad and Loren for a few months until things settled down.

John tried to win me back over the next few weeks, but his tricks didn't work on me anymore. His tears didn't weaken me any longer. His threats didn't frighten me. Loren helped to get me on my feet. She filed all the divorce papers, as she had done for herself at one time. She also encouraged me to take a few classes in job training, in hopes I could get a job, but in reality, I ended up on Welfare. My dad bought me a used car, and when I was ready to be on my own, they helped me to get an apartment townhouse.

By then, John was still bitter, as he was bitter for the rest of his short-lived life, and I knew, as long as I lived anywhere that he could get to me, he would make my life difficult ... as he did for many years to come. His hatred for me never ceased, but I was able to survive all his attempts to destroy me. His obsession, at times, was nearly unbearable, to the point his folks had to step in to keep him away. All visitation to see the girls was at his folk's house. As his condition became more dire, his folks had to take care of him. The threat of him harassing me any longer was then resolved. John had self-destructed, and it really was a shame, because my girls watched as he withered away.

Of course, there are so many more details, too many to pour out. His life certainly took a turn for the worst. I could mention that he fell off the roof of a two-story apartment building and was pronounced dead three times, and what that all entailed. Or how his folks had him committed to a mental facility, twice. Or how he drove his car through someone's garage, and plowed into their swimming pool while having an epileptic seizure. Yes, I could write an entire book just on John, but there are also some things that should never see the light, with respect and consideration to my daughters, my grandchildren, and his living family. What I have shared gives a summary of my five-year struggle to get to where I am today, and I have no regret for what I suffered to get here ... it prepared me for what would come. Yet, the sense of his spirit did not end until his life had ended, nearly twenty years later ... too many years, too many details ... but upon his death, I felt that spirit disappear, forever.

In the meantime, I found a life in my townhouse apartment and tried to move on the best I could. After re-connecting with Rosie, my life began to take on a new direction. I soon found myself meeting new people, going on dates, dancing in clubs, and having sex with other men. That was the hardest for me, to feel comfortable with other men. John had tried to destroy me by drilling into my head that I was all used up, just a secondhand piece of ass, and no one would want me after him. I proved that to be wrong. He had made me feel worthless and ashamed, and it wasn't easy to get past that negative image. But I did, and to my surprise I found that men were very attracted to me, and I was very

attracted to them. I found that I was very desirable, and perhaps I needed to find that out to feel whole again. It had been a long time since I felt whole.

When I met a lady at the pool who had just moved into our apartment complex, she had a son the same age as Lea Ann. Shari was also single, and she was a real party goer. After I invited her to go out with Rosie and I one weekend, from then on, her and I grew very close. Rosie would get so drunk at the clubs, that many times I was asked to get her out of there. She would actually fall down on the dance floor. It was embarrassing. And when she got kicked out, she became verbally abusive. After a while Shari and I were going out together, without inviting Rosie. We discovered this awesome band, and became friends with the group that followed them wherever they played. Every weekend thereafter, we would go to watch them, and dance our butts off. Soon, we were being invited to after hour parties, where I became friends with the sister of a band member. Eventually, I started an affair with her brother, who happened to be the lighting guy, until I learned he was married. It made sense then why he was always sneaking around, and never publicly showing interest in me.

I lived three years in that townhouse, and after a couple of years all the fun started to wear off. Eventually, I felt burned out, feeling a great emptiness inside. All the men who showed much attention, much affection, not one who felt deeper ... deep enough to take on my girls. Not one of them ever showed interest in them, and that bothered me. I wanted so much to meet a nice guy, marry, and go on with life raising my girls. Sadly, it just didn't ever turn out that way. I came to realize all they wanted was sex, and my heart was fragile, having been broken many times.

One day, I had a surprise visit from my brother Rusty. He just showed up one day with a lady friend, as they were passing through on a road trip. While he stayed with me for a few days I had given them Lea Ann's bedroom upstairs, while she slept in her sister's room, and I slept on the couch downstairs. Around 3:00am one morning, there was a loud knock on the door, and then pounding. I looked out the window and saw it was John, whom I figured it was. I had the chain on the door when I opened it to tell him to go away. He insisted I let him in, saying he had a right to see his kids. I kept telling him to go away or I would call the police.

Just as I tried to shut the door, he kicked it open, breaking the chain. He came barreling in toward me, while I screamed and tried to run. He grabbed me and threw me on the couch, as if to rape me, and I yelled at him to stop. Just then, Rusty yelled, "What's going on," and John recognized his voice. He headed for the stairs, cussing him out, saying he was going to kick his ass. John headed up the stairs, while Rusty started down the stairs, and when he was close enough, Rusty, barefoot, kicked John down to the bottom and out the opened door. I immediately locked it, and I called his folks. I don't know what I would have done if Rusty hadn't been there. It wasn't the first time he beat on my door in the middle of the night, or stood outside my window and yelled horrible, embarrassing slanders ... that was something I had to deal with constantly. But he had never gone that far before. Thankfully, it was the last time, his folks made sure of that.

That third year, I spent in solitude. I read my Bible daily, I wrote poetry, played the guitar, filled my townhouse full of plants, and got a bird that flew around freely. The girls were growing up, and Lea Ann was already in first grade. The only place they had to play was on the blacktop parking lot. There was a small fenced-in patio, with the freeway swooshing loudly on the other side. I soon found myself doing something I had never experienced, when I began to meditate. One of the men I had met had showed me how to go into a deep state, and I found a great spiritual peace in that. When Lea Ann was in school, and Karey was napping, I would go into the dark closet and close my eyes. Clearing my mind of all thought, I would begin to hum. I had hoped the voice would return to me, but it had not. At times, I felt kind of funny, but I kept going into the closet.

Then, Rosie called, asking me to go out. It had been a while since I talked to her, and it was then when I told her I didn't party anymore. She said there was a huge party she wanted to go to, but she had no way to get there. I didn't really want to go, but she begged me to take her. Of course, it was a weekend and the girls were at their grandma's. So, I decided to take her, but I didn't plan to drink or smoke pot. I didn't plan to meet anyone, or dance, or even cared to have fun. I had stopped taking my birth control by then, because I made a commitment to myself, and to the Lord - I would not have sex again until I married – but, going to that party was one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

The party was miles out of town, taking about 20 minutes. Rosie was already on her way to drinking, and I had been waiting around for several hours after she wandered off. I began to wonder how much longer it would be before she was fully drunk, so I could get out of there. I stayed to myself mostly, sitting in the car for long periods of time, walking around having a cigarette, or listening to the music on a nearby bench. As I sat alone, puffing on my Marlboro, a guy came and sat down next to me. We started talking, and time passed more quickly. Rosie finally stumbled out of the party and said, "Let's go." The guy asked if he could get a ride into town, I said sure. He had a drink in his hand, but I never saw him take a sip. While getting in the car, he offered it to me. I told him I wasn't drinking, and he informed me it was just a coke. I was thirsty, so I took the cup and sipped on it on the way back to town.

I started feeling kind of funny when I dropped Rosie off. The guy got in the front seat, and I asked where could I drop him off. He told me to take him to the park, and he would walk the rest of the way. When I got to the park, he had me pull over, and by then I really felt something funny. It was a dark night, and no one was around, that I could see. He started talking, asking me questions, and I turned the car off to have a chat. We started laughing, and he started touching me. My mind felt like it was turning to mush, but I tried to back him off. Then I started to feel very horny, like I had no control. Things got wild and I didn't even remember how I got home, but I woke up in the morning in my bed. My memory was fractured, bits and pieces, which frighten me as to what had happened. I was sure that guy put something in my drink and that terrified me.

I knew what happen a month later when I was pregnant. Scared and ashamed, I didn't know what to do. Another month went by, and I was absolutely sure then. I called my dad and Loren. Abortions had recently become legal in our state of California, and Loren

made all the arrangements. My dad had taken me on the horrible day, while Loren watched the girls. It was a day I shall never forget. It was, the best as I can describe, like a cattle shoot. Waiting in a large room with countless other girls all lined up, sitting on benches. Some were older, and some younger than myself. My dad had to wait in the car. One by one, someone was called and you never saw them again. No one talked to each, most held their heads down. The procedure sounded like a powerful sucking machine, but the pain was minimal. After a short recovery time, out the door I went. I swore, I would never do that again. It took years to find some kind of acceptance for the act I committed.

Shortly thereafter, I continued my meditation in the dark closet, crying silently from within my soul to bring me peace from the crazy world that surrounded me. I pleaded for knowledge of what life held for us. I was nothing more than a young and naïve girl, fooled by the cleverness of many. The words of John haunted me. No one wanted me. I was used up. I thought about all the men who used me. I came to see there was no future there, and I wanted an end to that life ... but could see no escape. I wanted as far away from John as I possibly could. The countless times he had stalked me, harassed me, belittled me, frightened me, I came to despise him all the more.

As I sat day after day, pouring my emotions into poetry, reading my Bible faithfully, my meditations became a vital part of my being. I often pleaded to hear the voice, asking for direction, and one day it spoke. I was stunned when it said, "Prepare to leave, your time has come." I became excited, my heart beat rapidly, and I asked, "Where will we go?" The voice said, "Far away." The experience was so powerful, so real, I began to tell others I was moving, with great excitement in my voice. But when they asked, "Where?" all I could say was, far away. I felt kind of stupid telling them I didn't know exactly where I was going, I just knew I was leaving and going far way.

I started collecting boxes and packing. In the weeks ahead the girls and I were living among stacked boxes, waiting for my next instructions. The girls thought we were never moving, as we lived with the bare minimum, and everything else packed away. After a month had passed and nothing was happening, I became down heartened as I continued to mediate, asking where and when and how are we going to go. Yet, the voice would not speak. Nearly two months later, when I would see someone and they'd say, "Hey, I thought you were moving?" I'd say, "Yea, I still am, someday." I think people thought I was crazy, and it was almost funny at that point, to them anyway.

Then it happened, the voice spoke to me. My mind was dark and quiet and I heard the slightest whisper to my endless question, where are we going. I heard, ever-so-softly one single word, "Oregon." After that, I heard, "Oregon," echo a little louder, and then a little louder, and my heart leapt with joy. Suddenly I thought, "how can that be, I have no money to go to Oregon." I barely had enough to pay my rent. And just then I heard the voice say, "The money will come."

I was so jazzed to know where we were going!! I began to tell everyone I was moving to Oregon. They'd say "Have you ever been there before?" I'd say "nope." They'd say, "Do you know anyone in Oregon?" And I say "nope." They'd say, "How you going to get

there?” And I’d say, “I’m just waiting for the money.” And then we’d smile. They never looked like they believed me.

All the same, I knew in my heart we were going to Oregon, and I went to the library and checked out some books. The girls and I sat around looking at all the beautiful pictures and dreaming of our new home, somewhere in those majestic mountains. I continued to mediate, asking how I was going to get the money, and when was I going to get the money, but the answer never came.

Well, after three months, the girls and I were starting to wonder ourselves when the money would come, as we continued to live out of boxes ... and others were wondering about my sanity, I suppose. Then one late morning a knock came upon the door, and when I opened it, there stood my brother Rusty. I had not spoken to him since he went stopped by that time, nearly a year ago. He had just been discharged from the Army, after spending a couple of months in Hawaii working in a military hospital. My brother was on the front line in Viet Nam, having been among the few who survived. He may have gained the status of a hero, but the damage that did to him was horrible. He has lived with those nightmare images his entire life, haunting him ... something he rarely would talk about it.

As we hugged at that door in a moment of emotional love, he peered over my shoulder and saw all the boxes stacked everywhere. When he came in and looked around, he commented, “Looks like you’re moving.” I said, “Yea, looks that way.” He asked where was I going, and I told him Oregon. He said, “Oh yea, cool, I’ve always wanted to go to Oregon. When you leaving?” I said, “I’m just waiting for the money.” Just then, he got an expression I can’t even describe, and while reaching into his pocket he said, “Money, well I got money,” and he pulled out a thick stack of \$100.00 bills. The money had arrived!

The day we drove out of there, was the day of my escape from bondage.