

# OPENING DOORS

THE *ENORMITY* OF US

Y V O N N E F O G A R T Y

# CHAPTER 1

## EARLY YEARS

A trauma occurred early in my life that I had no conscious recollection of: an event that became ‘indelibly’ imprinted within my psyche. The experience, combined with an unsettled childhood, gave rise to some very strong patterns of insecurity in my formative years and beyond. It was many years before I uncovered the cause of that psychological trauma.

When I was about four years of age, I turned within, seeking comfort escaping to an imagined, joyful place, in an attempt to shut out the unhappiness I was experiencing in our home. I have often wondered if that’s why I started seeing a person wearing a white robe occasionally at night standing near my bed. The person disappeared as soon I looked at them. Did they come to comfort me? If that was their intention, it didn’t work! Seeing them terrified me.

I remember waking in the early hours one morning, running to Mum, telling her I was scared because I saw someone standing in my room before disappearing. She made me go back to bed, telling me it was just a bad dream and/or I had imagined it.

Her words led me to doubt myself. I wondered if these people were real or imagined. If real, they must be evil, I reasoned, as I was often told by Mum when I did something wrong that I had the devil in me; I was bad and good for nothing. At the time, I assumed the people I saw occasionally were sent by the devil. As an adult, I now understand

that these spiritual beings came to support me, not hurt me, as you will discover further on in the book.

I was an over-sensitive, naïve and lonely child. If I didn't obey my mother's demands, I experienced her very harsh wrath, mostly in the form of verbal abuse, causing me to feel frightened and nervous around her. If I accidentally spilt a drink, I was yelled at and sometimes smacked for being careless. I lived in fear of doing the wrong thing.

I was not allowed my own voice. I quickly worked out a way to survive in our home environment by keeping my mouth shut and my feelings to myself. I restrained my inquisitiveness by living and behaving within the restrictions of our home environment, well, most of the time, except when my impishness couldn't contain itself. No wonder I became a chatterbox outside of home.

Each time I experienced my mother's abuse, I swallowed the painful words.

Over time, they slowly gathered together forming a solid hard crust, an impenetrable wall of self-protection, creating within me a judgmental attitude and resentment towards the outside world. I also know there were many times where I tested my mother's patience with my antics and behaviour. Eventually, I buried any claim to thoughts or feelings of my own. It was safer that way. The consequence of that decision affected my ability to freely express myself. I had unknowingly shut the door on my authentic voice. I had given away my inherent power, becoming a mindless puppet.

I was unaware back then that the unresolved issues and unhappiness between my parents caused my mother to unleash her own built-up disappointments in life onto my older sister and me. I was too young to understand that her outbursts weren't anything to do with me. Due to my sensitivities, my mother's own inadequacies were transferred to me. I took on board someone else's issues and beliefs, making them mine.

Isn't hindsight wonderful? Looking back, I can see that my mother's own unresolved beliefs, such as believing she was unlovable and

unworthy, often caused her to react angrily towards loved ones around her. I believed that I must always 'obey' and respect authority figures and whatever was said to me by my parents was true.

During my younger years in my need to feel loved and accepted in our home, I took on the responsibility of trying to make everyone else feel happy around me, I became a people pleaser. Little Miss Fix It. I exhausted myself attempting to make everyone feel loved, firstly within our home and then spreading my unmet needs towards others, especially by rescuing stray dogs. I knew that feeling of believing you're not loved and it hurt.

It was a few months after my seventh birthday when I first experienced a strong vibrational presence and heard a Voice speak to me as I was walking home from school, which I aptly named 'The Voice'. I can even remember the clothes I wore that day – a tartan skirt, red jumper, white socks and black lace-up shoes. My hair was straight without a curl or wave in sight, except when Mum rolled up my hair in rags, twisting them into a knot before tying them off. I hated it being done because it hurt. It didn't help that I kept wriggling and pulling my head away from her, only causing me more discomfort.

I was walking along our street, swinging my brown school case. As I approached our next-door neighbour's house, I suddenly stopped walking and looked up, observing the clear blue sky. I still have no idea why I stopped! I just stood there searching the sky when suddenly this warm loving Voice spoke clearly to me...

*'Yvonne, you are going to leave something to the world to be remembered by.'*

The words echoed around and within me simultaneously, creating a quivering throughout my body, before leaving a tingling sensation in my heart. I remained still until the warm sensation subsided. It felt very comfortable and surprisingly, I wasn't frightened at all.

To this day I can still remember how I simply smiled and accepted what happened without questioning it, shrugged my shoulders and

tucked the experience away, becoming a treasured memory that I have never forgotten.

Once again in hindsight, I can only surmise my very warm acceptance of The Voice was because no one suddenly appeared in front of me to frighten me, or maybe it was the warmth and comfort I felt from that experience that left no room for fear to creep in, only love.

One morning, months after my encounter with The Voice, while I was eating my breakfast at the small kitchen table – as our formal dining room was only used for special occasions – my mother said, ‘Yvonne. YVONNE, look at me.’

With a feeling of trepidation, I raised my head slowly before looking at her.

‘I don’t want you talking to the lady down the road who lives in the house with the green picket fence. She is crazy. She sees ghosts and hears voices!’

I stopped chewing my food as her words registered in my mind. *Oh no!* I thought. Her words churned over in my stomach.

**Why?** Because I was made to go to church every Sunday and I believed being a good Christian meant I was not supposed to ‘see’ or have these experiences I encountered. I pondered over her words and came to the conclusion that I really was evil and the people I saw occasionally at night were evil too.

A few years later, one Sunday the minister confirmed my mother’s words from the pulpit, saying, ‘Anything that is occult is of the devil.’

I sat bolt upright from my slouching position on the church pew, looking up to see if his eyes were zoomed in on me.

*What did he just say? Uh oh... I’m doomed to hell,* I thought. *I really must try to block out seeing these people visiting me occasionally at night.*

My parents were both born in the United Kingdom. My mother’s father was a Minister who preached the old-fashioned hellfire and brimstone God-fearing sermons. My mother’s parents had both died

before I was born, yet my grandfather's dictatorial manner lived on in our house. Although my mother stopped going to church years ago after an argument with her father, the tone of her words when she passed on his preaching only reinforced my fear of the unknown.

I felt a shudder run through me and I purposely shook my shoulders, laughed and said out loud 'Oooooooooo!'

It's a wonder I didn't feel the earth shake when my mother used to repeat her father's words. I tried hard to be a good Christian yet my attempts to shut the door on seeing these night visitors that suddenly appeared by my bed didn't work. I continued to keep these experiences to myself. Who would have believed a child anyway! I felt it was safer to stay quiet; Mum might think I was evil and crazy. In fact, I genuinely had doubts about my own sanity at times.

I can laugh now, but as a child and into adulthood I feared the unknown. These days I occasionally see various spiritual beings when I am supporting a person to heal an issue troubling them, using my inner gifts that slowly unfolded. That is when I finally found the courage to give myself permission to acknowledge them.

That first encounter with The Voice left a profound impression within my psyche, becoming deeply embedded in my heart. Many years passed before I realised The Voice had given me a gift of inner strength, which encouraged me to keep going and not give up when life became extremely difficult to handle.

After all these years I can still easily recall experiencing the comforting, joyful feeling that The Voice left in my heart that day. It was a feeling that was unfamiliar to me at the time, but I know now I was embraced and touched by our Source's vibration of unconditional love.

As I grew older, my fears turned to anger and resentment towards my misperception about God. I continued going to church as I was searching and reaching out for something, I just wasn't sure what. Thinking about it now, all I wanted was to be loved and accepted and told I was an okay person.

I laugh now at how the Bible was interpreted back in the early 1900s and sadly passed on to my mother by my grandfather's bone-rattling fear-based religious teachings.

All throughout my close association with the church, I believed as many others did back then that this so-called person named God sat on a throne, had a beard, stern beady eyes and carried a big stick, which I believed was always pointed directly at me. I was terrified of this God. I believed this God was not loving; instead, he was cruel and harsh. For many years I was frightened of what could be lurking in the dark. No wonder I was often at the doctor's with stomach issues due to nervous tension. I now know that this power is not a person but a power so much greater than us, which the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) named this mysterious element 'The God particle'. Refer to chapter 12 – Those That Walk Among Us.

Mum and Dad were both honest hard-working people. Although we were not financially well off, I was well looked after physically but not emotionally. One minute, Mum was cuddling me telling me she loved me and the next minute berating me, leaving me frightened and confused. They both loved and cared for my sister and me with all their heart, from their level of understanding of love, which was conditional. They didn't know anything different; nor did I back then.

If we are not shown unconditional love and do not experience the effects of this vibration for ourselves, how can we pass it on to others? It is very difficult. We are incapable of expressing clearly what we do not understand in our own hearts.

I can see how I came to believe only in a love that hurt instead of a love that embraced and nurtured. My mind had selectively blotted out all the thoughtful things Mum did for us and there were many. I had unknowingly closed my mind off to anything that didn't fit in with my negative and narrow view of life. Although my life was very challenging at times, Mum was a very caring person and always home when I arrived back from school.

My mother, who was 1.4 metres in height, overweight and had brown permed hair, was the dominant controlling authority in our home, yet it was my father who took me to marching girls' training, state competitions and gymnastic events. My mother never once came with us. Dad was a kind and gentle person, always very quiet in our home.

By the time I reached my teens, I couldn't see beyond my pain and anger. I was often very moody and I carried around a huge chip on my shoulder. I was looking out at the world through eyes that could only see resentment and bitterness towards life. I had taken on board a 'poor me' attitude and carried a heavy load of emotional baggage.

To live was a struggle. I feared being hurt by what life might shower upon me. I did the only thing that I could see would secure my survival and safety: I shut the door on my feelings. As a result of that decision I often felt confused as to what emotion I was experiencing. I lived on the surface of life. I had lost my connection to discern my own inner feelings and gave up seeking to have my own needs met. Even in high school, I had an 'I don't care' attitude towards study. Something I deeply regretted later.

Standing outside the door of my high school classroom one day, I listened in on a private conversation between my mother and my second-year high school form teacher. Who said listening to other peoples' conversations about you isn't always a wise thing to do! In this instance, I was so pleased to have excellent hearing. What I overheard my mother say changed the direction my life was heading.

'What am I going to do with Yvonne? She doesn't care about study. She sees life as one big joke. Do you think it's worth keeping her on at high school for another year?'

'Well,' the teacher said. 'In my opinion, if Yvonne keeps up this "I don't care about school" attitude towards her studies, I don't see her gaining anything by staying on at school for another year.'

As a result, my mother informed me it would be a waste of money

paying for me to go to business college as she had done for my sister, who was nearly five years older than me. Instead, she was going to put me to work in a clothes factory making shirts, as a neighbour's granddaughter was doing.

That conversation proved to be a blessing in disguise. Out from deep within me burst forth with gusto a defiance I didn't know existed, along with a stubbornness I did know existed. I finally had a purpose in life and something to strive for. I was determined to succeed and prove just how wrong my mother was.

I was aware my two older cousins had received cadetships to go to a prominent business college, so unbeknown to Mum, after school the following day with my determination egging me on, I cycled the few kilometres to my mother's sister's home and told her everything in between sobs.

My aunt, who was always very loving and kind to me, said, 'Yvonne, I will ring the college and find out if they have plans to take on any cadets next year and then I'll speak to your mother.'

I reluctantly cycled very slowly towards home, delaying the inevitable as long as possible, knowing I was in big trouble for not going straight home after school. Turning into our street, I could see my mother hanging over the front gate looking for me. I slowed down even more, which in hindsight only infuriated my mother more. When we stepped into the house and out of sight of neighbours, Mum let loose her fury. I was smacked across the back of my legs with a wooden spoon many times for being home late.

Looking back now, I understand Mum was worried that something may have happened to me, yet she was so happy to see that her precious child was at last home safe – she smacked me so hard, I thought the spoon might break! I'd have preferred to have been smothered in kisses, as kisses don't hurt. Well, except when Mum hadn't plucked out the prickly whiskers above her upper lip. Nonetheless, my defiance was worth it.

Thanks to my aunt, I secured the cadetship for the following year. I left school at the end of the school year, just prior to my fourteenth birthday (30 December 1961).

I commenced in the January, working my way through business college, cleaning classrooms before school started, making morning and afternoon teas for the teachers, running errands and doing odd jobs in the office every day between classes, assisting the very strict head of the college, Miss P. I was terrified of her; in fact, I was terrified of any authoritarian figure.

One afternoon after classes had finished for the day, Miss P was called to the staff room, leaving me in her office to complete some filing. I glanced over my shoulder, noticing her small purple hat (that she wore every day) which had small, different-coloured flowers all around it, hanging on the hook behind the door. An idea flashed through my mind and a thought quickly followed... *Yvonne, don't do it.* My curiosity won. I walked over plopped her hat on my head, held my head up high, stuck my nose up in the air, copying her stance and turned my head from side to side, looking at myself in the mirror. I heard a sudden noise behind me as the door creaked open. I hesitantly turned around, craning my neck back I looked up. *Oh no!*

There, towering over me, stood Miss P's skinny body, with her glasses perched on the end of her nose and her arms crossed in front of her.

I thought, *oh, why do I do these things? I'm in big trouble now.* To my surprise she didn't say a word nor reprimand me; instead, she very quickly told me I could go home now. I'm sure I saw her lips twitching, attempting very hard not to laugh. I, in turn, was trying very hard not to wet my pants. I concluded that day that she liked me.

I topped the school in typing, which I attributed to the daily practising on the piano I had been forced to endure since young. I failed in shorthand and passed in bookkeeping.

When I was older and a little wiser, I realised Miss P's worth as

a mentor. I attempted to locate her to thank her for the wonderful training she instilled in me. I laughed out loud and sat straight up in my chair as I typed the word ‘instilled’ because that was exactly what she did. I learnt to be responsible, thorough, respectful and loyal, and to do a job properly whether it was going to be seen or not. Sadly, she passed over before I could thank her.

After I graduated, the company that owned the college employed me in the December of that year. I commenced work not long before my fifteenth birthday. It was illegal in Australia to employ anyone before they turned fifteen, so I was told to keep my employment a secret until January. I was so excited to be working and getting five pounds a week. Wow! But... keeping my mouth shut took all my willpower. It was a huge undertaking for a chatterbox.

My boss saw my potential and in mid-February I was trained to use an accounting machine. The first time I sat behind one, I was amazed. It was huge. The machine was bigger than me. (Did I tell you I am small in stature?) I strained to see what I was doing; I couldn't see over the top of the monstrosity. When they raised my chair for better access, my feet dangled in the air. They solved that problem by putting a small box under my feet and a cushion behind my back.

It was the only time I grudgingly appreciated having size (with a s-t-r-e-t-c-h) 32 breasts. It meant I could sit very close up to the machine to operate it and still look down easily to see the keyboard without anything of ‘great’ substance blocking my view. My only problem was when I was required to roll a new A3 sheet of paper into the machine; I had to stand on the wobbly box to accomplish it successfully. I loved the job, possibly because I felt needed and valued.

A couple of years later I saw my dad after he died, opening a door in my consciousness that would never be closed again...

# CHAPTER 2

## MY FATHER'S DEATH

In January 1968, I was 20 years of age when my father died of bowel cancer. It was a sad eighteen months prior to his death as we were never allowed to talk to him about his illness. Mum was adamant that neither the doctor nor any of the family was allowed to tell Dad, as she said he would drop his bundle. Sadly, I suspected that was not the reason at all. He was a very intelligent man. He was approximately 1.7 metres tall, solid build, grey hair with a receded hairline. Being unable to talk to Dad upset me as I wanted to tell him how much I loved and appreciated him. Watching a loved one deteriorate before your eyes is very difficult.

For a few days prior to his death, we all sat with Dad at the hospital every day while he lay in a coma, then on this particular night, we kissed him goodnight and left. After arriving home, I retired early to bed. My medium-sized bedroom held a single bed, dressing table and a built-in wardrobe. Besides a bedroom door, I had two French doors on the other side of the room that opened out onto an enclosed-back veranda with louvred windows across the length of the upper part of the wall. Being a warm summer's night I had the French doors and louvres open to capture any sea breeze that happened to find its way in. It was a clear night and beams of moonlight filtered in, creating a broken display of light on the floor and one wall of my room.

That night I experienced what I call my first vision-dream where

I seemed to be awake and asleep at the same time.

*I saw my father, in his striped pyjamas, walk into our home straight through a large window at the front of our house into my parents' bedroom. He stood by the side of the bed, looking down at Mum. He then walked into my bedroom and stood at the end of my bed, staring at me and I saw myself sitting up in bed wearing cotton pyjamas and rollers in my hair, gazing back at him with my eyes wide open. Dad then walked into my sister's room, pausing there for a moment before leaving out the back of the house straight through a solid brick wall.*

I came out of the vision-dream with a jolt. I went to sit up and realised I already was. I looked at my bedside clock. It read 4.06 a.m. I lay back down and promptly fell back asleep. The telephone woke us just after 6 a.m.; it was the hospital informing us that dad had died at approximately 4 a.m. It saddened me that no one was with him when he died. I now know from my own personal observations when supporting a dying person that there are always four angels (refer to chapter 47 – Roy's Passing) waiting to accompany them back home. I didn't see Dad again until 2004.

After his death, I realised he had been the only element of stability in my life, even though deep in my heart I felt I never really knew him. He kept to himself, working long hours to avoid my mother. He was a quiet unassuming man and was well-respected in the community. Behind closed doors and out of sight of family and friends, we lived in a turbulent environment.

I can only recall us having two family holidays together and the last one was the year I turned five. After that, Dad changed. He became withdrawn; he hardly spoke at home and never came away with us again. Dad would take me for a drive some Sundays; it was always just the two of us. I often wondered why. It was only after my mother's death in 1992 and a trip to England a few years later to meet Dad's family that I discovered Dad's secrets and all that was behind the animosity held between my parents: they had both, in different

ways, betrayed each other.

Sitting in a park having lunch weeks later, I realised it was the first time I had seen someone who wasn't living anymore that I had known. That realisation caused me to question if there's more to life than just this external existence. That thought disturbed my indoctrinated beliefs and I quickly attempted to close the door on that idea as I had done previously. Even so, the impact of that thought continued niggling at my curious mind.

Despite my religious upbringing, I battled to close the door on the idea that life could possibly exist elsewhere other than the life I could see and touch in front of my eyes. I surmised it was possible that I believed the times I saw spiritual beings standing by my bed were not real, and I had left a door open to the idea that I had imagined them as Mum had told me. But seeing my father was different, he had physically lived and seeing him after he died etched a deep impression in my mind. I couldn't let go of this notion and it continued to infiltrate my thoughts. Even though the church spoke of angels, from my limited understanding they didn't mention that it's acceptable and logical for us humans on earth to see angels and people after they had passed over.

I read that people eons ago were condemned to death by the church for believing in anything that was not in accordance with their religious doctrines. I knew without a doubt I had seen Dad after he died; therefore, there had to be more to life than what I had been led to believe. Seeing Dad convinced me that I hadn't imagined the other encounters I experienced growing up either. Yet, my mind battled to move beyond the indoctrinated beliefs I inherited.

I tried to logically explain away these happenings but no matter how hard I tried they continued to torment my thoughts. I liked everything to fit neatly into a little box; I didn't like having unsolved questions hanging around me – it unnerved me. I felt out of control and insecure. I never invited these 'happenings' and I believed I would

be a much happier person if they didn't occur. Even though Dad's death had opened a big door in my consciousness, one that would never be closed again, I shelved as best I could those niggling thoughts to the back of my mind.

Thinking back to my youth, I came to understand my mother was saddened by how her life had unfolded. Mum once told me that her father's sister, who was rich, asked her brother if she could pay for Mum to go to a London conservatory of music as Mum was very gifted on the piano. He refused to allow it.

Not long after Dad's death, my mother's pain from losing Dad and her inner struggles caused her to become even more resentful and bitter towards life in general.

My sister Nancy deeply loved Dad and only tolerated my mother for his sake. She told me once that Mum was a manipulator, but I couldn't see it back then. Nancy, a high school teacher, transferred to the country a great distance from home and Mum couldn't understand why she stopped having any contact with us after Dad died. My sister's decision triggered hostility within Mum and her outbursts and behaviour towards me escalated.

As an adult now, I can understand that Mum was hurting; she had not only lost her husband but she had also lost a daughter, and my heart went out to her as she feared losing me too.

My mother and I argued often, as she believed I didn't love her; sadly, she couldn't see that it wasn't true. All I desired was to voice my own individuality. I vacillated between loving and immensely disliking her and at times hating her, yet I couldn't turn my back on her, as my sister had done for her own survival, which I begrudgingly understood.

On rare occasions when I was extremely distressed, I felt two arms encircling me, and the hairs on my arms would stand up as goosebumps popped up all over my body. I liked to believe it was Dad comforting me, which left me with a smile on my face.

I understand now from experiencing the passing of other close family members that this sensation is definitely a spiritual being's vibrational presence touching me. A person's bodily reaction to these feelings is connected to our soul's energy body, which surrounds our physical body. When contact is made, it can cause a physical reaction such as goosebumps or shivers. Refer to chapter 63 – Sid's Farewell Hug.

I was 24 years old when I heard The Voice for the second time. I had hit rock bottom emotionally and life was a daily struggle. I desperately wanted freedom from the negative tormenting thoughts that bombarded me day and night. I was looking for a way to escape my pain by ending my life.

One lunch hour, I was standing at a crosswalk at a wide intersection in Perth CBD waiting for the lights to change. Glancing to the right, I saw a large, fully-loaded, fast-moving truck intent on making it through the green traffic lights before they changed. I thought, *all I have to do right now is just step out in front of this approaching truck and end it all. Go on do it. Do it! Just step forward right now. DO IT!*

At the precise moment I went to step forward onto the road The Voice spoke, distracting me... *'Yvonne, remember.'*

Only two words were spoken, yet, in that instant, I experienced the same sensations again as the Voice's vibration spread throughout my body. My memory flooded back to the previous encounter I experienced when I was seven years old. The vibrations touched my heart once again as they had done so long ago. Besides comforting me, it triggered a curiosity within me to understand how I came to hear and feel this Voice so strongly. The Voice had given me a reason to keep living. It had opened another door in my curious mind.

The following year I started questioning my family's hand-me-down beliefs and what my strict religious training had taught me. I realised as admirable as their view of life was, it was far too narrow a perspective of how I was literally seeing life.

By the age of 25, I was heading towards a successful career in the

computer field for a very large well-known Australia-wide company. I discovered I had a gift for analysing a company's existing workflow systems to improve their efficiency as they prepared the transition from a manual system to computerisation. I worked with contracted consultants and computer programmers prior to the changeover, testing the new diverse programs before implementing the new systems. I was involved with the choice of a computer system to purchase after I found the courage to tell the accountant that I didn't believe the one they were going to purchase would be efficient enough to handle the workload.

This new and innovative system was later adopted interstate. I loved the work. My work colleagues nicknamed me 'Bubbles' as I always appeared happy and vibrant. On the surface, life was going well for me or so I thought.

When I was 27, suddenly overnight, my life took a turn for the worse. I went from a woman who appeared to be confident and somewhat carefree to a very frightened one. The door to the freedom I was enjoying slammed shut in my face. I kept up a persona as if I didn't have a care in the world, although it felt as if there were two very different people residing in my body, fighting with each other. The aftermath of my father's death and the build-up of negative emotions that my body had amassed and buried over the years, suddenly, without any warning, released their load, bringing on acute anxiety and terrifying panic attacks. I believed life was scary, the world a dangerous place and everyone was out to get me.

Over the past ten years, I had broken up with two wonderful men after they asked me to marry them. The first – we drifted apart after being together for five years. The second – I couldn't handle exposing my flaws to him. I had been living a lie.

I felt as if I might implode and I started having difficulty coping with how the tormenting fears affected me. I often felt extremely insecure and threatened in certain situations. For instance, I sometimes found

it difficult to relax when I was sitting in a chair without side arms in the middle of a restaurant, surrounded by other patrons. I used to grip onto the sides of the seat with my fingers whenever I felt myself becoming dizzy and thought I might faint from the inner pressure that built up in my body. I preferred to sit with my back to a wall to feel secure and safe.

When I experienced moments of insecurity, I unconsciously triggered flashbacks of intense fear, overwhelming feelings of dread along with a deep sense of hopelessness. I had no idea what was causing these feelings to suddenly burst forth without warning, crippling my ability to function rationally at times. I couldn't see any logical reason for these occurrences.

I just wanted to scream and escape from my inner struggles. I added to my stress by not allowing anyone to know about my issues. I was so embarrassed and ashamed of what was happening to me. I hated myself immensely. My negative attitudes towards life started showing up in the form of small health issues.

One night my car was hit by a drunken driver, which resulted in severe whiplash, leading me to take a prescription relaxant tablet to reduce muscle contractions in my neck and back. I became addicted to the drug Serepax. I discovered these tablets helped me cope with my anxieties and the underlying discomfort I felt, especially when I was at a restaurant.

I kept up a facade at work and amongst friends that life was a breeze, creating even more inner stress. I slowly increased the dosage, blindly remaining ignorant of the effects the tablets were having on me. They became my crutch. I couldn't go anywhere without having them on hand. If I did forget, I panicked and would have to return home to collect them.

A few months before my 28<sup>th</sup> birthday, I started to seriously question my life and the teachings handed down to me. I had no intention of turning my back on The Voice – that door remained open. I still

yearned to understand how I came to hear it. On the two occasions I'd heard *The Voice*, the words spoken felt so very loving and kind.

I recalled reading that many people were persecuted and some burnt to death by churches in a long-ago era when their beliefs differed from the strict religious doctrine of those days. I could see the connection between my dilemma back then and the people who were persecuted. I realised my indoctrinated religious beliefs were my mother's inherited concept of religion and misconstrued as true, as were some churches' beliefs long ago. My past beliefs no longer fitted with how I was 'literally' seeing life.

While typing this, I feel a surge of heartfelt compassion for the younger me, her inner struggles and her bravery by choosing to pursue her own concepts about life.

Thank goodness, the days of the hellfire and brimstone approach to religion are mostly a thing of the past. Many, like me, were part of an era that was coming from an overzealous approach in their desire to save us. Unfortunately, my mind still clung on to a negatively ingrained view of life and beliefs that had been instilled into me that I couldn't shake off.

I still had many issues to resolve and I needed space to unravel my confused religious beliefs and the inner turmoil I experienced daily. In order to create the space I desperately needed, I made a big decision that I knew would bring consequences, yet at the same time, it opened another door in my life...