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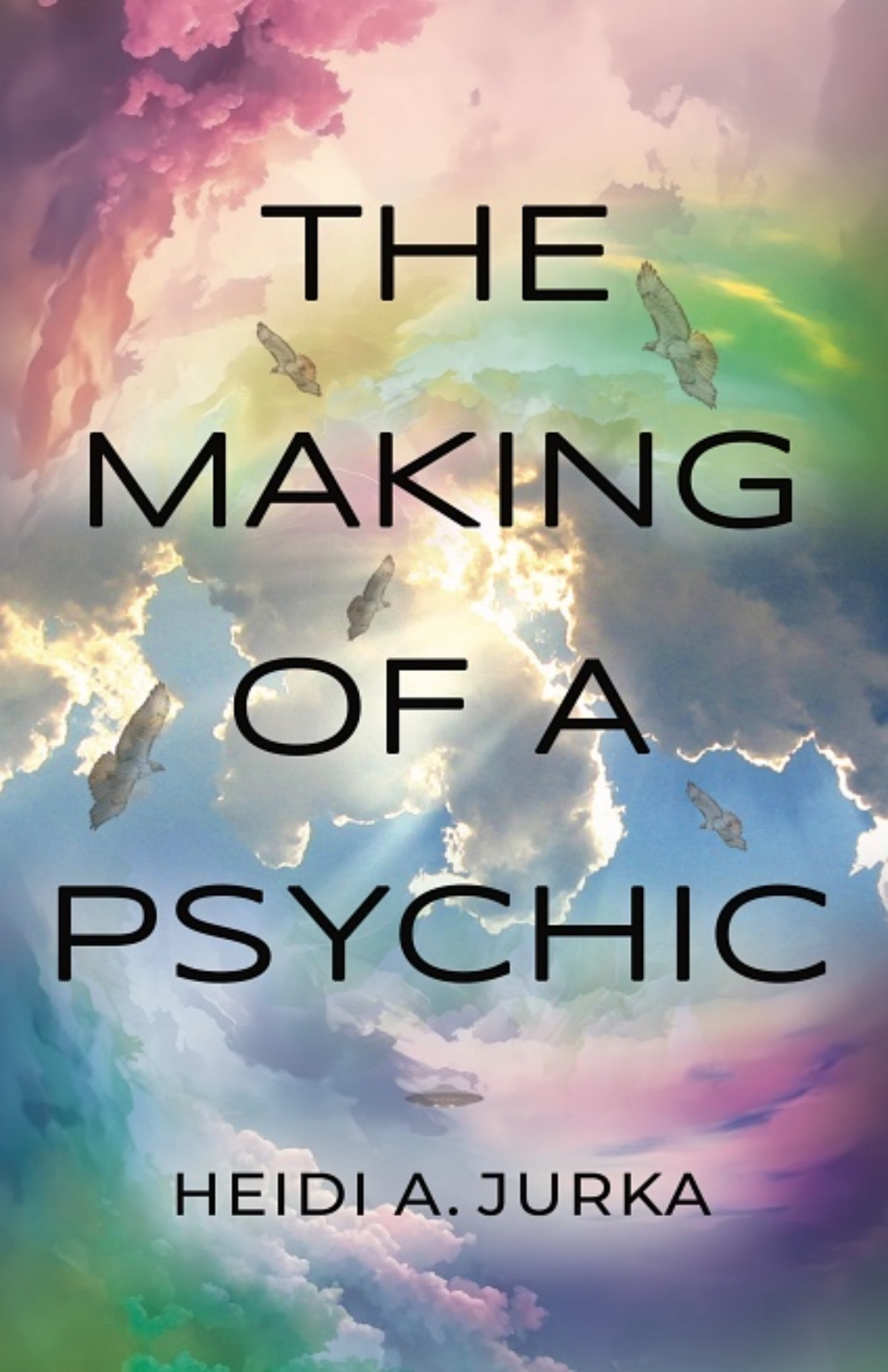
The Making of a Psychic

By Heidi A. Jurka

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THE
MAKING
OF A
PSYCHIC

HEIDI A. JURKA

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In writing this memoir, I delved into my personal notes and journals, plus researched information already published in biographies and online. I consulted with some people that appear in this book, and relied on my own memory of events and timelines in my life. I have changed or omitted the names of some individuals in this book, and in some cases modified identifying details to preserve their privacy and anonymity. Students I mention in school and hospice clients are composites.

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PROLOGUE

Hawkes Avenue, Ossining, New York. Monday, August 7, 1978

“Wake up! Jump! Jump!” I awakened to seemingly far-off voices yelling at me. As I opened my eyes and looked around my third-floor attic bedroom, everything seemed fine. It was an overcast, muggy, subdued summer morning. Then I noticed it was hazy in the room and I smelled smoke. I heard screams coming from the back of the house. Jumping to my feet as the tormented voices became clearer, I dashed to the window. Below me, to my horror, was thick black smoke pouring out of the second story bathroom window directly below me. It was seeping out of the other windows too. This couldn’t be happening. The house was on fire. Still foggy from sleep, I grabbed my car keys, wallet and journal and wearing only a summer nightgown, threw open the door and headed toward the stairs.

Dense acrid smoke and intense heat hit me like a wall. I rushed back into my room and shut the door behind me. *Whoa*, I thought. *This is all happening too fast*. Trying to think of the best way out, I pulled on sneakers and decided to make a real effort to get down those stairs. I gathered myself together and headed out again. Now it was even worse. The smoke was thicker and I could feel it in my lungs. I began coughing. As I attempted to move forward into the smoke, I realized I couldn’t even see the stairs. *Maybe there were no stairs anymore*. I retreated to my room, slamming the door this time. It was now getting hazy in my room, too. I heard shrieking outside the window. It was Don, the pilot staying at the house, and he was frantically clamoring for me to jump out the window. I wasn’t so keen as I saw flames shooting out the first-floor windows as they blasted open from the heat. Broken glass also scattered the pitched porch roof section directly below me two floors down.

I moved back a step to think and decide my next move. Grogginess started coming over me and fleetingly, I considered just sitting down for a minute to think things over and decide what else to take with me. But it hit me, *I'm trapped! Get out! Hurry! Get out right now!* Panic welled up inside me. A whole-body primal holler of fear, rage and defiance, erupted up and bellowed out from the depths of my being. In a flash I rushed to the window, knocking plants out of the way and leaving all belongings behind. Normally that screen was stuck tight but it flew open as I grabbed it and then climbed on the sill to sit precariously, balancing on the edge. Don looked up at me. He had a ladder now that just reached the porch roof below me. I looked into the eyes of his panic-stricken face as he continued to yell, "Heidi, jump, jump now!" I hesitated. I couldn't even see the porch roof because of the dense black smoke pouring out the broken windows. I took a deep breath, held it and leapt out and forward, as far away from the windows as I could, blinded as I hurled through the swirling, sticky, toxic black cloud below. Landing on that slightly pitched porch roof, I was flung forward onto my hands, then whiplashed back by the momentum. Falling backward, sprawled out onto my butt and spine, I felt a light snap in my neck as I landed, hard. My back hurt and for a moment I couldn't move. It flashed that I might be injured. Adrenaline kicked in. *No time to worry about that right now, find out later. MOVE IT!*

I jumped to my feet, coughing, with smoke and shattered glass all around me. Don was unknowingly trying to push the ladder through a tree branch because he'd panicked and had his eyes only on me. I realized things were okay for the moment, and regained some composure. Trying to calm Don, I said, "Don, I'm alright, there's enough time. The branch, move the ladder, move the ladder!" I motioned to him toward the tangled branch as I glanced over my shoulder at the coal-black, foul-smelling cloud blowing out of the windows enveloping me, two feet away. The ladder got put in place, and

I flung myself down it like a flight of stairs. Just then I saw my two other roommates running around from the back of the house with Jaime. It must have been their screams I heard.

I stumbled across the road to a neighbor's house, a grimy blanket wrapped over my thin summer nightgown. Knocking on her door, the woman didn't answer at first, but finally emitted a quiet, "Yes?" I tentatively croaked out through a dry throat, "I'm your neighbor across the street, we just had a major fire. May I please make a phone call?" A pause, then she slowly opened the door a bit and moved back. A petite black woman with her young son stood staring at me. Upon seeing me closer, and I imagine, smelling me, they both took another step back into the shadows of their tidy parlor. She pointed toward the back of the hall.

I needed to call my parents to see if they could bring some real clothes stored at their house. But I couldn't bring myself to give them this shocking news yet. Instead, I called my best friend Clara. She was the editor of a local weekly newspaper in the next town over. I said there were a lot of firemen, but we were mostly OK, and I was sure it would be in the paper and wanted her to hear it from me first. She was her usual supportive, kind self, trying to reassure me it would be ok now. It helped in the moment. When I called my parents next, they were horrified at the news.

As I thanked the neighbor and turned to leave, I saw my reflection in the hall mirror. It stopped me short. My eyes had a truly wild expression and were open much wider than usual. Black streaks ran up both sides of my face from inside my nose and around my mouth. My whole face was caked in runny soot, and my hair was a sticky, jumbled mess only made worse by the drizzle that had started. All exposed skin on my arms and legs was coated in a grey film. I looked like a zombie from a horror movie. No wonder she hesitated to let me in her home.

That's when the reality of the situation really settled in me. I staggered slowly back across the road in shock, joining the others on the lawn. Another fire truck pulled up the long driveway.

Within 40 minutes my parents were at Hawkes Avenue with the extra clothes, plus fresh drinking water and breakfast snacks for us all. They were aghast at the scene. Staring at the embers, I thought back to the countless evenings spent in the comfortable, deep red décor of the living room in that house, hanging on to every word of Andrija's. Dr. Andrija Puharich was the noted scientist, parapsychologist and psychic researcher and I'd been his assistant and study subject/participant for nearly the past two years. At the house we'd listen enraptured as he updated us on his wave technology inventions to combat ELF waves, his latest Faraday Cage session recordings of world renown mediums, or his recent visit from good friend, astronaut Edgar Mitchell, discussing UFOs spotted by the military.

After making sure we were ok and had what we needed, my parents lapsed into the same stunned silence as the rest of us. Standing in the drizzle under the massive oak trees, we were reduced to being spectators as the circus of dense swirling smoke, firefighters and police unfolded. We didn't know then...that it was arson.

Waking up in my old twin bed at my parents' house the next morning, I kept rewinding this mind movie of the fire scene, my body clenching with cellular memories and chills. I had no way of knowing then that this fire would change everything, that I'd now be forced to live an entirely new life. There would be unanswered questions about it for decades. My job and home were lost overnight, and a major regroup was inevitable. But I was ALIVE!

I sank back into the pillows with gratitude until teased back into the present moment by muffled kitchen noises. Coffee and breakfast smells wafted upstairs. Soon I would be dressed in fresh clothes and

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headed down. Faint, oily scents of smoke released through my breath and skin trailed after me for days.

It was 1978, before internet and cell phones. At only 24, I eluded death by minutes and needed to start over completely. So much to digest. How had my early psychic glimmerings evolved into me being here in this fraught moment? I was daunted by the immediacy of creating an almost lost future. What was next?

CHAPTER ONE

I Feel Like a Freak

We all think our lives are normal until we are presented with clear evidence to the contrary. I was no exception. Growing up in the 1950's in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, I felt safe in our small, quaint, picturesque village. It was an hour north of New York City on a wider point of the mighty Hudson River, over three and a half miles across. Croton-on-Hudson was a bit infamous, a commuter town with other intrigue. Archeological evidence indicates it was populated by Native Americans as early as 4950 B.C.

By the late 1890's New York City residents needed more drinking water. Croton was chosen for a massive new reservoir site and aqueduct system carrying high quality drinking water 35 miles away. Sicilian immigrant masons started building the largest hand-masoned dam in the world there in 1892. Croton Dam was second in size only to the Great Pyramid of Egypt in hand-laid structures. There were rumored ties to the NYC Mafia, and there also were a number of communists in the 1940's. John Reed, the American journalist, poet and communist activist, and the subject of the 1981 Academy Award winning film "Reds" starring Warren Beatty, Diane Keaton, and Jack Nicholson, lived for a time in Croton up in the hills. Part of the film was shot there. A few houses up there had secret stashes for radical writings, some big enough for hiding people, too. Croton made an obvious home base, quiet and removed from the city, but still convenient. We had intellectuals, artists, writers and a few anarchists, as well as the more blue-collar jobs in railroad and construction.

The surrounding area was culturally and racially diverse. This made for an interesting "Letters to the Editor" section in the local weekly paper. Croton's location attracted celebrities as well, since it was

such an easy drive or train ride to the NYC city theatres. Large properties overlooking the Hudson River or up in the highlands were available, with the much-desired privacy. Actors Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Dorothy Sands, Gloria Swanson, Jackie Gleason, Howard de Silva, Allen Funt, singer Barbara Streisand, and later musician Peter Frampton were just a few who lived there for a time through the years. You would spot them at the grocery occasionally or exchange a quick nod at the diner. They were not pestered in Croton.

My great-aunt was the famous stage actress Blanche Yurka, though she was remembered most for her 1935 film role as Madame Defarge in Dicken's *A Tale of Two Cities*, with Ronald Coleman. As a child my family went to some dazzling parties in her Manhattan apartment. She was good friends with actor Basil Rathbone and his wife, of Sherlock Holmes fame. But I was quite young, and my most vivid memory of that time is of falling asleep in a huge array of fur coats, elegantly perfumed and piled high on the bed in the spare room. I think the lasting effect of my hometown and the time in history I grew up in was a sense of unique possibilities and rapidly changing times ahead. I was in fourth grade when Kennedy was shot, and my family all sat and watched the moon landing on our old black and white TV with the rabbit ears antenna. Even before the age of ten I felt a strong urge to reach for something more than the mundane. I don't ever remember being interested in the white picket fence, marriage and 2.5 children scenario as a life goal.

For a kid, Croton was a compact and manageable town, wedged between Ossining (of Sing Sing Prison fame) and Peekskill (where the Indian Point Nuclear facility resides). Large parks edged the riverfront, there were ponds for ice skating and Silver Lake for swimming. With a lot of undeveloped property upland back then, people would ride their horses along the power lines near the peaks and sometimes go camping up there. It was safe enough that doors were often left unlocked. Small

packs of kids ran freely, spilling out into side streets for spontaneous games of tag, bike rides, or clamoring around in patches of woods. Woven through the neighborhood was a loose network of “housewives” who kept rough tabs on us all.

Our house was on a hill, the large corner yard rimmed with tall, fragrant lilac bushes. From my second-floor bedroom I could just see the far-off river barges on the glistening Hudson. I watched the river for hours, dreaming of adventure yet to come. The neighboring children were my playmates and we enjoyed the usual games of hide and seek, plus the boys’ favorite, Cowboys and Indians.

Bored one day with my usual role of being the Indian and tied to a tree because I was the girl, I yelled out to my two male companions, “I don’t want to play this anymore!” All the other choices they offered sounded equally unexciting. “Well, what *DO* you want to play?” Without thinking, I turned and pointed to our apple tree in the backyard and said, “Hey, let’s all get really small and run around inside that leaf!” Based on my earliest nature experiences, this seemed completely normal to me. I was used to the feeling of my “essence” rising out of my body. When this happened, my physical form felt gently suspended in place, paused for a few moments despite no sense of time as my “lighter self” climbed around the flora. Then a pleasing light tickle as I merged back in. The boys just stopped and stared at me in stunned silence. In that long moment, I felt my stomach clench with fear. *They think I’m a freak.* It was an experience I came to know well in the years that followed. Quickly and quietly, I said “Ok, we can go back to Cowboys and Indians”. I never said a word to anyone about it and desperately hoped they wouldn’t either.

From about the age of five I began to realize that I was different from the other children I knew, even from my older sister. I enjoyed my alone time, and would draw animals for hours. I spent a fair amount of time outside in the yard gazing at the old, red climbing vine roses that

crawled all over the back of the small, detached wooden garage at our first little house. I was fascinated by the entire world I saw within the matrix of the rose's twisting branches, thorns and flowers, and the insects that made their homes there. The red-pink blossoms felt like velvet between my tiny five-year old's fingers, contrasted by the bright green, red-tipped and needle-sharp thorns. I would close my eyes and drink in the fragrance. In an instant I became very small in my mind, able to scamper around inside the flowers and climb up the vines like a bean stalk, using the thorns as handles to ascend. The fuzzy bees seemed gigantic, with their huge glossy black eyes as they swooped in looking for nectar, making a roaring swoosh sound as they buzzed in and out. The ants and other bugs seemed like delicate puppies and kittens to me, and I would watch them do their thing and occasionally gently pet them. You could see right through their pastel bodies, full of yellow and green light.

Ladybugs were my favorite. They were so friendly in a motherly sort of way. Up close they looked feminine and dressy with their dainty legs, and had elegant black spots on round, shiny, candy-red shells. They would raise and lower their moon shaped wings at each other in a secret code. At night I would stand in the yard with fireflies all around me. I liked the light caress on my skin as they gently lit upon me with their warm, mysterious glow.

Flowers fascinated me, each seeming as different as planets. I loved to lie belly down on soft moss, full of postage stamp size villages magnified in front of me. It was a miniature world of grassy knolls smelling of moist earth, with wee spotted mushrooms, oversize transparent dew drops and shadowy diminutive spirits. There was no real sense of time. I felt completely safe and at ease. Much more so than being with people, including my own family.

I loved birds perhaps the most. We had robins nesting in our apple tree, so I would climb up a bit to see the mother settled in. My parents

had Audubon bird song records, and I enjoyed listening to the different bird calls. Occasionally we would walk in the local bird sanctuary and I would pipe up, “That’s a red winged blackbird!” as we passed the marshy part of the pond, or I’d respond with the name of other bird songs I recognized from the recordings. It was easy for me to visualize flying with them, looking down on my house and village with a bird’s eye view. This place would become a real sanctuary in my teen years, as I struggled to understand what was happening to me with the overload of stimuli and my enhanced perceptions of what was going on around me. Sometimes sound and light were heightened to the point of discomfort. I seemed to notice EVERYTHING. Colors were stretched and I felt like I saw new ones. Certain noises and visuals were intrusive. It was overwhelming and I was not yet skilled at wrangling the benefits from these heightened perceptions.

The tall trees and soothing sounds of the wind brushing their branches provided solace. I felt them hug me back when I grasped the great pines around their girth and held tight. Leaning my back against them I looked straight up into their huge branches. I felt invisible and melted with relief into their great solid stature and the calm wisdom of their age.

The following year when I was six, we moved to our home with the far-off Hudson view. I started having a recurring nightmare. It didn’t come every night or every week. Sometimes I would have it only once and would wake up screaming and crying, terrified and afraid to go back to sleep. Other nights it was waiting for me like a sniper as I dozed off. My parents would rush into my room, trying to calm and soothe me, but as time went on they eventually decided that I should tough it out alone. They would not come any more despite my anguished cries. This went on for the good part of a half-year, with my mother trying to get me to describe the menace in my dreams. “Is it a monster?” she would ask, “or like something you saw on TV?”

Articulating this dream as a six-year-old wasn't easy. Not like anything she described, I ended up calling it Big Red. It always started the same: I was out in an open area, mostly a flat plain, by myself or playing with other children. I would hear this eerie sound, almost the absence of noise. The sky would turn an odd orange-yellow color. Suddenly all my playmates would vanish and a wave of dark red, almost a rust color, would start creeping in. It came from all sides, slithering up over any rocks or boulders, surrounding me as it approached. It reminded me of an ocean wave gathering in and up on itself as it moved back out. It was accompanied by a soft, but very high-pitched whining sound. I knew that its intentions were to swallow me up, drown me, suffocate me, to completely consume me. I also knew if it succeeded that I would physically die. I could keep it at bay for a while, using all my will and might to stare it down. It would slowly recede. But as I became exhausted from the effort, and let my guard down, it instantly rushed back, right in my face. I would wake up screaming in terror, sobbing and sweating. It took everything I had to force it away. This epic battle continued for months. Finally, my mother took the time to sit with me and get a real explanation about what it was. After careful listening, she said, "The next time it comes I want you to stare it down, and tell it you are not afraid of it, and for it to go away and never come back again."

"But I *am* afraid of it."

"It doesn't matter," she said. "Next time just yell at it, face it, tell it you aren't afraid of it anymore and to leave you alone and never to return."

I sniffled through my tears. "I'll try."

The battle with Big Red began again ten days or so later. I repelled it by staring it down and mentally forcing it to retreat. It had almost crept away over the faraway low hills when I let down my guard from pure fatigue. It came roaring back and I whirled around just in time to see it

about to overtake me. I reengaged using all my mental will. Then I remembered what my mother had said. Facing it squarely and yelling as loudly as I could, “Go away, go away! I am not afraid of you anymore! I don’t want you here, Leave me alone! I want you to leave and never come back! Never return!” Continuing to bore into it visually, the intense rust red color looked flatter in its brilliance and it slowly retreated from me. I kept at it, staring it down with all my strength and determination. It started to retreat over the far hills, lingering just over the caps, hovering there. “No!” I commanded. “Leave!” Persevering, I focused totally on it. I felt it let go internally, release somehow, as it slowly disappeared over the hills. Forcing it down in my mind, I pushed it farther, farther away. As I kept concentrating, and falling into an exhausted sleep, it vanished like the last slip of the sun setting over a mountaintop. Big Red never returned. I was haunted and confused about this dream for many years and had vivid memories of it. It wasn’t until my college years that its meaning finally became clear, at a healing session when I began meditating regularly and exploring intuition and expanded consciousness.

My parents were conservative-living savers. With their solid middle-class income, we planned and enjoyed some unusual two-week summer vacations. Mom did all the research for us. The summer after my fourth-grade year we went to Florida. The drive down from New York in our old Ford station wagon was a long, hot excursion. It was just the AM radio and no air conditioning. My older sister and I had to amuse ourselves with Mad Libs, license plate counting games, cards and magazines as the miles droned by. I liked just watching out the windows, noting the different terrain and wondering about the lives of the people I saw as we sped past. It was my first trip south and I loved the sprawling old trees with Spanish moss hanging down. I read in my little tourist book about how they had used it for stuffing mattresses and dressing wounds in the old days.

We all were excited about our stop at Santini's marine park on the eastern coast. Home of the "Flipper" movie dolphins, there were also rescues and dolphins in training. We felt great anticipation as we arrived. The dolphins were in wide open fenced enclosures, penned up in the coastal water inlet. No separate holding tanks or pools. We marveled at the shows as we sat on a small set of bleachers, right off the dock. The trainers had the dolphins jump, flip and fetch to the delight of our audience of 25 or so. It was such a homey Mom and Pop place, real old Florida. When the demonstration was over, Mr. Santini turned with a smile while surveying the group, and asked, "Who here would like to swim with Susie today?" There was a gasp and then hushed silence. Susie was the dolphin from the Flipper movie. Did he really mean get in the water with her and touch her? What he was offering had barely sunk in when my mom raised her hand and said, "We would!" Mr. Santini looked over me and my sister, and then asked me, "You know how to swim, right?" I was dumb struck. From behind me my mother's voice came clearly and firmly: "Yes, she does."

This wasn't completely true. I was a tenuous swimmer, having almost drowned the summer before in our local lake before anyone noticed I was in trouble. I went out farther than I was supposed to, but managed to crawl back to shore and never told anyone out of embarrassment. My confidence was low, especially in front of a crowd with Mr. Santini's friendly but piercing stare, sizing me up. I felt a rush of excitement as an awareness of the enormity of this opportunity surged through me. Suddenly everything I saw looked brighter, lit up. It occurred to me that it was new for Mom to support me in this way. Filled with surprise and gratitude, I looked back at her. She just nodded with a small smile. She wasn't going to let this opportunity slip past us. I could barely sit still to listen to Mr. Santini's instructions, my body trembling with the anticipation of something so unparalleled in my young life. My sister and the others in our small group of five or so who were picked to

go were equally roused and eager. This was decades before “swimming with dolphins” became a regular spectacle at marine parks.

My sister went before me. When my turn came, I was instructed to jump in the water off the rustic wooden dock and wait for Susie to swim up alongside me, then hold onto her fin. She would swim around the large enclosure towing me. As a ten-year-old, the dolphin seemed enormous when it came up to me, and I could see her smile and her many teeth. She looked me right in the eye as she placed her body next to mine. I grabbed her fin with my right hand, my mind flooded with sensations of the water, the smooth feel of her skin and the outline of the bulk of her long body next to me. She started to move off, but I hadn't gotten a real good grip yet, and lost my hold as she mildly bumped against me with her lower body. Susie sensed instantly that I wasn't there and with the tiniest of tail movements repositioned herself next to me and waited until she knew I had a firm hold on her fin. She then very gently and slowly moved forward with me, and I could sense her holding her lower body just inches to the side away from me so that it wouldn't bump me again.

Then we were off around the wide, fenced inlet enclosure, and I felt like I had entered a new world. It was just Susie and me and the sea. I morphed into a mermaid. The rippling water felt silky, parting around us in ribbons as we glided forward. We were one creature, so tuned into each other physically and mentally, that it seemed like we agreed on our route in the enclosure without saying a word to each other. My perception of the earth and what was possible expanded in that instant. The scope of Susie's incredible intelligence, sensitivity and gentle caring washed over me. I felt like she had read my mind and my body, knew my fears about the water and had taken great care of me. It was completely unique in my experience. I would never be the same. I was now connecting to a force much bigger than myself or even Susie. It was a kind of deep love and soaring joy.

At the end of our ride, she gently brought me right up along the dock and waited there, keeping me stable until I was pulled out. This dolphin swim was one of the great moments of my life, not just my childhood. Wrapped in a towel on the dock afterward, a deep shiver ran through me as I grappled with so many feelings and emotions in an instant. Later, driving onward in the car, my sister and I barely spoke for hours. We just occasionally looked at each other, as we replayed in our hearts, minds and bodies this deep emotional dive we had just experienced.

My interest in dolphins and other creatures of the sea expanded greatly after that. But it also germinated a curiosity in what I came to know as the spiritual side of life, of telepathy and intuition. I felt a type of pure communication with Susie that I had never experienced before. It electrified me. I was hungry for more of it. It led to my much deeper interest in the unseen and unspoken ways of the world and animal communication. I have Susie, and that nudge from my mom, to thank for my launch into the study of metaphysics. It was just the beginning of what would shape a good portion of my life, travels and work as a psychic. Seeing a dolphin out in the water when travelling, I always think of Susie and the gifts of her smile.

My love of travel was ignited early by my dolphin adventure as a kid. But there were also many more exceptional family excursions that broadened my horizons and piqued my curiosity for other cultures, sights and sounds.

My sensing and intuition also heightened as I grew, as a survival mechanism. My parents, like many of their generation, drank a considerable amount. My father, a dentist, was 6' 4" tall, and my mother, mostly a homemaker, was 5' 3". They would drink the same amount or sometimes my mother would have a martini before he got home. But because of the difference in their size and metabolism, the effects of alcohol were very different between them. My father's

personality barely changed. My mother was highly intelligent, an avid reader with a great sense of humor, but became moody, sometimes sickeningly sweet or gushingly sentimental. Then, like flipping a switch, she would become angry, belittling and accusatory towards my sister and me. I later found out that my mother was also taking “little yellow pills,” just like the Rolling Stones song, “Mother’s Little Helper.” Uppers, given to her by her doctor for weight loss. Because of her heart murmur, rigorous exercise was discouraged. These pills were in a pretty little yellow canister, and it wasn’t until I was a teen that I actually read the label of the no longer used pills. Combined with the alcohol and not enough food during the day she was often prickly and irritable. She could scare me, especially at night after my father went to bed. Realizing I couldn’t trust her was heartbreaking. My father dismissed our first anguished entreaty for help, only saying in passing, “Well, your mother has had kind of a hard life.” This made him untrustworthy as well, despite his more affable personality. I knew early on that I was on my own in this.

Walking home from school, as soon as our house came into view, I would start trying to sense what the atmosphere was like at home. I scanned the energy in and around the house, though I didn’t understand what that meant yet. Walking through the door, I became very aware of exactly how much my mother had drunk by mentally sizing her up, by her energy and looking for changes in the glow I started to see around her. I became instantly able to read her: what was on her mind, if she was drinking yet, her mood, and possible drama coming on around the dinner table. The unpredictability of an alcoholic home took its toll on my self-esteem and confidence. It also made me hypersensitive at school. I became more withdrawn and shyer. My grades suffered. I was eventually dropped from the most advanced reading group, which was humiliating. Teachers gently broached if there were any problems at home, but this was the early 60’s and mostly, those sorts of questions

were off limits. I could never tell them about the drinking. I had this secret and I was expected to keep it.

The bright spot in all this was my grandmother, Gramma Jurka. She was the one stable, consistently trustworthy person I could count on as a child. Affectionate, encouraging and verbally tender with us, she let me see what was possible in a true loving relationship. My sister and I were often dropped off on Sundays at her house. It was a relief for us, and no doubt, for our parents. We felt safe with Gramma, who liked to cook and bake and encouraged us to participate with her. She hugged us and told us what wonderful girls we were.

My Aunt Edith Jurka was also sometimes there, with stories and gifts from her exotic trips to Japan, China and India, including full kimono costumes for my sister and me. Many exuberant, carefree hours were spent learning to play croquet on Gramma's back lawn, and Edith created treasure hunts at Easter inside Gramma's elegant, mysterious old dwelling. I dreamed of a portal in a locker sized space off the kitchen, next to a huge old wooden carved sideboard in the dining room. It was so vivid that I went to that exact spot when visiting her house, feeling a vague swirling energy in the spot I dreamed of. I would just stand there a minute or two, attempting to sense the energy. It was not at all scary, but I did not verbally share this find with others.

I realized later that these painful episodes at home were actually helping to train and hone my intuitive skills in ways that would serve me well. I now saw colored energy fields around my classmates, and could sense how they might be feeling physically by the muddiness or brilliance of these fields. I could tune in to them, and sometimes see flashbacks, like short movie clips of the night before with their families. Once I had a vision of seeing a particular girl in the attic of her home, looking through a weathered photo album while plopped in an antique rocker. The next morning, I overheard her telling her girlfriends about the ancient photo album she had found in the attic, buried inside her

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grandma's trunk. Initially I didn't think much of this, because I assumed everyone could perceive these things. But I soon realized that was not the case, and I felt shame, like I was eavesdropping on their private thoughts and actions. I was careful not to linger or try to know more. *I was a freak*, and I couldn't tell a soul what I was experiencing. I began to think I was crazy.

CHAPTER TWO

This Tastes Weird

Junior High was all about fitting in. I was athletic, loved books and belonged to the Girl Scouts. I had a couple of close friends but wasn't a classic "joiner" type. Developing early, I was already being teased about my fit and budding woman's body. One teacher in a later grade even repeatedly called me "the Blonde Bombshell" when I walked in the door, prompting humiliating stares at my physique from the class. I always got way more attention from men than I ever wanted, starting after sixth grade. At a two-week Girl Scout Camp that summer, a male riding stable employee casually cornered me in an empty horse stall. Mildly throwing one arm over my shoulders, he then drew me to him, force-kissing me on the mouth while groping my breasts and buttocks. I was frozen in fear until we heard someone coming and he let go. I bolted. Another girl who he'd similarly grabbed and I reported him to our counselors. We were immediately switched to another stable for the camp duration. But I was a changed person after that "first kiss" with a forevermore, acute radar.

I found solace in the woods, in nature, in tranquility. I soothed myself sitting quietly by a brook or stream and just smelling the air with my eyes closed, or drinking in the green of the foliage like a tonic. I saw delicate, airy, lofty energies dancing about, with sparkling soft hues in and around the water and grasses. It was comforting, along with my bird friends' calls.

In eighth grade science class I found some major relief. My desk was near the window in the back of the room close to a large bookcase. I drifted off as the teacher droned on about barometric pressure and while I absently scanned the book titles on the shelf. I happened to rest my gaze on a paperback about someone called Edgar Cayce, and pulled

it out. As I furtively scanned the back cover, trying to appear still engaged in class, I felt a rush of anticipation. I took the book home and was blown away by what I read.

Finally, someone I could relate to. Someone who felt like me and heard and saw some of the things I did, and used them to help people. He was called a “psychic”, and he was accepted, even admired for it. It was a revelation and joy surged within me. I felt the spark of a passionate flame ignite. I tried to find other books in the school library about Cayce but there weren’t any. No one else had heard of him. Too intimidated to speak to my teacher about it, I returned the book to the shelf. Life went on and I became preoccupied with all things teenager. But my perceptions were starting to change.

By high school, I sometimes saw dense, muddied, yet diffuse cloud-like puffs of energy on bodies of people who were sick. I named them the “Brown Spots.” While drifting off, unfocused in class, I began to notice multicolored energy fields (now referred to as auras), surrounding some students. One older girl I noticed from the next town over was friendly and vivacious, but seemed anguished about her need to fit in with a certain crowd and be accepted. I saw sparse, leaky, dissipating energy around her. She passed away before I graduated high school. I noticed a couple others with similar energy fields at football games or similar local group events. I was learning to discern, so not surprised when they also died young. There was no one to confide in about this, and not one other person seemed to have similar visuals as my own, or were willing to say so. *I was a freak.*

In a strange way this actually built my confidence, because I began to consistently see glimmers of the future for some of the crowd. Sadly, it wasn’t all rosy. A cheerleader grades ahead would peak early and never make it to college because she would get pregnant. The jock in a nearby town with the promising sports scholarship would crash his car, breaking his ankle so badly his athletic career would be over. But the

nerdy science geek would find love and happiness. I saw him ringed by happy children playing in his yard. I saw it all, in little fleeting glimpses like snapshots, when I allowed myself. It felt strange and wrong to know these things and confusing since I couldn't see my own destiny. Anxious and often sleep deprived, I began sneaking out at night, dressed all in black so I wasn't easily seen. I roamed the back roads outside the village in the cool quiet hours, trying to hide when cars would come by. The quiet night sky, and lack of stimuli were so comforting.

My mother was raised Catholic and bitterly resented the confines of its sexist dogma. She was adamant that she “would not have the FEAR of God struck into HER children!” Our version of Sunday church was a hearty breakfast together around the table, and the Sunday New York Times. My Dad's side was casual Presbyterian and we only went to church with our grandmother a couple of times to see what it was like. But even then, in the early 1960's it was obvious that girls weren't really welcome to completely participate. There were no women ministers or priests around. Girls were expected to serve refreshments and clean up afterwards. Oh, and smile, a lot. I couldn't see the appeal of any of the local religions. Instead, I was a Girl Scout, and went camping, enjoyed the horseback riding, camaraderie and group projects we focused on.

It was painful and lonely at times, like many teen-age sagas. I learned to be more self-reliant and resourceful. I wrestled with my growing intuitive abilities, which I only shared with two close friends. Wrangling my feelings about emotional support disappointments experienced in an alcoholic homelife, my anger surfaced. I questioned authority and came of age during the peak of the whole “flower power” era of the 1960s. I turned 16 the year of Woodstock and so not allowed to attend. However, I did make a pilgrimage to the rainy Watkins Glen concert with friends, along with 600,00 others a couple of years later.

We had a different principal every year of high school. In my freshman year, all students needed a pass to go to the bathroom, and

girls weren't allowed to wear pants, or take drafting and shop classes. But Home Economics was required for girls. In my senior year of 1972, students were smoking pot in the bathrooms and wandering off campus at will. The pill was now widely available on demand, and abortions were made legal by the Supreme Court that year. It was the year *Ms. Magazine* first began, yet sexual harassment in the workplace, which I experienced more than once, was still perfectly legal. Women were just beginning to be able to get a credit card, or a mortgage on their own without a male co-signer. However, the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Act, legally protecting spouses from wifebeaters, didn't become law until 1976. For the guys, the Vietnam War, not over until 1975, held the draft lottery. Being called up to fight hung heavily over their heads all during high school, as some older male siblings, friends and cousins perished. It was a turbulent time of conscientious objectors, civil rights efforts and anti-war demonstrations.

Amongst all the turmoil, I found the hippy mindset very liberating. It preached freedom to do what you pleased as long as you didn't hurt anyone and PEACE was the way. I felt like less of a freak, was much happier and more accepting of myself and everyone else. It was a fun time of stringing peace bead necklaces with my friends and making tie-dyed shirts as we listened to Jefferson Airplane, Bob Dylan and Grateful Dead albums. Some of my friends were in a band and now we were the cool crowd.

I began to get quite rebellious in the second half of my sophomore year of high school, growing impatient with the restraints imposed by my parents. I saw them as complete hypocrites. They were enraged when they found out I smoked pot. I reminded them that booze had been illegal not that long before and weed had once been legal. They told me I could now not walk anywhere after dark, alone or with just girlfriends in our very low crime, tight-knit community. I wasn't having it.

Experimenting with weed, LSD and mushrooms, I found psychedelics to be quite useful as a barrier breaker in consciousness when not taken in big doses. My first time, I took only a quarter tab of “Orange Sunshine” acid, and joined similarly dosed companions in a drive to the top of our local dam. As we wandered around enjoying the expansive views from our perch, Wendall sighed deeply and said “Wow, far-out!” in along drawn-out tone. Soon we all were “Wowing” it up, and giggling at our impromptu chorus of similar tones. Multi-colored, shimmering streaks of light framed everything and I enjoyed the vivid kaleidoscope of colors, patterns and the stretching of reality. But I did not like losing control, so was wary of going overboard on dosage. I felt a deeper connection to the planet and universe through it ultimately, and for that alone I valued it for a time. I felt “tuned in” but in a more playful, joyous way than in my protectionist mode when I was straight. My friends and I usually took psychedelics as a small group out in the woods, where we could romp around undisturbed. We flung paper airplanes back and forth, batted badminton birdies about, strummed guitars or played tambourines and harmonicas. We admired the wavering flower buds and their zigzagging bees amongst the gorgeous scenery while we avoiding driving. Humming a song together was a whole-body tingle with a vibration so strong we imagined it could reach the creamy half-moon shining over us on the warm summer evening. LSD made me reach for something more from myself internally, which was the tool I came away from it with. My use tapered off before college, as I felt I had gotten what I needed from it. Weed was the dominant drug in our little circle of hippies.

In April 1971, then a junior in high school, I spontaneously helped my school chum, artist Richard Bartell, find the perfect new family dog. He documented this event and kindly allowed me to share his 2020 post at [BARTELLDESIGN.BLOGSPOT.COM](https://bartelldesign.blogspot.com), called “How I Got My Ossining Retriever After a Chance Encounter”. It was a time when my

psychic abilities were budding and I was gaining confidence in them. The blog post was a unique opportunity to read how others experienced and viewed me at that time. Here are some excerpts:

“I believe it was a Saturday afternoon, and in my profound isolation, my teenage angst and loneliness, I wandered off, taking a long walk as I was apt to do. This day, I sat on the high school lawn. I was talking to one or two people, not sure who, and I had not been there long when enter Heidi Jurka, that’s Jurka as with a Y, spelled Jurka, pronounced Yurka. Heidi floated in like some angel of G-d, an instrument of change, of cause and effect, to transform one thing into another. I can’t say I knew Heidi well, but knew her well enough to know she was easy going, self-confident, with a flashing, knowing smile. She had empathy and situational awareness. Heidi knew how to read any interaction and rightly assess whether it was for good, or not. These are excellent skills for a life of good, or danger avoidance and survival. Heidi had her head together. Heidi also had a car.

We spoke briefly, and somehow it came up that I was wanting a dog. Our family had always had a dog, and now she was passed away. Our bird died, our dog died, my sister got married and moved away, my brother had graduated college and was long gone. My dad always worked long hours. The house was quiet. I had always spent a lot of time alone, and I was ok with that, but I figured having a dog to hang with would be a good thing. My parents had said no to this request. With that, Heidi jumped up and announced, ‘let’s go get one’. It was like a Shakespearian rallying cry, as in some way the

answer to this burst of exuberance and energy had to be ‘yes’ and it was. Just like that we were off in her car. I had no idea where we were going. After a bit, I asked her and Heidi said we should go to Ossining, to the pet store in Arcadia Shopping Center. Sounded like a good plan.

As I recall, we hardly spoke on the way. A couple of times I glanced over at Heidi and she looked calm, with a hint of a smile. We arrived at the pet store, and everything moved fast from there. In my experience, often when you are trying to get something done, either things fall in to place, one thing flows into another, or, every step of the way is a challenge, and requires thought and effort. This time was like the former. We entered, were greeted, said we wanted to get a dog. They indicated something like we had come to the right place. We wandered over, saw two or three dog crates and there was this little guy, scruffy with a beard, mostly black with white markings and a long tail. He saw us and seemed to be listening, moving his eyes only, following the conversation. The crate was unlocked and he emerged looking quietly happy, hoping not to blow his chance. He interacted beautifully. The pet shop owner praised him. Okay, how much to bring him home? \$15. Somehow, I had a little money on me. I may well have gotten a few dollars from Heidi. It could be that I owe her money now. I asked what kind of dog this was, and with a smile, the staff told me it was an ‘Ossining Retriever’. Like that we were off, heading back to my house.

From there, things unfolded in an unusual fashion. It was very unusual, but my mother was away. I think

she had been visiting relatives out of state. My dad was at work. Most unusual, just as we got home, my brother showed up unannounced, not sure why, but he was there, a big dog lover. Heidi smiled and quickly left, like an angel whose mission was complete.”

For me, this was an early, positive confirmation of my intuitive strengths. I learned that if I was just bold enough to act in that moment, it would line up perfectly for Richard. I loved that it did. Henry grew into a happy, long lived, cherished family member that I got to see occasionally until I moved away.

In early summer before my senior year, I flew to the Devon countryside in England. My parents had lived in Devon during World War II, my father stationed on a naval ship in Plymouth. Befriended by a local couple in the area, my parents became lifelong friends with Jean and Fredrick. Jean was very active in the community and started one of the earliest therapeutic riding programs for children. Always a horse lover, Jean arranged for me to stay for six weeks. I earned my room/board and riding lessons at the stable by mucking out stalls, caring for the horses and helping lead trail rides up in often-foggy, legendary English moors where wild ponies still roamed. It was unlike anything else I had seen before. I worked hard physically with one day off a week, but enjoyed the fellowship with the other “grooms” and the immersion in all thing’s “horse” in the bucolic countryside.

We worked Jeans’ program, with children who had been exposed to Thalidomide in the womb, a sedative that was withdrawn after thousands of babies were born severely disabled. I saw heartbreaking challenges for some of these kids. Their limbs failed to fully develop, some with only a couple of fingers protruding from their shoulders or elbows. Knees that worked backwards, birdlike, on malformed feet. There were eye and organ problems, and a host of other well

documented, devastating, and disfiguring ailments. We used the short, sturdy, retired former “mine ponies” (used to pull the heavy carts in the coal mines) for their sessions. Twice a week, working in pairs on either side of a pony, we would lift a child onto the saddle, supporting them with our arms and bodies as they adjusted to the height and feel of an animal shifting its weight below them. Sometimes that was enough of a challenge for their first time. Carefully we led them around a large outdoor ring, stopping and starting, turning, so they could orientate themselves in different positions. I saw first-hand the phenomenal, positive results of this program. Children so happy to be out in the fresh air, interacting with the friendly ponies, strove to sit up straight and balance on their own in the saddle, enhancing their back and neck muscles over the weeks. Their confidence grew weekly as their bodies increased in strength and stamina to the tearful delight of their parents. The glimmer of a more independent life dangled before them all. The ponies were a wonderment, as they clearly were “tuned in” to the vulnerabilities of their charges. They did not fuss, never bucked and basked in the love pouring out of the children’s grateful hugs. It reminded me of my telepathic communication experiences with Suzie the dolphin, and I bathed in the healing love I felt from the process. Humbled and honored to be part of the kids’ astonishing progress over the summer and inspired by their resilience, it made me want to be a “helper.”

I doubled up on my classes in my senior year, and despite being forced to take secretarial classes, graduated a half year early. I wanted and needed to graduate then because by that time I was living in an apartment with my boyfriend and looking to find work. My parents had said before I left for England, “You need to decide over the summer if you are going to adhere to our rules when you get back, or move out.” They believed I would be admonished by this and concede to their directives. But after being on my own overseas that summer, it just

seemed logical to stay independent. However, “good girls” didn’t do that back then, and my parents pretty much disowned me by senior year. My mother was now working as the receptionist at my dad’s dental practice, and they did not attend my small high school graduation ceremony that spring. We did not have much contact for months afterward.

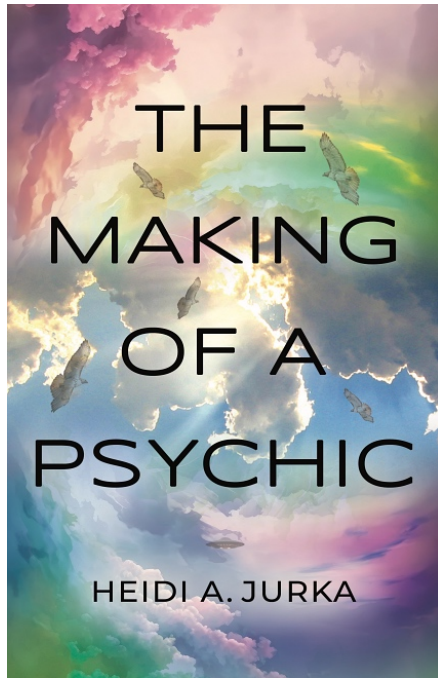
My boyfriend and I struggled with poverty at times over the months. Sometimes we went hungry, and at one point had to camp, waking up with slugs on our blankets in the muggy summer mornings. The only jobs available to me were secretarial or domestic, which paid poorly and neither were a good fit. Eventually I found work helping out at an art school, and single again, moved into a co-ed, older colonial style house we dubbed “Manorloo,” with other friends as roommates. Over dinner we recited skits from Firesign Theatre records, played music and hosted parties. I enjoyed it, but was restless, wanting out of my small town onto bigger adventures, and eventually, college.

Still having bizarre experiences, I could now sometimes call my pets to me mentally. My friends and I would often hang out on top of the Croton Dam, or in the park below. It was nicknamed “Weekend Woodstock” by the local paper because of all the parties. After enjoying the majestic river view up top one afternoon, my friend Clara and her boyfriend decided to drive back into town. Their car approached the sharp left turn to get onto Rt. 129, the major road in the area. Walking farther away from them along the top of the dam, I suddenly whirled around and bellowed “STOP!!!” He slammed the brakes and just then a large work truck careened around that turn, going very fast. If they had pulled out farther, they would have been struck and probably killed in that moment. They both turned and looked at me in shock from inside the car with their mouths agape. I just waved them off, turned and walked on my way. But I WAS thinking about it.

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Mostly, I thought about going to California. To me it seemed like the Promised Land, away from my unhappy family life and a place to reinvent myself. Part of my rebellion had been not taking my SAT tests, so getting into college wasn't easy. Eventually I got accepted to Chapman College in Orange, California. I drove out with a roommate, whose brother lived in Manhattan Beach, close to Los Angeles. It was a stimulating new world cross-country trip, and I saw the rolling hills of Missouri, the Badlands, met my first Native Americans and saw bison and antelope around Mt. Rushmore. The topography of the west was so different from anything I'd ever encountered before. The Grand Canyon was the highlight of the journey. So vast, color-layered and deep, we found ourselves speechless in awe a lot of the time.

Finally driving up and over a small crest, the Pacific Ocean sprawled out in front of us. It sparkled glamorously in the morning California sun. I spent one semester at Chapman. The girls were locked in at night at 10pm through a courtyard, and the boys could roam as they pleased with doors opening directly outside. It was not for me, having been on my own since age 17. I ended up enrolling in a local community college, and answered an ad for a roommate with two girls in an apartment down in Newport Beach. It was just off the beachfront, which we could see from one window. Swimming in the vast Pacific, just steps from my door, I finally felt I was home.



Join Heidi Jurka's adventures in blissful expanded consciousness while she balances real world challenges. Heidi's resiliency during these events coupled with amazingly positive synchronicities, will intrigue and delight the reader.

The Making of a Psychic

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