

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
The Great Escape – My Return Home
by Judith Ingram

Marriage number three had come to an end. Once again, I was on my own, free and relieved. When I relocated back to my hometown in Roseville, California ... where life had started for me as young girl ... and, where the roller coaster ride of my life first began in 1968, for Dani it was a whole new experience. I rented an apartment and started looking for work. I was ready to start a new beginning, but Dani was out of her comfort zone, especially at her new school. It was a huge adjustment for her coming from a small town with a small school, to a big city with a big school.

It felt strange going back to where so many memories lingered of my past. The city had grown so much, and, where there never used to be anything except miles of bare land, was now shopping malls, housing subdivisions, and apartment complexes. The apartment complex we lived in was a very nice community. It offered all kinds of activities, which I thought might help Dani better adjust to her new environment. She did seem to enjoy the walkways around the lovely landscaped paths, but after she had gone to the game room a few times, she showed no interest in that or the pool and tennis courts. She did meet one girl who she hung out with occasionally, yet, she didn't seem to be adjusting as well as I had hoped ... especially at her new school. She was lonely for her life and friends in Oregon and felt out of place and overwhelmed.

When I applied for three different jobs, I was called for interviews to two of them. Both companies called within hours after my interview with them, both wanting to hire me. I had told myself I would take the first one that called with an offer, because there was no guarantee of the other, though I was confident I had the positions when I left both. I was so glad that the one I really wanted called first - a company that built high end custom homes. The other was at a rehab center for troubled abused teenage kids.

It wasn't more than fifteen minutes after I accepted the reception position at the custom home company, that the other place called, in which I was glad I got to turn it down. I realized at that interview the emotional strain it would have taken on me, perhaps too much. Being a center for abused kids, I really felt the dark energy when I was there. As I was leaving the facility, some of the boys made crude comments to me, laughing as they walked by. It didn't bother me, yet, it wasn't exactly a place I desired to work, though I would have accepted the challenge. I was just so glad it turned out the other way.

My new job was going well for several months, until it became total overload. It wasn't long after I started when the workload was three to four times more demanding. Every weekend, I was exhausted. The stress of it all was killing me trying to keep up. When school break was coming up, I arranged for Dani to fly to Washington to stay a couple of weeks with John. I decided that while she was gone, I would take a short get-away trip. I needed some relaxation time ... a new adventure, something I had never done before. I got online, not knowing where to start, where to look, just randomly searching until I came across an ad for a Bed and Breakfast package. That is when I met Everett from Austin, Texas.

I responded to the ad by sending an email to the person who supposedly owned and ran the business. I got a response right away. He answered my questions about the offer and had some questions for me, as well, like how many in the party, timeframe, and stuff like that. I wrote him back that it was just for myself, explaining my need to get away and renew my energy for work. That's how our communication started, one question leading to the next and the next.

He continued to write me, and I continued to write him and before I knew it, he had drawn me in deeper and deeper. We began to share life stories, though he got me to do most of the sharing, and it felt good to have someone who was interested in my life again. He was a writer, although, he said, his day job was part of the creative team for a large company that built components for NASA's rocket systems. He was quite proud that he helped design some components that he claimed had actually gone to the moon.

However, I was more interested in his writings after he told me he had several published articles in various relationship magazines, some popular ones included. He had sent me copies of a few articles from magazines, and the more I discovered, the more I developed the realization that he was a respected and notable relationship advisor.

Everett's knowledge on the subject of relationships was undeniably an attention grabber – which gave me some kind of understanding into my past relationships – and that made for many long, long conversations ... conversations that were too deep for emails.

Over the course of a few weeks, Everett and I grew closer and it wasn't long before we were speaking on the phone. From the moment I heard his voice it was as if something deep inside triggered a powerful connection. I had never heard a voice that powerful touch me in such a way. His voice was hypnotic.

There were many nights into the early morning hours we would talk, and at this stage things went even deeper into a unity of one ... like some kind of trance. I must admit it felt as real as if he were right next to me, holding me close, speaking softly into my ear with words that sparked a radiate flame of passion through my entire being.

Nearly every morning, and every night, his voice was the first and the last I heard. Then the time came we wanted to desperately meet. My plan for a short vacation had turned into a later trip to visit him instead.

During the course of our online time together, I would not send him a photo of myself. I needed him to fall in love with me, my person, my mind and soul, and not my appearance. All my former relationships were based on appearance, and though I went into those relationships with a hope that I would be discovered and loved for all my pain and suffering, challenges and sacrifices, I found that none cared to truly know me. I had always felt like it was my body they loved. I had to know I was loved for me, so I refused to send Everett any images of myself. He, however, wanted to send one photo of himself, for he needed to know I could love him for his body, and not just his mind and soul. He was overweight, and that was his greatest insecurity.

The photo he provided didn't really give me a good image of him as he was standing far off, climbing into a black limo. I could tell he was heavy, but not so much it was shocking. And his

appearance did not matter to me at that point anyway. I was so in love I was totally blind ... totally in love with a voice with luring words.

It may seem odd that one would fall deeply in love through a voice, yet, his voice held me captive in the most intoxicating manner. I would soon come to realize the voice did not connect to the body as I believed whole-heartedly it would. That is where my greatest struggle began and eventually ended.

It was summertime then, and although I had only been at my new job less than six months, I took off work for a couple of days, taking a four-day weekend trip to Austin. I knew they wouldn't be happy about that because the workload was so heavy, and I knew when I returned that files would be piled high, yet, none of that seemed to matter to me.

Dani had gone to stay at my folks that week. Her grandma and grandpa took her on their own little vacation. Heading to the airport, I was so excited all the way there, but I was also kind of nervous. Not only flying, because I hadn't flown that much and it was a little scary, but more so because of my anticipation of meeting Everett. When the plane landed, I waited for everyone to unload the plane before I got off, avoiding the rush.

When I entered the airport, my eyes were darting around to find him, and after a few moments I noticed a man standing alone looking around as if he too was searching for someone. I immediately realized he was Everett, and something inside me froze. I didn't have that instant excited feeling I expected to happen. I had a moment of panic, and instantly, something felt not right. When he noticed me, his eyes locked on me as I walk toward him. He asked if I was Judith. Of course, I said yes, and he came over and gave me a hug.

I sensed an aura radiating around him that made me feel eerie. When he first spoke, my mind was boggled. I had never experienced such a strangeness. His voice did not connect with his body. It took me a while to mentally force the connection, and until then, it just felt weird.

As he drove us to his second-story apartment, I was feeling quite uncomfortable. I didn't talk much, just short conversations like how was the trip. I sensed he also felt uncomfortable, perhaps awkward. He told me how beautiful I was, more than he ever imagined ... and I wished I had felt the same of him. Truth is, I was utterly turned off by him, and it wasn't because of his weight. I really felt confused. Something didn't fit the way I assumed, and for the remainder of my time it felt like eternity ... in the most awful of ways.

The reality that brought us face to face, body to body, soul to soul, did not bring us spirit to spirit – I didn't feel that spiritual bond I believed we had developed. I would close my eyes sometimes just to listen to his voice, trying to find that feeling, but it had vanished.

He wasn't the confident man he portrayed to be, that was obvious and disappointing, but I excused that. He was nervous, as I, and it felt strange, which was normal I suppose, but none of that was it. What was 'it,' I could not figure out. His apartment had also had a strange feeling about it. Not the warmth of a home. But that was excusable too, he was a single guy. It was, however, a very nice place, clean and tidy, with nice basic furnishings.

When he tried to be affectionate, his touch made me feel discomforted. I found myself stepping outside to have a cigarette way more often than normal just to get away from him. He didn't join me because he was a nonsmoker and it bothered him. When I realized that, it became my way of escaping for moments to just get me through it.

We slept together in his bed, but we didn't have sex. It was most difficult to get through those few nights, and I was glad he didn't pursue what he felt I wasn't into ... and I absolutely wasn't into sex.

As the days passed, I tried to make the best of the situation. The daytime was better than the nights because he took me places to meet people, see the sights of Austin, and dine out at some very nice restaurants. The nights were more difficult. He didn't like that I went out to smoke so often. He made the comment that he not only noticed I was out having a cigarette a lot, but that it bothered him, it took away his time with me, he said. It made him act differently than he did at first, a lot more insecure. Sometimes he was scowling, and sometimes he was pouty like a little boy. I felt a bit paranoid because he wasn't the person I thought he was. I found myself playing the part the best I could, not sure how to act, I only knew I had to keep it cool.

I knew it bothered him that I wasn't the loving and affection woman he had come to know, and had hoped for. Those glimpses of moments when I saw the different sides to him ... it resembled a melancholic, kind of mysterious energy he seemed to try and conceal. I thought he was scared that he might scare me off, making him all the more insecure. Yet, when we were around his friends and family, he was a totally different person.

I didn't fear him, I just didn't feel what I imagined I would ... the fantasy was crushed by reality.

He was a nice man, overall, a true gentleman who even opened doors. It really bothered me that the feelings I had before I went, were gone. Just gone. His friends and a few coworkers, his lovely family with grandchildren, and everyone just loved him, and they seemed to love me too. I was friendly, sociable, trying to enjoy my time. He took me to the Bed and Breakfast house, the place he had claimed was his, and there I learned it actually belonged to his friends. It was a very warm and friendly place, in a beautiful area of lush green landscaping, lots of huge trees, and gardens bursting with colorful flowers and shrubs. We had a wonderful lunch there.

It was such a warm and beautiful day that we took a walk along the country road, holding hands. I thought to myself how wonderful it would have been to have taken that vacation and never got involved with Everett. And although I played the part the best I could, it felt fake. After four days, I wanted to go home so bad. I couldn't wait to leave that morning.

When he took me to the airport, I knew it wasn't going to work. When he hugged and kissed me goodbye, like we were still in love, I felt badly for him. As I walked away and looked back, all I saw was a gloomy, lonely, and undesirable man standing there. And once I was completely out of his presence, that feeling, that awful feeling I had felt from the moment I arrived, had disappeared. On the way home I cried, silently, at how disappointed I was. I just couldn't believe it. I felt like I lost the love of my life, and I just didn't understand why.

When I got home, I knew I never wanted to go back but I didn't know how to tell him, so I tried to ignore him. I didn't contact him to let him know I was home, and I ignored all his attempts to contact me for days. He tried to call so many times, but I just couldn't answer ... I just couldn't bear to hear his voice. He emailed me like crazy, frantic, and crying over what he didn't understand had happened.

After a week, I found the courage to finally email him and apologize, telling him things just are not going to work out, explaining that I was sorry, and I didn't mean to hurt him, but I just didn't make the same connection in person. His response was a long and deep confession of how he wasn't himself because he was nervous. I did not respond to him, because I knew my lack of feeling were not because he was nervous, yet, I still could not understand why. He started calling every day, at night, too many times, and one day I made the mistake of picking up. I wanted him to stop, stop and go away, it was overbearing, the emails, the phone calls. But instead, as I feared, his voice got back in my head. He got me to open up and express what I felt, and I told him of the darkness I felt around him and he apologized by saying he wasn't himself. He repeated what he wrote, telling me he was nervous and scared, and that is why I felt that way. He convinced me to give him another chance. He said he wanted to show me the real person he is, the man I grew to love.

He talked me into allowing him to come to California so he could show me he wasn't that person I met in Texas. I agreed to let him come. Dani and I went to pick him up from the airport, and he was like a totally different person. He was upbeat, positive, joyful, confident, and the man I wanted to believe he was, the man I came to know and love over months of emails and phone calls. Dani, however, didn't warm up to him at all. She stayed mostly in her bedroom.

After spending the day and evening together, things were starting to feel right again, and I was able to let my guard down and enjoy the happiness I had felt before. The next day I took him around to see our area, meet some of my old school mates, and had a nice lunch. They all seemed to like him a lot, more than anyone else they had ever met. They told me they thought he was intelligent ... a keeper.

That evening he surprised and shocked me when he asked me to marry him. I said I thought it was too early to take that step, but he had a way of smooth talking. He said I could move out to Austin and we can make plans to have a wedding there. He wanted to put a ring on my finger before he left, and make it official, saying it would make him the happiest man alive. He was like an excited little boy, "Please, Please," he begged, so sweetly, and I played right into it.

Later that evening he suggested we go buy a ring. He wanted to get a real nice one, so we went to the jewelry store at the Mall. I was taken aback when he asked me if I could pay for it, saying he would pay me back, explaining his funds were a little short, and his credit card maxed out. So, I paid for the ring, though it bothered me to do so. He did, however, repay me later.

When we got back to the apartment, I went into Dani's room to tell her Everett and I were engaged, but she didn't look happy about that. I asked her what was wrong, and she said there was something about him, saying she felt something wasn't right, yet, she didn't know why. She hardly had spoken a word to him the entire time he was there ... four days, and three nights.

The day before he was leaving, he said that morning at the breakfast table, “Let’s get married today. We can drive up to Reno.” Dani looked disturbed at his statement and she left the table. I knew he could feel her distrust of him, though he didn’t make mention of it, or show he was concerned.

I went to her room after that and sat down, asking her what is wrong with her. She said, right to the point, if I wanted to marry him, she couldn’t stop me, but she wanted no part of it. She refused to go to Reno with me, even though I pleaded with her to support me. In that moment, when she absolutely refused, I realized, I can’t marry him if she wasn’t going to be with me. I told her, then I won’t get married.

I went back to the table, where he still sat, and held his hand, telling him I can’t marry him because Dani won’t go. He started crying. He turned into a bumbling baby and I felt badly for him, yet, I had to put Dani first. I told him we can wait, and still get married in Austin. I thought she would change her mind once she got to know him better.

The night before he left, we had our first sexual encounter, and it wasn't the most passionate love making I had known, but I felt bad for him for his disappointment. I suppose I wanted to give him something that would bond us until we were together again.

He left the next day, and after three weeks I quit my job and was packing up to move. I hired a moving company to ship all my belongings, and stuffed my car full of plants and things we would need until the moving truck arrived. It was a long, long drive and I was glad when we finally arrived. He was very excited to have us and had made his spare bedroom into a place for Dani. Though she didn’t really warm up to him for quite some time, but she was respectful.

I didn’t find out until I got there that when Everett had returned home from his trip to California, he lied and told everyone we had got married while he was there. His coworkers, family, and friends were so happy for him they planned a wedding reception. I was upset that he lied about us, but what could I do except play along.

The reception was more than I ever could have imagined. I was quite surprised to see how many people adored him. I had only met a few when I was there before. There must have been over 25 guests. The people who hosted the reception lived in a beautiful, elegant, very large home. There was so much delicious food, prepared and arranged in an attractive display, spread out along a long, white clothed table. On another table sat piles of gifts wrapped in fancy paper and bows, and upon opening them were expensive gifts. I couldn’t believe it. Everyone just loved me and said how happy they were for Everett, how he deserved to have happiness. The only thing was, it wasn’t true, and I had to live that lie. I had to tell my family and friends I was married too. I even took his last name.

I got Dani registered in school, but it was so huge it frightened her. Even larger than the one in California. The Austin school was almost terrifying for her. It was very hard for her to adjust. I could see she was becoming depressed, staying in bedroom most of the time. She would only come out to eat dinner with us at the table, and go back to her room. Everett tried to make conversation with her, and one day he discovered she liked to sing, when he would hear her in

the bedroom listening to music. He said she had a beautiful voice and he wanted to get her singing lessons. She was really excited about that.

He knew the lady who gave the lessons, but she only accepted those she felt had real potential. She had worked with many famous people. It was not easy to get into her private lessons, she was well-known as one of the best in Austin. When he took Dani for an audition to see if she would meet the lady's criteria, we were all thrilled that she did. It was quite costly, but Everett paid for it, as well as taking her himself to each lesson. I could see her attitude change toward him after that. She would bring home tape recordings of her singing ... and she did have a beautiful voice. Finally, there was something to make her happy.

Everett did all driving while my car sat in the parking lot. He had a really nice, cherry red sports type car, with an awesome AC. The humidity there was near unbearable and I spent little time outside, mostly to have a cigarette. From apartment, to car, to store I would hurry in and out. I had never been in such humid conditions before, and that, I didn't like at all. We took many trips to nearby areas. He seemed to enjoy showing me parts of Texas. We had lunches and dinners along the way, a glass of wine, and just sitting in quiet places. It was very pleasant.

Things were going well for about six months, but then things started to get strange. For the next couple of months, I started to hear him in the master bathroom talking, mumbling, and it sounded like he was talking to someone, or more than one someone, as it sounded like different voices. After it had happened a few of times, I got curious and went to listen at the door. I couldn't make out what he was saying, but it felt creepy. I didn't say anything to him about it, didn't ask him any questions, or let on I had any concerns. I just became more observant of his behavior.

One night he came out of the master bathroom with an angry face, and started pacing the living room like something was bothering him. It was very late and Dani was sound asleep. When he returned to the bedroom, I sensed a strong negative energy stirring about him, and I asked what was wrong. He stood over the bed, glaring at me, and then went back into the master bathroom. I then heard him talking in a deep voice, just loud enough I could kind of understand, and the words he spoke were scary ... words that expressed dislike of me. My heart began to race. As I listened, I heard his voice struggling against the deep voice, demanding I not be harmed.

I laid there in bed frozen with fear. When he came out and got into bed, he wrapped his arms around me, as if to protect me. I didn't move. The next morning, he acted like nothing had happened, and I pretended like I didn't know anything. For days after that, he seemed as if he was still struggling with something within himself.

One night he finally confessed to me his deep dark secret ... a secret he tried so hard to hide and control, a secret he feared I would find out and leave him, a secret he feared himself had reached a point that he could no longer deal with it alone. He hoped, he said, that with all my experiences that I might be able to help him. He made it sound like it was more of an emotional issue, an insecurity of sorts, that he was battling. I did try to help him, until it was too much, until there was more than I imagined going on.

I came to realize I was not prepared to take on such a mission, especially after he revealed the dark reality I was facing.

When he could no longer hide the whole truth ... when he confessed to having multiple personalities ... when he said one of them hated me, my panic alarm went off, warning me to run ... and on the day he held me hostage, was the day I did.

The reality of Everett's secret became ever more apparent in the days ahead. He told me of a female and a younger boy whom he said liked me, but the male figure didn't trust me. He never gave them names, and although I never heard the female, I did come to see the younger boy would appear when he would cry. I went to Dani to inform her of what I had discovered. Her strength had always been my rock during the many hardships we lived through - as my two older daughters had been in our earlier days. When I told her what was going on, she admitted she had also noticed he was acting different at times.

I never feared for her, and she never felt threatened. He was still taking her to singing lessons while I continued to tread lightly, keeping up the routine. I had explained to her that I had tried the past two months to avoid having to make the desperate decision, but learning he had multiple personalities brought about a more worrisome reality. She knew then, as I, we had to get out of that situation. At that point, we both felt uncomfortable, and we could tell he felt our distance. Just his touch gave me inner chills.

The one blessing I had was the funds from the sale of the sixty-six-acre mountain property ... whatever was left. Thank God for that. I had offered to help pay for rent and food, but Everett insisted he pay for everything. It had already cost me thousands of dollars to get to Austin, and now, thousands more to flee ... in less than a year.

Each day I pretended that everything was fine, though I could see his paranoia became more revealing after he confessed his truth. As often as I could, I avoided sex, but one night I saw a dark and scary side to him. He wasn't the gentle man he had been. His eyes were scary, and his strength became apparent as he held me down, turning me on my stomach, and thrust his body against me, making eerie sounds, groans and grunts that gave me chills as I laid still. It was a familiar act I had known before, and it conjured up all kinds of unpleasant memories and feelings of my first marriage. It took a long time to fall asleep, feeling horrible inside.

That next morning, I was still shaken up. It didn't feel like it was Everett making love, it felt like a sexual predator. I didn't get up until he had left for work, pretending I was sleeping. All day long I was feeling nervous as he called me every couple of hours, as if to keep checking on me. I was afraid he knew what I was going to plan. That night at the dinner table he was very quiet.

Again, that night I avoided him touching me by telling him I didn't feel well. The next morning, I knew I had to do something, so I decided to call a moving company to see what it would take to pack all my things and truck them to Oregon. I had to forgo the trucking option because their schedule was out two weeks for pickup ... and I had to go now.

I decided to hire someone to come pack me up, and instead of trucking my belongings, I would rent a U-Haul and have them load it. I thought in the days ahead I would make plans for my son-

in-law to fly out and help me move back home. I was just in the first throws of making my escape. I had made several calls while gathering information, trying to get everything lined up before I told him of my decision, a decision he must have already known.

I set an appointment up for a lady to come over the next morning, telling her I needed to work quickly ... without going into a lot of detail. She said she could be there at 9:30am, long after Everett would have left for work. She explained the process of taking inventory, how many boxes they will need, and time involved ... and then she would prepare me an estimate.

That next morning Dani went on to school, although she wanted stay with me, knowing the plan. I needed things to appear normal. Things, however, did not go the way I hoped.

In the eight plus months I had lived there, Everett had never taken a day off work, nor was he ever late to work ... but that morning, he hung around and hung around, drinking coffee and reading the newspaper at the dining table. I kept waiting for him to leave, getting nervous that the lady would be there soon. Finally, I said to him, "You're going to be late," and he responded, "No problem, I called in."

In my mind I thought he must know, he must know, but how would he know. Then I got suspicious that he had cameras in the apartment, he must have, I thought, how else did he know? At 9:30am the knock came at the door and I tried to get to the door before him so I could tell the lady he was still there, and get rid of her, but as I made my way to the door, he blocked me and said he'd get it. My heart began to pound.

I heard the lady ask for me and he let her in. When she saw my face, she knew I was freaked out. Everett quietly went to sit back down at the dining table, his face with a look of stewing, brewing with anger, not uttering a word. I immediately led her to the bedroom walk-in closet, where she started her inventory, and where I could talk to her without him hearing. She said to me she thought he was going to be gone. I told her what I suspected, and so I was in a more hurried situation, letting her know I hadn't told him yet. She commented that he looked scary to her, and said she'd do all she could to put a rush on the job, fearing for my safety.

Everett sat at the table, still silent, just watching the lady go from room to room with her clipboard while I pointed to her all my belongings. Of course, he knew what was going on. When I walked her to the door, she whispered that she would send me an email with the estimate that afternoon, and as soon as I pay online, she will schedule the packers. Around 11:30am she left.

The moment she was gone, he stood up and asked, "Are you leaving me?" I was so scared, but I told him I just couldn't deal with the situation, and that I had planned on talking to him first. I explained how I was just getting some information, because I didn't think I could go on with his mental state. I tried to handle things as careful as I could, as I had done so many times before, yet, it never got any easier.

I expected him to break into tears, to start crying as he often did, yet, instead, he suddenly became darkly possessive. His entire expression turned to a fuming face ... his eyes shaded black. I had a terrible feeling that Everett was taken over by the personality that hated me, and was protecting him from the pain I caused.

I tried to let him down gently, but he refused to hear what I said. He became extremely agitated, pacing the floor, breathing heavy, and demanding that I cannot go. He wasn't going to let me go. Then he grabbed the phone and sat down on the sofa.

He called his attorney asking him to draw up papers that would make me stay, saying we were married under Texas common law, and he had the right to force me to stay. His attorney told him he could not force me to stay. He begged him to do something to stop me from leaving, and became even more distressed knowing he had no legal way to pursue his demand.

When he hung up, he put the phone down on the sofa and began pace the living room, going in circles, his head hung down and talking to himself. I stayed sitting at the dining table, watching him, fearing him, afraid to move. The look on his face was one of a stern and serious expression, one I had never seen before. His voice was deeper with a threatening tone, and I knew in that instant I had to keep calm.

I moved over to the sofa hoping to get a hold of the cordless phone. If I could grab it and run into the bathroom, I could lock the door and call 911. When I sat down, he seemed to be guarding it with his eyes. Then, in his paranoia, he realized that I was going to take it and he grabbed it up, saying, "You're not calling anyone." He took the phone into the bedroom and hid it somewhere.

Everett went totally to the dark side. He continued to pace the floor, mumbling under his breath in an eerie tone, looking at me with penetrating eyes of spitefulness. I became very scared to move as he continued to pace the floor. I told him I needed to use the bathroom and left the room. Once in there I locked the door, too afraid to come out. When I didn't return, he came to the door asking what I was doing. I didn't answer. He got louder, demanding I come out, but I said nothing. I was terrified.

It must have been an hour or so when I heard his daughters voice in the other room. She came to the bathroom door and said it was okay for me to come out, saying she was taking her dad to her house. I came out, and she hugged me, apologizing for her father's behavior. She said she hoped things would never come to that point. She was fully aware of his mental condition and told me she'd been trying to help him for years. She felt really bad for me. I told her I have to leave, as quick as possible. She said Everett put the phone back so I could go ahead to make my arrangements ... assuring me she would keep him away until I left. I asked her how she knew to come, and she said her dad called her.

I didn't get to know his daughter as well as I should have, but she was a sensible woman with several children and another on the way with a lovely home and a good loving husband. I always sensed their relationship was close, and now I understood why. She was very understanding of my situation and cared about Dani as well. She made it easier for me to leave, without guilt. Once she took him away, I kicked the plan into full gear. I contacted the packer lady, explaining my terror, and she made it happen the next morning.

I immediately called my oldest daughter Lea in Oregon and told her the situation. She was so freaked out she called her husband and he left work immediately. I told her to book the first

flight to Austin and I would pay for it. She called me back and said he would be there at midnight.

It all happened so fast. When Dani got home from school, I told her what happened, what the plan was. I left Dani sleeping when I went to the airport to get my son-in-law about 10:30pm. I had no idea how to get there, but I looked online for directions. As I drove alone in the dark, I cried, releasing all my fear and heartache. When I thought I was lost I took an exit in hopes of finding a gas station or a store where I could get directions. Unfortunately, I took an exit where there was no such resource around, just a lot of ghetto houses with garbage and painted walls with gang symbols.

I turned down a street thinking it would take me back to the freeway but instead it went down a dead-end. I had all the doors locked and tried to get out of there as quick as possible. I finally made it to the airport but I was late getting there. I didn't see anyone around the entire airport, it had long been closed. I entered the huge empty building looking for my son-in-law. He was nowhere. I went back outside and looked around feeling panicked – where is he? - and then I saw him come around the corner of the building way down at the end. He wasn't too happy that I was 30 minutes late, but when I told him what happened he was understanding. I didn't have a cell phone so we couldn't call each other.

The next morning the packer crew arrived. My son-in-law took my car and went down to rent a U-Haul truck, Dani went with him. When he arrived with the truck, the crew started loading it up with furniture and boxes as they continued to pack. As we were driving out of the apartment complex, I saw Everett sitting in his car watching. I turned my head away. I couldn't bear to see his face.

We picked up my car where my son-in-law had left it at the U-Haul place, and the three of us headed out of Austin ... Oregon bound. It was a long trip, and I left regretting I had ever moved to Austin, Texas. One our way back, we spent a couple of nights at motels. Dani would switch back and forth from the truck to the car. When we arrived, it felt so wonderful to be back in Oregon ... home again, at last. Leaving in the first place was definitely a very terrible mistake.

I was able to get into a small rental house, and got back to work at the real estate company with the people I worked with before I moved to California. Dani was thrilled to be back to see her friends. We were starting over again and it felt good, until a month later when I arrived home after work, and there sat Everett on my front porch. I saw a strange car in the driveway before I saw him, and when I saw him, I wondered about the car. I soon learned that he had sold his car and bought that one, as well as he got rid of everything he owned. He had quit his job in order to come find me. I wondered if he had been watching me, and for how long.

I learned he had hired a private investigator to locate me. He seemed so sure that he could get me back, he just needed to prove to me that I was safe, that he would seek professional help, that he'd do anything to make it work. I kept telling him it wasn't going to work and he needed to go back to Austin. We talked on the front porch for quite a long time, and then he left. I so hoped he'd taken my advice and left for good ... and when I didn't hear from him for a few of days, I was about to sigh with relief.

Then, I got an email from him telling me he got a job at a nearby motel and would be staying there. When I realized he had no intentions of leaving, the thought of him being there made me fearful, made me feel creepy all over again. I panicked knowing he was there, and when he started to call constantly, leaving sobbing messages, and sending countless emails day and night, as well as parking outside my home and work, lurking around everywhere day after day after day for several weeks, I started to go insane. I would sometimes scream to myself, "LEAVE ME ALONE!" I knew better than to give him any attention, to not respond

No one had ever stalked me before, and it's a most frightening experience. I never knew what he might do, but not him, but rather his other personalities. I called the police but they couldn't do anything if he hadn't actually threatened me. I was afraid to even go to sleep at night. Dani was aware of the situation, though she didn't seem worried for herself. She was very concerned for me. I tried to assure it was going to be okay. We just kept praying he would go away ... and one day it all stopped. For nearly a week, nothing. I was relieved, yet not sure why, or if he was still lurking.

A couple of weeks later I got an email from him. He said he was back in Austin, and that his daughter passed away during child birth. I knew she was pregnant when I left, and knowing she died made me feel so sad, and sad for him, too, but I didn't respond. I couldn't open that door. I never heard from him again.

A few months later I was able to buy a home on an acre way out of town through a client from the office who had purchased a five-acre timber parcel. After he logged most all the timber, he split one acre off that had a cute two-bedroom house and an old run-down building that looked like it was about to collapse. Dani and I moved there and began anew.

It was very peaceful and quiet in our new home. Settling in and readjusting our life. Being so far out of town meant Dani had to take the bus to school, which she missed quite often and I had to drive her in. She felt isolated and bored but was able to spend many weekends in town staying with friends.

One day I got a call from Karey telling me she was going to come visit me while on leave. Her visit led me to online dating sites. She thought I needed to find a new man, someone who would make me happy and so while she was visiting, we went online and started looking at profiles. I had always been a little afraid to meet someone on a dating service, but my daughter's encouragement kind of pushed me into it. I really didn't see anyone that interested me, but after she left, I continued to pursue my curiosity. I finally saw one guy that sparked my interest and bravely sent a message.

That started a growing relationship from emails to phone calls to him eventually moving in. Teddy lived in California and before I would consider having him move in with me, I needed to meet face to face. I needed to be sure the feeling would be the same in person. Dani and I took a drive down to California and spent a few days there. She stayed with her grandparents while I stayed at Teddy's. He owned a fairly nice home. By trade, he was a well-established electrician. He took me around to show off his work in newly developed housing subdivisions. He was quite proud of how neatly he ran his lines, as if it were some kind of art display, that no one would

ever see behind the wall. But he thought it important to show pride in your work, where he complained about how others do a sloppy job.

We got along well, and the feeling was still alive. After I returned home, things got more serious and before too long, he put his house on the market. When the time came, I drove down and helped him pack and load the UHaul truck. Soon we were on our way back to Oregon.

For weeks that led into months, Teddy wouldn't look for work. At first, he said he didn't want to do electrical work any longer, but then I realized, he didn't want to work at all. I started to put pressure on him to get a job, any job, to help with the bills. I was paying for everything, including his cigarettes, which we smoked two packs a day. Finally, he decided to go ahead and study for his Electricians license and started working for a local company.

I suppose things were going along fairly well, until I caught him one night when I woke up and he wasn't in bed. When I got up to see where he was, I found him in the dining room online looking a pornographic site. I didn't say a word, I just went back to bed. I was hurt. The next day I approached him with my disappointment in him, asking if I wasn't enough to satisfy him. He assured me it wasn't me, it was him. He explained that he's addicted to pornography and apologized, saying he would do it again. I don't know if he did or didn't, but I never seen him do it again.

After that, he started making comments about Dani. She was very developed by then and I came to realize he had a fascination with breasts. I tried not think of him ever crossing the line with her, but one day I came home early from work and when I walked into the house I saw him sitting next to her on the sofa, apparently helping her with homework. Although it was quite innocent on Dani's part, I felt it wasn't on his. I got the most horrible feeling that he was trying to seduce. I was very upset, but I couldn't accuse him of a feeling, so what I did was I had a talk with Dani and warned her to stay away from him, that I didn't trust him.

His sexual addiction got worse as he would stare at other women's breast while shopping, or head to the adult section when we would rent movies just to stand and stare at the covers. I began to observe his behavior more closely, and the more I realized the sickening truth, the more disturbed I became. The distance between began to cause tension when I pulled away from him, and I got to the point where I told him things weren't working out. When he wouldn't leave, I figured the only way to get him out of my life was to sell the house. And so, I put the word out at the office, but I didn't list it because I didn't want him to know, but mainly I wasn't sure what to do. I really loved living there, so I just prayed about it.

Several weeks had passed on when one day I got on a knock on my door. It was my day off when two ladies stood outside my door, and at first, I thought they were solicitors. When I opened the door, the older lady introduced herself as Katherine, and her daughter Janet, telling me one of the real estate agents at my office had told them I was looking to sell my property. Before I could say a word, she said with such heartfelt emotion that it was exactly what they were searching for. She said it would be a dream come true, then immediately stated, "We want to buy your house!" I was quite surprised and speechless at first, and a bit stunned.

I looked at her with a sorry expression and replied that I wasn't selling my house, explaining that I had entertained the idea a while back, but hadn't seriously considered it. I think I was still hopeful that Teddy would move out. Katherine went on to say she would pay above any asking price to have it. I told her I would have to think about it. They hadn't even seen inside, and I didn't invite them in. After they left, that evening I talked to my daughter about the offer and she was thrilled to think we might move back to town. After seeing how happy the thought made her, I decided to have a chat with Katherine and see what we could work out. I didn't say a word to Teddy about it, and I kept it to myself until, or if I actually had an offer.

Katherine invited me to her residence, a place she had been renting for quite a while hoping to find the perfect home. She explained that they had left California after her life-threatening transplant, when things got bad between her and her husband ... which ended in an awful divorce. She was awarded a very large settlement, telling me she would be paying cash.

During the process of talking over the possible sale, we became friends as I explained to her my need to get Teddy out of my home. We started sharing stories of our past and found we had a lot in common (both being California born and raised). Her daughter was staying with friends at the time, so I never really spoke to her much. Though I never asked her age, she looked to be in her twenties. Katherine was a bit older than me. She said she nearly died waiting for a transplant, in which she said was a lifegiving blessing (I think it was her liver, but it escapes me to be sure).

After her unpleasant experience, they left California to seek a new and peaceful life. She was very open in sharing how her transplant had slowly changed her, in a strange and eerie way. What she thought was a blessing, had sadly turned out to be a deep spiritual suffering. I saw the signs but I did not act upon them. I could only try to comfort her, to give her strength in words of faith. She was a devout Christian, so we prayed together many times. Up until then she had only talked about her mental and physical effects after the transplant, like her hair changing from being straight all her life to turning curly. And how the feeling that she wasn't in her own skin was disturbing, but what concerned her the most was having thoughts that were not hers ... dark thoughts. She felt a battle inside her that she had to cope with every day, and staying close to God was her way of finding some comfort and protection.

I began to share with her some of my own dark experiences, and how I had turned away from getting involved, which made it even harder for me to ignore when she revealed to me her terrifying nightmares. She was afraid to tell people about them, fearing they would think she was crazy or possessed... she feared she was possessed. Shortly after her transplant she began to have gruesome nightmares that were so scary that it got to the point to where she was afraid to go to sleep. She said she felt the spirits around her all the time, but they only came out at night in her dreams. She said she tried to take naps during the day, but found that was just as bad. She felt so tired all the time from lack of sleep. Her story was so familiar my heart felt such sorrow for her ... I knew her fear well.

Although I could sense her intense fear, I didn't try to help her in any way other than praying. I told her unless the Holy Spirit called upon me, I would pray for such a way to help her. She was hopeful for that calling, and continued to attend her a local church for strength. It was right after

we had the conversation at her house, that things got worse. Until then, the spirits had been hiding from me, but they weren't hiding no more. When I left her house, I was fully aware of darkness in her home, and I silently rebuked them, outwardly showing no awareness, because I knew not to open that door. As the days passed, I saw Katherine becoming more distraught. She said the haunting' was getting worse, and she hadn't slept in days ... too afraid to go to sleep.

I would pray for her daily, at night before bed, at moments that struck me, asking for Katherine's protection. I couldn't shake the powerful presence I felt when I was with her, and most especially when I was in her house. I kept things to myself, keeping matters focused on the real estate transaction to keep her mind off the present depression. When I finally agreed to sell her the property, we met at the office and wrote up the deal. When Teddy got home, while having dinner, I told him I sold the house. He wasn't too happy about that, but he didn't say a word.

While the paperwork was being processed, I had a dream. I dreamt I was in Katherine's bedroom - as an observer - invisible from the spirits dwelling there. I saw them, hovering as near transparent figures around the room, while Katherine was in a deep sleep. I heard their voices, not words, vibrating with sounds of hauntingly eerie sensations. Then, the phone rang in the middle of the night awakening me to the cries of Katherine's desperate plea, "Help! Please help me!" and suddenly I felt the calling. She didn't need to tell why, I knew why, and I told her I was on my way. It was about 3:00am. I told Teddy I had to help a friend, and then I left a note for my Dani in case she woke up wondering where I was.

As I drove into town that night, I had no doubt the Holy Spirit was upon me, I felt the power of the presence. I was prepared, ready to go to battle. When I arrived at Katherine's house, the back door was wide open. I hollered her name, no answer, and again, no answer. Before I entered, I put on the full armor of protection, claiming the promise of the power of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Almighty. Katherine had already given me permission when she called asking for help. Everything was in place and I feared not as I walked through her living room to her bedroom, where there she lied curled in a ball under the blankets, shaking with terror.

It was very intense. I helped her out of bed, comforting her to the living room where she sat down, still shaking. I told her to stay there while I went into the bedroom. I closed the door and stood boldly while the words poured out of me, while I felt the pressure against me, while I sent them to where they had come ... and where they had come were in objects around the room. Then I anointed and sealed them. I went to Katherine to tell her, to get her permission to remove the items from the house. She wanted them out, immediately. I gathered them up and put them a plastic bag, taking it out to the garbage can. When I came back in, she asked if there were any more. I went through the house but I sensed nothing else. She was relieved, yet, she still felt fear. I took her hands and pray over her, lifting her to her feet and freeing her from the captivity she suffered from.

I felt something unusual while holding her hands, something I had felt when a curse was lifted from me, but I felt it in Katherine. When we said, 'Amen,' and then sat down, she expressed that she felt a strange sensation, as if something had left her body. I knew then the work of the Holy Spirit was done.

It was a very strange encounter, and one that she was most grateful for. The light had come back into her life and she was so relieved and free of all the haunting, inward and outward, that she professed to her entire congregation what I had done for her. She told all her friends and family ... and I was so happy things turned out well.

Things turned out well for myself too. Teddy had informed me that he was moving out. He had rented a small house in town, but that he made an offer on a one-bedroom house which was for sale by owner. He just needed enough for a downpayment. He asked if I would help him out, and after my closing, I helped him to purchase his little home. I felt he deserved it because he had helped me around my place, increasing the value. I was just glad to get rid of him.

In the meantime, a wealthy client of the broker I worked with was going to put his house on the market after he had bought it brand new for his niece several years earlier. He traveled a lot and hadn't seen her a long time. When he went to visit her, he discovered she had lost her mind. Apparently, she was schizophrenic and paranoid. When he saw the way she was living, he realized she needed mental help and made arrangements to have her committed.

When the broker took me to see the house, I was so excited. It was a newer home in a newer subdivision with a lovely landscaped front yard, and big grassy back yard with a huge towering oak, plus an automatic two-car garage. When we entered the house, it was empty and everything looked really nice, until I got to the bedroom where she had stayed in. The way I knew that was because the white walls were stained with black soot. I asked the broker what happened to the walls and he told me the niece had burned candles continuously around the entire room. He was told by the client that she was trying to keep the demons out.

I was a bit concerned when I learned the history of the house, but I didn't feel anything evil or dark there. The client didn't ask for any more than what he had paid for the house, which was worth a lot more by then, so I was able to purchase it with the sale of my country property. The room was painted and turned into a home office. My daughter and I moved in and lived there for five years. We never had any problems.

Katherine and Janet moved into the country home and were very happy. They removed the old run-down building and set up a manufactured home where Katherine lived, and Janet lived in the house. She later got married and had twin boys.

One day I got a call from a young girl telling me she attended church with Katherine and had heard how I helped her. She said Katherine gave her my phone number and asked if she could come see me. I told her I didn't know if I could help or not, but she was welcome to come. She came the next day and we sat and had a talk. As I listened to her tell me her story, I realized her problem was not spiritual and I advised her to see medical help. In a way she was relieved that she wasn't possessed or haunted, and thanked me for my honesty.

I hadn't seen Katherine in quite a while until I heard she was very ill. I drove out to the country to see her, and discovered she had developed a crippling disease and was in a wheelchair. I was impressed with her positive spirit, her kindness and love, during the most painful time in her life. She was truly an inspiration and spent her days mostly in bed drawing and making special cards

for her friends at church. She gave me a framed picture that looked to be quite aged of a Hawaiian landscape, in which I still have to this day hanging on my wall. She wrote the most beautiful words on the back. Sadly, Katherine has since passed away.

As things turned out, the Hawaiian picture was like a foretold prophesy. It wasn't long after when I decided to give the online dating service another try. That's when I met a man from Maui, and in my wildest imagination, I never thought I would be living on an Island. But that's where my path led me, where the wind swept me up and carried me far, far away.

A new and exciting adventure awaits ... I wish.