

CHAPTER SEVEN: HOW LONG WILL IT HURT? IS IT REALLY A NEW BIRTH? :

Absence in the house; A startling inner knowing; More early morning experiences; Prophecies ; Darkness and struggle; I meet 2 special people; Advice again from a medium; The amazing gift of a house; Schoolhouse days; Testing and trials

For two weeks, nothing in the house moved. The beds stayed unmade as if the children had only just got out of them. Downstairs their toys lay all over the place: my son had been making what he called a rat-trap and it stayed on the carpet all this time with his tools and scraps of wire etc. all around it. The house was full of reminders of a family now gone and I could not seem to do anything about it. The absence everywhere in the house was almost tangible--- and for me it was hell. I suppose this was a period of something akin to “cold turkey” for me as I went through a period of living, sleeping and being alone. I had never before in my life been so completely on my own. A friend travelled across East Anglia to stay the first night with me; for the first week my neighbours did my washing and ironing.

At first my wife called in most days to pick up more of her and the children’s things and I liked to think to check if I was O.K. as well. I was still so tied inwardly to her and the children that it was hard to properly understand what was really going on. She already looked much happier and I noticed a distinct difference about her---as if she actually had something completely “new” inside her. I could not really say what it was except it made me think that her new partner had somehow got inside her in some unfathomable way! It was and still is utterly puzzling to me but I have to say I felt it every time she came to the house. I even noticed, as she drove away, how her posture when driving seemed to be “different”. She had become a different person to me; she began to feel more and more like a complete stranger.

I was left more and more to my own devices as I struggled to come to terms with my unhappy abandonment. It was at this point that the early morning hours became even more important to me and, at about 2 o’clock in the morning, I began to feel more and more in the presence of *Something Other* than my normal self. First came the now familiar feelings of beauty all around me and then came some, often striking, thoughts and, more especially, feelings, about the day ahead. I felt over and over again a sense of inner “hardness”, unbelievable inner hardness when I thought of my wife. I really had to acknowledge that over and over again: so difficult was it for me to accept even though I saw it every day as she turned up at

the house and I could see and feel her total rejection of me. Within the first two weeks of her leaving, I think I would have done anything to get her back. By the end of two horrible weeks I would say the “spell” had been broken and I knew “it had all gone too far” for it ever to be brought back to how it had been.

A Startling Receiving; special early mornings

One morning, in the early hours, I had the strong feeling that I had to give a warning to my wife about her new partner’s wife whom I felt was absolutely livid about what was going on, so much so that she was out for revenge. More, I “knew” *intuitively* how she was set to take her revenge! I felt that she had, in fact, discovered her husband’s contraceptives and.....had put holes in them with a needle! I had no idea if this were true until a couple of days later when the wife herself phoned me and told me that was exactly what she had done!! Wow! I hoped the warning had not come too late!

Another of these really interesting early morning experiences came awhile later when the beauty in the room seemed to be stronger even than usual. It seemed to carry with it a feeling of celebration as if something particularly happy and beautiful had occurred. I then felt strongly that inside my wife was “a little girl waiting to be born”! When she came into the house that morning, I instantly “knew” what it was: she was pregnant! I was sure she had conceived that very night! The feelings of beauty and celebration were just so strong! Then came a whole host of “predictions”: this would be a very special little girl (I had no idea in what way “special”), and then, although my wife felt very much in control now, she would at that time lose this sense of control and “events” would take over. The worst time would be “at the feeding cup stage” when material conditions would be “awful” and my wife would also begin then to feel “emotionally desperate”. She would then want to move away with the children. This she denied: “I would never do that to you!” she said. The whole thing, I felt, would take three years to complete.

Darkness And Struggle

The idea of the children being moved away was really too much to bear. I doubted whether I could ever find a way of coping with that. Why, I was barely coping with their living the other side of the village. In fact, I was not really coping at all well. Everything was “dark” to me; I felt old and “tatty”. I tried to buy some new clothes and nothing seemed to fit me so I could not buy anything. I got worried about

spending money--- with some justification, in a way, because suddenly I had all the bills to pay on my own salary instead of only half of them and several of our commitments, like buying the house, had been made on the basis of both our salaries! But it went too far with me- I got into a panic about spending money on a bag of crisps at one stage! I worried about the house because I could see it would soon need some major repairs. How on earth was I going to cope? I remember a story in the local paper at this time of a man whose family had left him and rather than live without them he had gone to a local beauty spot, poured petrol over himself and set light to it! What a way to go! The awful thing was my first thought was, not horror or shock, but a simple “I know how he felt!” And I did.

For awhile I saw the children most days: my son, in particular, was with me every day at first. He never really got on with the new man and some of the stories he told of his treatment of him (like being deliberately tripped over by him and so on!) were so extreme that it was hard to believe them. He said his mother never believed him and “always took his (the new man’s) side”. I spoke to his mother about it and she said she would sort it out and I believed her. Unfortunately, my son felt nothing was done about the underhand “mistreatment” (always done he said when his mum was out of the room) and as time went on he grew more and more angry, feeling, quite rightly, I suppose that everyone had let him down. Years later I heard stories of his running away for hours at a time, often hiding in the churchyard, apparently. No wonder he came out of it all with a lot of hurt and angry feelings. For him, the experience of parental separation was awful. I got the wrong idea because I saw him being taken fishing and camping by the new man and I thought he was doing his best with him. Later I was told that he was forced to do this by his mum and he was made to go under pain of punishment if he did not. This was confirmed by his sister- but only many years later. What sadness! How awful!

A Gingerbread “Angel” And A Companion

I was largely oblivious of all this at this time: I was only just surviving myself. Then some help came from an unexpected source: I met a man from the next village who was a member of the single parents group called “Gingerbread” and he offered to drive me to one of their meetings. I did not hold out much hope for it helping me but I went anyway. I was glad I did. I was fascinated by his story, which he told me as he drove the ½ hour journey there. His wife had died of cancer at thirty-something, leaving him to bring up two children on his own. I listened

captivated by his story of how he managed, telling me with obvious pride that he could now look after a house and family and cook a Sunday roast as “good as any woman”. I liked this man a lot and for awhile he became something of a “mentor” to me. I began to look forward to these meetings because there was always someone with a real life story to tell and often these were stories of triumph over hardship and real suffering. Sometimes people would find new partners and disappear for awhile. The saddest thing was when they turned up again suddenly because it meant another relationship had failed for them. I was surprised at how many of them had been married several times. It made me feel nothing but a novice and a rather naïve one at that! Well, three months after my wife moved out I made a new relationship with a lady who had been coming to the Gingerbread meetings once every six months or so. We sat together at a pub meal that the group had organised and we hit it off straight away. She was to become a great help to me, practically, and in all ways.

At first, she and I would occasionally visit each other’s homes for weekends and evenings. She had three children: two girls and a boy. They were older and very different from my children- they were teenagers, in fact. I was to get on really very well with the two girls and I especially enjoyed their liveliness and optimism about life! The boy never really accepted me until years later; he stayed out of the way most of the time when I was around. It was very good for me to be part of a family again and to have some good company around me. Alas, my own children, in spite of really trying, could not get on with my new “family”: the children were much bigger and louder than they were, although my son, surprisingly perhaps, got on better with them than my daughter. He was also to grow to like my new lady friend but his sister, unfortunately, was unable to accept her for a long time. I suppose that once I began this relationship, things were to get more complicated for my two children in all sorts of ways. Most especially, they could no longer just wander up to the house and find me there. From now on we had to make more formal arrangements.

Second Visit To The Local Medium

For me there was nothing but advantages to having this new relationship. My daily life was not just all single-handed struggle any longer. Unfortunately, I was still in something of a black daze for most of the time, however. Both the present and the future were extremely worrying and anxiety-making for me. It was at this time that I arranged to see the medium again who lived about ten minutes away. At this second meeting he again seemed to find insight into my situation: “Your life is

now more complicated than before,” he said, “you have a sense of unreality about it, a sense of inner disharmony and unfulfilment. I see two pathways ahead of you and you do not know which one to take. It is as if you are standing in the middle of the road and it is dangerous for you. You are at a crossroads of your life...Your nature is to want to share. This has led to your forming a new relationship while the spiritual you needs space and time for reflection. You have to clear away the debris of your past and make space for whatever is to come. You have complicated matters by taking on board what might need to be unloaded. You cannot go back to what has gone before either: you and your wife have taken on new responsibilities and commitments, which must not be ignored. Your wife has many regrets; she still feels a lot for you. If your present relationship is spiritual you need do nothing about it but it feels incomplete. It would be better to end it now, before it gets rooted, rather than later. You need to be completely honest with each other. You need courage because you have a real battle on your hands. You need to be more confident and more positive. You undervalue yourself. Whatever you decide, be both confident and positive about it. Your lack of confidence is holding you back in your job although your lack of ambition is not necessarily a bad thing. You try to live by not hurting anyone but that is not always possible. You may have to have the courage now to hurt in order to make space for whatever is to come. There is some clearing away to do before this can be revealed to you. Don’t do it all at once. Talk to your new partner; hold onto school because it allows you to fulfil your responsibilities and commitments. If you decide your new relationship is right for you, don’t doubt it- go ahead and make it work. The worst thing you can do is just to drift- it will just get harder if you do that. You are just keeping it together at times. It is taking too much of your energy. It will manifest physically if you allow it to go on. Decide what you want and be positive and confident about it.”

I found all this pretty startling and certainly thought- provoking. I had no trouble accepting most of it: yes, my life had become even more complicated; I certainly lacked confidence and was anything but positive; I WAS conscious of barely keeping it together most of the time (not just “at times”); and I had no idea of how “incomplete” my new relationship was---I was in no fit state to judge. As for my doing or “being” anything (“confident” and “positive”), I just did not know how to transform myself into being those things, although I could agree that they were needed. Thank God, it was not all left up to me and the next development in my life was to come directly from “Inner” guidance.

The Amazing Gift Of A House Via Testing

As the weeks went by, one of my biggest worries was where I was going to live. My wife had a tenancy agreement which was only for six months and it looked likely that I would have to move out of the family home then and give her half its value. She had made it clear that she had no intention of buying out my half and moving back in; she did not want that, she said. Well, as the six months came to an end, things had not worked out as my wife had hoped and she decided she would have to move back into my home! My solicitor told me I could not stop her doing this and when I suggested moving out completely, he also advised against this in case I was accused of “desertion” and thereby losing my half of the house! So what happened was I ended up staying two nights with my wife and the rest of the week with my new partner! This continued for three months. Before then, however, I had an incredible stroke of “luck”. I was almost at my wits end, not having any idea where I was going to end up living. A colleague who worked for the “Citizen’s Advice Bureau” told me that I was likely to be treated as a single man and be expected to get a bed -sit somewhere or the only other, much more expensive alternative, was to rent a house somewhere. The second I had doubts about being able to afford on my own, the first would mean I could never have the children to stay. It began to look hopeless. Then the Inner came to the rescue...

It began with a feeling that I should ring the council. Now I ignored this at first because I knew that the local council no longer gave council houses to teachers as they had done when we first moved to Suffolk. It was a policy then to encourage teachers into the area but it had not been needed for some time now so it seemed clearly a waste of time to make this phone call. Anyway I had been told they would not give a house to a single man, as they would deem me to be. However the feeling was so insistent that I decided to test about it with my neighbour. During the testing the receiving seemed hopelessly confusing until the thought suddenly occurred to me, from somewhere completely inside myself, that I should test about ringing a lady I knew at the Education Office who used to be involved in allocating council houses to teachers. Testing showed this, clearly, to be the right thing to do but, incredibly, it was made clear that I was NOT to phone; instead I was to ask my new Head to phone for me! After the earlier confusion, this could not have been clearer. We were both amazed at the turn the testing had taken! When we spoke about it afterwards, we could see the sense in my Head ringing rather than me. The recent H.M.I. inspection had been a great success and on the strength of it my head had become something of the “blue eyed boy of the County” i.e. known and respected by local educationalists. You see, had I rang, quite possibly the Officer concerned would have been too busy to speak to me at that time: I would certainly have been way down on her list of priorities whereas my head would certainly be

at the top! Yet neither of us could possibly see how anyone at the Office could help with housing or just how critical it was to make this phone call at this very time!

Anyway, next day my head rang and about the middle of the afternoon he came excitedly into my lesson and said: "I think I have got you somewhere to live!" It turned out that the Officer had just had a phone call from a teacher to say that she and her husband were buying their own house now and were giving their notice to quit the Schoolhouse they had lived in for seven years. Guess where that Schoolhouse was?! It was in the same village as where I had been living all these years with my own family! It was one of only two such houses still left in the County- it could not be sold off like all the others had been because it was right on the school grounds and there were access problems! "Tell him to call in and have a look," said the officer, "and if he wants it, tell him just to give me a ring and it's his." I could not believe it! There were so many improbabilities: that the previous tenants should move out after being there seven years JUST when I needed somewhere to live; that there should be one of only two such houses in the whole County JUST where I needed it; that my Head should phone just after the house had become available! It was all so remarkable---and all down to inner feeling and testing. Without them I would never have thought such a thing to be possible. When I came to look at the house, I had to ask for instructions because, although I had lived some years in the village, I had no idea where such a house might be.

Schoolhouse Days

In fact, the house was situated right on the end of the school drive. The reason I had not seen it on all those many occasions when I dropped off my son (my daughter was at Primary school until the coming Autumn) was because it was partly hidden by some trees and well-established bushes. My first sight of it took my breath away: it was a large, detached, well-built, red brick house, surrounded by fields and farms on all but one side where there were the tennis courts and the school. I first saw it after school one afternoon when all the children had long since left and the quiet was enchanting! It looked absolutely ideal--- for me, it had real Solitude, peace and quiet and for the children it was ideally placed: when they stayed with me they just had to walk across the drive into school (less than a couple of minutes!) and when they were with their mum they had less than a ten minute walk to see me if they wished. What a stroke of "luck"! Unfortunately there was a delay before I could move in because the place needed re-wiring but that just meant I saved a bit of money on rent. When at last the day came for moving in,

two of my neighbours helped me. One had a history of mental illness and as soon as I opened the door, the loneliness of the place and its poor state, led him to turn smartly round and run all the way back to his home, without saying a word: he simply felt overwhelmed! The other neighbour was my Subud friend and he was bold enough to set foot inside! As soon as we did this both of us felt the latihan so strongly that we burst out singing straight away and at exactly the same moment--- what a start! We both agreed that the house had a beautiful, peaceful, calm and strong inner “feel”. We looked all round the house: it had two good- sized bedrooms and one small but cosy bedroom; a big, although narrow kitchen; a study or small dining room and a comfortably-sized lounge. Yes, it would more than do! Outside the views were of fields up to the horizon at the back with an established back garden full of all sorts of bushes (some of them fruit bushes!) and a rather unkempt and long-grassed lawn. Out the front was a cornfield to the left and directly in front there was a long lawn, leading down to the kitchens and the school car park. I liked it!

The one big problem was the inside state of the house. It was full of builder’s dust everywhere---and I mean dust!! The wallpaper in every room had at least one, huge meandering strip torn out from ceiling to floor where the builders had put in new wiring! Every room needed cleaning thoroughly (sweeping, vacuuming, washing and scrubbing two or three times!) and re-decorating urgently. What a job! Obviously, I could not afford professional help so there was no alternative but to do it all myself. It took ages for me to do it: I did one room every school holiday until the whole place was done. My lady friend was the only help I had and she was a godsend. She did most of the wallpapering for me while I cleaned, scrubbed and painted. Eventually it was all done: My daughter had a pretty blue room with everything co-ordinated blue. She and I chose it all together- carpet, curtains, bedcover etc. all matching. It looked lovely! My son’s room was orange, largely to match the dark orange carpet I had got cheaply. His was a very big room (his sister’s was the smallest bedroom), so we had to make do a bit but it still looked tasteful- a light orange wall, co-ordinated curtains, darker carpet and a white, with an orange and light-brown design in the middle of it, bedcover which we had been given. I was very pleased with it although my son was disappointed that I had not painted his ceiling as a Union Jack flag! The rest of the house was a mixture of colours, largely determined by the colour of the carpets that I was given by friends and colleagues. The worst room was the hall and the stairs, which was covered in dark brown wallpaper when I moved in! It had pictures of Japanese (or Chinese?) pagodas and fat-bellied men all over it which, unfortunately, did nothing to make it more attractive to me, especially as, for some reason which I was soon to discover,

the wallpaper had huge bubbles in it every few inches or so: it was not lying flat as wallpaper should! The worst thing of all, which I was to discover as soon as the first signs of winter came, was heating the house. It had two electric storage heaters downstairs and that was it. There was a coal-fed boiler in the kitchen, which heated the kitchen a bit and the water. Because the house was isolated it was much colder than we were used to. The worst days were the windy ones (and there were many of those) because the house was also very draughty and was exposed on all sides. By the end of the first Winter I was using every form of heating there was, I think! I had a log and coal fire in the lounge, a smokeless coal-fed boiler in the kitchen, an electric storage heater in the dining room and lounge (they were lovely and warm about 2 o'clock in the morning and only slightly warm during most of the day and the evening!); in the bathroom I had a paraffin heater which, although small, just about fitted in; while in the bedrooms I had calor gas heaters---no-one told me these made condensation! I left them on low during the coldest nights and I could not understand why I was waking up with my face and bedding soaking wet, literally drenched and so uncomfortable. Yes, the house was exceptionally cold. In fact, twice in that first winter I was to come home from work to hear the sound of dripping water! Once the pipes had burst and there was a steady drip of water through the ceiling, just missing my daughter's bed! The second time, it was coming through the ceiling and running down the stairs! Unfortunately, I had to leave some extra heating on all day and that was expensive. When I went away for a few days, I left the loft door open so that some heat could get up to the well-lagged pipes. How cold the house was when I got back and every time I would expect to hear that dreaded sound of dripping water after I turned it back on. Phew! I also had to get used to ice on the inside of all the windows on the coldest nights-what an effort it was to get out of bed then but, of course, it was down to me to get up and get all the heaters on. Sometimes the place looked like a scene from the film "Dr. Zhivago"! It was very beautiful but...

I was to live here virtually until my children were independent, certainly until they were coming to the end of their time at Upper School i.e. finishing full-time education. They were not easy times. The children came to me Mondays and Thursdays after school and for alternate weekends. On cold days I tried to get home as early as I could to get the fires alight and the place warmed up- that took awhile because there was no-one in the house all day. In those days, too, the shops shut by 5:30 p.m., so I had to make sure I got everything I needed for the week at the weekend. If I forgot anything or needed anything special, I would have to rush like mad from school and try to get to the nearest food shop in time. The worst was when one of them suddenly announced to me that he/she needed something exotic,

which I did not have in the cupboard, for “cooking” at school, -panic! panic! panic!

I am amazed that the children kept coming to this house for so long. It was cold and isolated. At their mum’s they had a centrally-heated house that was always warm and where there was always somebody at home. But keep coming they did and I was always glad to see them. I can see now that because of everything I had to do- getting the fires alight, cooking etc.- I did not have so much time left over for games and so on as we used to have. Nonetheless I have many memories of things like reading night-time stories to my daughter and playing endless games of darts with my son up in his bedroom. I remember, too, that icy evening when I pulled my daughter all the way back to her mum’s on a sleigh while she entertained me the whole way by pretending to be the “Queen of Narnia”! Most of the time I was shattered and tired, however and I think that was to take something away from the relationship I had had with the two of them. I think my worst moment was one cold, Spring night when I was awoken by my son complaining that he “felt funny”, whereupon he was promptly sick all over me and my bed! So I had to get up in the middle of the night and clean him, myself and the bed and floor. I put the bedding straight into the washing machine, turned it on and went back to bed with him...When I came down in the morning, the washing machine had gone wrong and leaked this horrible, sickly mess all over the kitchen, hall and dining-room floors! Unfortunately, I was decorating the hall and stairs at the time so I had ladders and a plank set up across the lot with the walls half stripped with this wet distemper- mixed- up- with- paint mess all over the walls (hence the “lumps” in the wallpaper-there were two or three layers of wallpaper “stuck” over an ill-prepared wall!!!) So there was this horrible wet mess over the walls with a different but equally horrible wet mess over the downstairs floors! The place was freezing cold and all the fires and heaters needed sorting out while my poor son was upstairs feeling terrible! I thought hell had come to the Schoolhouse!

There were times of “heaven” there, too. Many Thursday evenings I would come home and the house was unusually invitingly warm and there was a wonderful smell of food filling the house. My lady friend had got over early, lit all the fires and cooked us all a meal! Wonderful... There were many happy times with the children when the three of us would snuggle up together on the sofa in front of a blazing log fire and watch T.V. or talk to each other about what was going on in our lives or, simply, just have a good laugh together. There were good times there on my own, too. I had a Quiet time in the study every day and more than one during holidays and weekends. The best times were when I had caught up with the jobs, the place was tidy, clean and organised and I could concentrate entirely on

the Inner. There were times then of real joy when everything around me seemed to shout happiness at me! I remember one such occasion when I was completely alone and it was a bright, mild day and, as I watched the clouds passing by outside the window, I was overcome with joy and I remember thinking “Separation from my wife is something to be grateful for if it means being as happy as this!” Unfortunately, such happiness was all too transient: most of the time I was tired and overburdened with jobs! Nevertheless, I now take a pride in the fact that I survived all this, got a home together, decorated and furnished it completely, and looked after myself and my two children as completely as anyone could. I learnt to cook, did all the cleaning, washing, ironing etc.- all the household jobs-mostly by myself. It amuses me now to think of two friends of mine who were so shocked by what happened to my wife and me that he decided to get his wife to teach him how to cook! I went in one day and he was mixing up a Yorkshire pudding, something he had never done before in his life!

There were very many latihan moments in this house, too, that, for various reasons, were to be special to me. In order to make things easier for me, my neighbour and myself often met for latihan at my home. We had lots of latihan together, often in front of a blazing fire. They were beautiful, nearly always uplifting and refreshing. Some of the testing we did there later was to be as helpful and revealing as any I had ever done...

The most difficult thing at the beginning of my time at the Schoolhouse was to be with my new partner. Before moving in we had spent a lot of time together; in fact, until my wife finally accepted that she would buy out my half of the family home, I had spent all but two nights a week at her house---and very grateful I was for that, too. Now a great deal of my time was taken up with my getting a separate home together for myself and my own children. She found this extremely hard-understandably so. I tested about this with my neighbour and received that my moving into the Schoolhouse made her feel as if “something” had been “lost” between us and I should just be calm, relaxed, restful with her because that would make her feel more “emotional comfort”. She was later to tell me that she hated the Schoolhouse because it always seemed to “reject her” and made her feel as if she was always an “intruder”. I never understood this at the time; perhaps it had something to do with my wish for withdrawal which she, like most people I knew, did not share..? Well, not only did she come to accept my living at the Schoolhouse, it is somewhat remarkable to me that she was able to give me so much help there. All the time she wanted the two of us to make a “new start” together and, perhaps, buy somewhere where we could all live together. I did not

want that. For all its difficulties, the Schoolhouse gave me so much- a place and time with my lovely children and also the peace and quiet (and the “space for reflection”!) that I knew full well I needed.

Trials Loom Large; Testing Gives Reassurance

It was at this time that my car was vandalised---twice! Deliberate scratches all down the side...Then I had an unwelcome visitor every late afternoon and night-time: a mouse which ran along my draining board nibbling and playing with the curtains. I tried all sorts of ways to catch him, mainly because he was so messy (not the sort of thing you want in your kitchen!). He avoided the trap (obviously he was finding enough to eat). I almost caught him by throwing my hat on him! In the end I discovered he had a weakness for chocolate and that proved to be his demise. Little problems like this have a hugely exaggerated effect when you are struggling with life anyway but somehow I was able to keep going, largely through the reassurance that my Quiet Times and testing brought me. Every morning, no matter how busy the day was, I would drag myself into my favourite chair and receive encouragement, energy for the day and, sometimes, specific advice. Often, too, I felt the presence of my “friends in spirit” and that helped me greatly with my many feelings of loneliness. Late afternoons were often my worst times and it was then that I would try to do something about the house because that still helped to make me feel better. Testing about my need for Quiet Times showed them to be very important, especially at “dawn”; testing about my attitude to the Schoolhouse always confirmed its importance to me. In one test about what my attitude to it should be, I yelled “Yes!” at the top of my voice and felt incredibly strong inwardly. I tested my attitude to the decorative condition of the house and felt too burdened by it: I should try to be unaffected by it and concentrate on the inner gifts that the house brought. I also received that this house was not to be my final home but more a temporary Sanctuary, important for my Inner life and for psychological change in me. To decorate it as I would like would turn me into an “overburdened donkey” (I even hee-hawed in the testing!); to do a little a day was O.K. as a prelude to the real work of the day. As a result of this I tried to discipline myself not to go overboard on decorating and to keep reminding myself of the need for giving priority to inner things: the latihan, meditation, relaxation times, reading etc. I had some success with this because I was soon to see real psychological change in myself that was to bring more outer change and this was to be so surprising that, if I had been told about it a year previously, I would have said, quite confidently, once again: “No chance!”

Just before that was to happen, however, I received a handwritten note through the door one morning, which delighted me. It simply said: "It is a girl. Born 9 a.m! Will pick up the children this afternoon to take them to see Mum and baby"! So my prediction had been fulfilled: not only had my wife been pregnant when I thought but the "little girl inside my wife" had been born and, yes, she was "special" - but not in any way I would have expected...