

Molly Hawkins is a twenty-three-year-old woman in a Wiccan apprenticeship living alone east of San Diego in 2013. She meets Jake Reed, a dishonorably discharged marine. The bad boy arouses her and she conveys conflicting messages. Ambivalence prompts her into a shamanic vigil discovering the terrors of a karmic link that attempts to repeat itself.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

by T.L. ORCUTT

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PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

A Novel



T.L. ORCUTT

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NONFICTION

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Awakening in the Land of Human Beings

1995 *MAGICIANS OF THE SOUL*

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1994 *INTEGRATIVE PARADIGMS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY*

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1989 *NO BEGGARS JUST BALLOONS*

A Practical Approach to Self-Transformation

1

A JAGGED LIGHTNING BOLT cracked the sky and struck a black oak towering above the gravel path winding to a forest cottage. Creamy pale curtains captured the bright illumination and tinted the space cornflower blue. Molly Mae Hawkins sat on the crimson Persian rug of her cozy bedroom, safe inside the chalked pentagram and sacred circle made of small stones she had gathered in the nearby meadow the day before. She had been working on these Wiccan principles in ceremonial ritual for over two years. Tonight's storm presented an ideal opportunity and challenges she expected would advance her competence in the apprenticeship. With practice, the ceremonies and rituals worked. Willful results manifested; then again sometimes not.

Molly gazed about the dim room at her furnishings. The single bed with its wrought iron headboard stood against a canary-yellow wall. Black sheets welcomed a puffy lavender comforter. Printed daffodil pillows with vivid red strawberries rested on top. Cuddling pillows sat her favorite stuffed animal, a fat gray bunny Molly had named Romper, a name that came to her in a dream when she was sixteen.

A pewter pentagram hung from the ceiling above her bed and served as a protective amulet to absorb harmful energy and ward off destructive forces—observable and not observable. The top shelf of an antique dresser fashioned an altar with a runner of red silk. Molly crafted two black candles set wide apart to resist toxic emotions. Two shorter white candles, nearer the middle, stood ready to nurture healing or prompt desired intentions. Adjacent the left candle stood an eight-inch silver chalice. Two intertwined roses sculptured the stem. A six-inch athame for prompting rituals lay on the front of the altar. Representing the feminine principle and the element of water, Molly filled the chalice with red wine for offerings to spirits. In ritual, she waved the athame, a ceremonial dagger symbolizing the male principle and the element of fire, to channel psychic energy. Within the chalked pentagram and circle of stones, she pointed the athame to the heavens and demanded protection.

The evening's television news reported a forty percent chance of a thunderstorm before midnight. Molly viewed the evening as a perfect opportunity to practice an aspect of her craft, the ability to influence weather through conjuring spirits with a will. Her intent was to manifest thunder and lightning more than once. Her mentor, Meredith Byrne, told her that as an apprentice she should practice within a favorable climate, one she expected would optimize success. After establishing skill with easier climates, she could work toward more demanding challenges. Hopefully, later she could try to make rain in a severe drought, a mystical practice the Native Americans had used for hundreds of years.

Molly concentrated and invoked her spirit guide, Abigail. Within a few minutes, a second piercing crack and thunderclap slammed the small cottage. Hans and Gordon, two Rottweilers, paced back and forth guarding the parameter of the property a

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hundred yards in all directions. Hans was a rich dark chocolate-brown. Gordon was shiny black. Stormy weather had summoned their instincts and trained duty. Four ears stood erect. These canines did not bark, growl, or howl. With their heads moving in all directions, they listened and sniffed the air. Hans and Gordon grew up on the property and Aunt Martha had professionals train them to protect and attack if necessary.

The tiny cottage graced the pine-oak woodland of Jaggard, an unincorporated community east of San Diego. The community named itself after Robert Jaggard who once owned Jaggard's Mining Company. With rumors of discovering gold, Jaggard moved west from Kansas in 1860 to prospect, but it would be four years before he panned a nugget to make a placer mining claim. By then his wife and two young daughters had succumbed to typhoid fever. Depression filled his mind and to cope, Jaggard buried himself in his work. Tracing the nuggets to their source, seven years later Jaggard located a wide vein and made the second lode claim in the area.

Soon, hundreds of people, mostly men, rushed to the area to stake their claims. Jaggard became an overnight tent town with gold fever. Not long after, as the town grew miners built permanent structures. Towns and later cities grew in the old West by this developmental process. Following the scent of money, the masses followed gold, silver, buffalo, and wild horses.

Jaggard was now a popular tourist resort. Streets marketed different gold—chic boutiques, an ice cream and soda fountain, bakery, burger café, pizzeria, and gourmet steak dinner. The town offered a bookstore featuring books on local history, mining museum, Victorian hotel, vintage saloon, and Ginger's Brew, a coffee-house fused with a micro-brewery. The owner, Ginger Katsu, materialized from a special mold. Japanese American, thirty-eight, five-foot-two, weighing in at ninety-seven pounds, she held a

Godan (fifth-degree black belt) in aikido. She was an international instructor who sometimes practiced with six opponents at a time. When the bar became rowdy one night, she threw two bikers through the saloon's swinging doors, not as gently as she would have preferred. With moans and groans, they slammed and bounced outside on the concrete sidewalk.

Molly's cottage was her Aunt Martha Lane's vacation home. Martha seldom visited and because of her affection for Molly, gave her permission to move in. Molly would help defer the earlier cost of canine-sitting and feeding. For the past two years, Molly had accelerated her training in Wicca and had visited every week. Now, since she turned twenty-three she became a permanent resident. With its breezy country feel, seasonal weather, Molly's need for quiet study, and the small-town ambiance, Jaggard offered an idyllic community.

In Molly's mind, with the recent evidence her evocation of thunder and lightning worked, she no longer felt like a puppet on a string, a victim of nature. She was unaware her former fears and of thunderclaps in particular, were neither because she was a girl nor because she had not yet studied alignment with nature. Terror saturated cells of a former memory in another lifetime. Odd how that happens. Memories of another time and space, from a different brain in a different body, project from a cellular awareness karma imprints. Most of the time the details stay hidden, but sometimes, with proper training and intent, the details of past lives show themselves.

No one understood how the transmigration of wisdom or recollection happened, not even the seven witches of the coven led by Meredith, a priestess in the Wiccan tradition. Molly and Meredith believed most of the cool, paranormal phenomena never manifested with an adequate or otherwise acceptable explanation.

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The dominant scientific opinion was karma did not imprint cellular awareness into a new body. Karma and souls neither existed nor continued beyond physical death. Such karma or soul-talk was nonsense, rubbish, comfort beliefs held by infidels or by naïve, susceptible, and ignorant people.

Science was the ruler of truth. The laboratory had not proven souls or psychokinetic powers exist. That belief was not true, but scientists doubted and dismissed even investigated case studies and double-blind experiments that offered statistical evidence. Such evaluations arose from fear and political persuasion more than unbiased investigation.

Molly was precocious enough to understand nature was her ally, not her foe. *Precocious* is a perfect word for an *indigo* child. Indigo children, as the next stage of human evolution, show increased confidence, independence, and empathy. They show heightened curiosity and creativity. Indigo children have paranormal abilities such as telepathy and clairvoyance.

Molly was developing these paranormal skills and a handful more sprang from her natural abilities coupled with her Wiccan tradition. She had experienced psychic abilities since age six and was not always as comfortable with her experiences as she was now. As a child, she felt strange and ostracized as if she did not belong to any group or fit in with her classmates. She experienced visions of the future, few, but enough to rock common sense off its ordinary pedestal.

Adding to her enigmatic perceptions, she saw a ghost now and then, and a few times heard voices originating from outside her head. Sometimes, an experience bothered her, like the time when a day ahead, she predicted the death of a neighborhood dog in front of a car or the time a ghost touched her arm. At other times, she was curious and wanted to understand the meaning of the experiences and how she might control them. None of

the other first-graders revealed these experiences, but children often keep such information secret. Children in first grade do not share uncommon experiences unless they freak out, and then they run to mommy and daddy, not their friends.

Most parents try to comfort their child's strange fears by telling the child not to worry, the disturbing experiences will go away. They tell the child he or she is imagining these things, and that such experiences are the product of fantasy, not reality. These parental statements discredit the child's experience. The child learns not to trust himself or herself and sure enough, over a few more years, the child becomes desensitized as psychic realities fade from recognition.

As an indigo child, Molly had psychic gifts but her mother, Agnes, could not accept such malarkey. Agnes was a religious fundamentalist who believed in the literal word of the Bible and viewed telepathic abilities as works of the Devil. As for Molly's father, he was already absent, having left Agnes after Molly's surprise-birth. He left because he did not like to parent. Agnes never told Molly about his abandonment, but Molly knew anyway. She had read his thoughts on the day he left the house with a suitcase.

When Molly was seven and at the cost of a bankrupt state's budget, Agnes dragged her to a psychologist. The shrink probed around in her early past with ink blots and questions, trying to ferret out the dark source of a childhood trauma or phobia. Child psychology indicates many young children show results of psychosis on ink blots. This occurs because the society has not yet conditioned them about socialized rules of perception. After several weeks, the mental health professional found nothing inside Molly's mind, but justified her job security and funded her personal retail therapy.

Molly was a blend of paranormal ability and a dark past from another lifetime. Recollections of the past were not registered in

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her current memory bank. Access denied to Molly, her mother, and the psychologist. After all, the purpose of bodily death is to erase the blackboard for a clean start. That part works okay, but sometimes when a prior life features traumatic events or a death, the system fails because traumatic cellular memories are not well repaired for the next physical embodiment. It is as if the assembly line rushes along injurious memories when the entity needs special-healing treatment. The entity loses hope. Like old film strip images, love crackles and fades away.

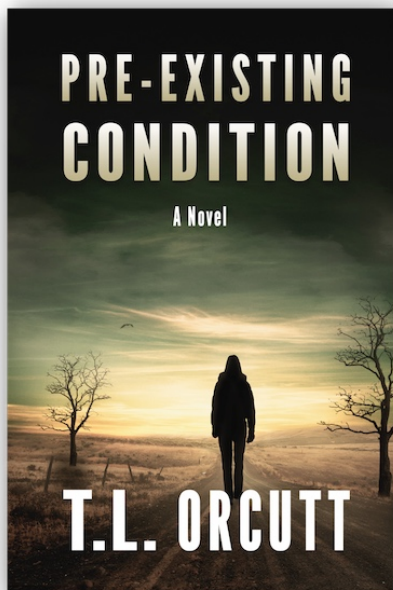
For Molly, early life was a barren landscape—hollow, empty, and unforgiving. More than bruised, hope had withered—until she joined the coven. Though membership and practice with the coven had not restored the faded images, they had fostered empowerment and nurtured aspirations. With these sparkling diamonds, like a far away star, a hint of love twinkled.

With deep blue eyes, coal-black hair and painted thick lips, natural and not swollen by Botox injections, Molly resembled a rocker chic. Her fashion raised a few eyebrows and flavored her characterization as bewitching. Her sensual lure followed an avant-garde *trad goth* style with a splash of rocker chic. Three tats decorated her body: a tasteful honey bee on her right breast, a hummingbird on her lower back, and an artistic dragon circling her right bicep. Complimenting the tats were two piercings: a tiny dumbbell under her right nipple (below which was the honey bee tat), and a ring in her belly button.

Then there were the mysterious and noticeable scars plain at birth. They were more noticeable now than in earlier years. Circling each wrist was a braid of scar tissue that resembled rope burns. The same held true to her ankles. Though no one knew, the welts of scar tissue on her buttocks resembled several discoid blisters.

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Whatever else, Aquarian Molly projected a flirtatious flare for independent adventure that lured men's interest like a cat with a ball of yarn—playful until entangled. This was not intentional but it was effective. In high school, Molly dated a few boys who favored interest in her body. No surprise there, except Molly's brain was equally attractive. That would take some time to discover and she knew most adolescent boys and young men are impatient. Given the predictable development of teenagers, Molly's dating behavior was normal. Up until she met Jake Reed.



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