

## First chapter of "A Woman's Journey"

### Chapter 1

*"It is impossible not to believe what you see, but it is equally impossible to see what you do not believe."* A Course in Miracles

"Okay," he said and went quiet. He stubbed out yet another cigarette in the ashtray between them and blew the smoke from a corner of his mouth so that it brushed against her dark hair before hitting the ceiling and dispersing.

"If you like to....I can teach you how to interpret signs."

He looked up from the ashtray with his eyes fixated on her. Maria could tell he was looking for some kind of reaction in her face but she did not really know what to answer. It was their fourth meeting, yet it felt different than before. She thought he looked at her in a more serious way, which made her feel insecure and almost a bit frightened. She looked down.

Maria had started to consider him as her friend, but also viewed him as her Master. Someone she wanted to learn more from. She was certain he had something she needed and that he possessed some kind of knowledge she wanted to be part of. The rather annoying fact was that she always felt somewhat dumb and lost at their meetings. She thought she worded things in a clumsy way and gave bad answers to the questions he asked. She could think of the right thing to say and how to say it, but somehow when she opened her mouth the answer sounded more vague than she first had intended. How or why it happened, she did not know, although she suspected that she wanted to impress him all too much. During many years she had admired him and she intensely wanted him to like her; to think she was special. If only she could answer the way he expected her to or say things he appreciated, then maybe....

Maria thought it was tragic that she had not progressed further than this. And she had an awkward feeling he could see through her, that he could read her in a way she could not even do herself.

At their first meeting Maria had told her friend about two symbols that had appeared in her life over the last few years. Over and over again and in the most peculiar ways they had appeared in her dreams or popped up before her. When she a year later had read about the exact same symbols in one of his books she had become petrified. She had felt a shiver down her spine, and more than ever she wanted to know the meaning of those symbols. So when an opportunity had finally arisen, she took the chance to meet him. She had asked him about the symbols whilst he had quietly gazed at her. He had not answered straight away, instead he had walked beside her for a little while, then he had told her they would talk about it at a later date. So they did. During a nervous dinner she had had the opportunity to ask all the questions about everything she wanted to know. However, despite all the questions asked, she did not feel any wiser; quite the opposite. She felt frustrated. The questions had not produced any answers, only more questions. Time had passed, it was probably about a year ago since they had met at that dinner, and here they were again. They sat at a lunch restaurant on the water front, with the scenery outside all dressed in autumn colours. A single archipelago boat was slowly cruising the cold water. It was a quiet season, not as busy as during spring and summer. The days grew shorter and it was as if everyone prepared to shut themselves in their dens. Maria looked at him again. He still observed her in the same serious manner. Without letting her out of his sight, he

groped for his French cigarettes, which he smoked often and a lot of. She liked him, but at the same time he frightened her. She could not work him out, which is probably what scared her, that she neither managed to control him nor the situation.

"I can teach you to read the signs," he repeated urgently. She knew she had to give him some kind of answer.

"How?" she wondered cautiously.

"Yes or no," he said. "Decide first whether you want it or not, then I'll tell you how." He let go of his cigarettes and instead he stood up, still holding her gaze.

"When I come back you will give me a yes or a no." He disappeared towards the men's room. In a minute he would be back, and then he would require an answer.

Her whole life Maria had loved the mystics. As a child she had fantasised that there is something more to be found, which you can not see; she had been able to sense it without being able to prove it. Or was she hoping that it ought to be this way, because she wanted to? She had been a child with a vivid imagination, with invisible friends, who had drifted away into a world of her own or disappeared into the land of fairy tales. She had felt like an outsider, but not exactly; she had felt different, but not exactly. Sometimes she had thought she was very special, and in the next moment she had felt she was of no importance. She had always wanted and hoped for something more, something bigger, than what she in the small world of her own could see and maybe also understand.

Mysticism offered an ocean of possibilities. A maze of uncertainty, a fairy tale in midst of everyday life. Her author friend once wrote: "Signs are a language, a language we develop to speak with the world soul, universe, God or whatever you wish to call it." Maria wanted to learn, wanted to understand. But what was there really to understand? Is this what she had always been looking for; were the answers to be found here? Could it be as simple as saying "yes"? What would it involve; what challenges would she be exposed to? She was somewhat unsure, afraid, but at the same time very curious. If she said "no" now she would never find out what he intended to teach her. She would remain in the grip of uncertainty. If she answered "yes" she committed herself to....well, what? What would she commit to?

She heard his steps echoing against the wooden floor of the restaurant . She looked up. He swayed across the floor, lightly swinging his arms and upper body. He was dressed entirely in black. She had probably never seen him dressed in any colour other than black. He made his way along the aisle between the tables, looked at her and sat down across her yet again.

"Well," he said. "Have you decided?"

She had decided. She was still unsure, nonetheless she had made a decision. "I can always refuse to do whatever I feel uncomfortable with," she thought to herself, even though she knew that would never happen.

"Yes," she said. "My answer is 'yes'."

"Okay," he said, and turned around as if he wanted to reassure himself that no one in the restaurant was listening. Then he leaned forward and said to her, almost whispering: "Repeat after me."