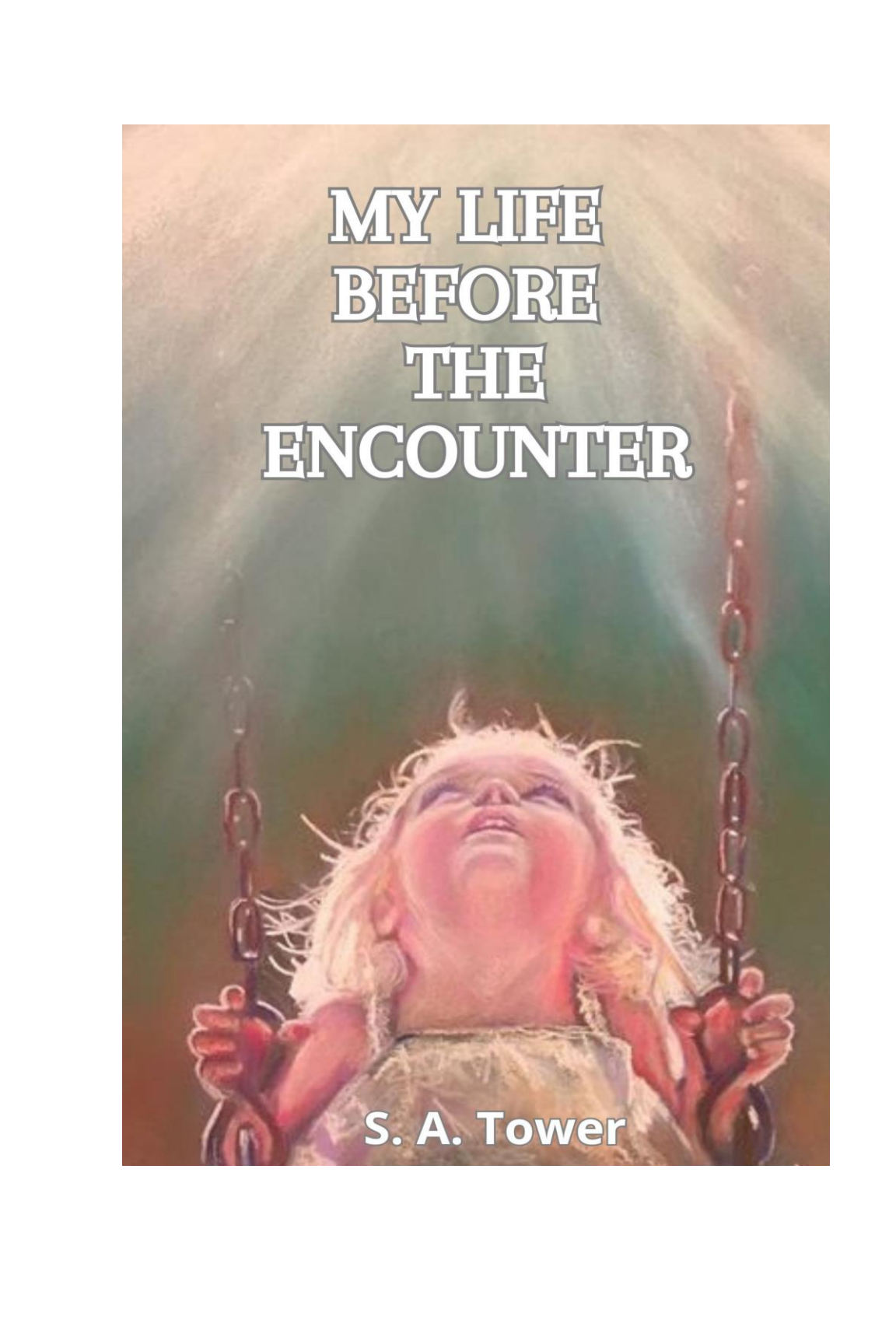


A painting of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a light-colored dress, sitting on a swing. She is looking upwards with her mouth open in a state of awe or wonder. Two chains of the swing are visible, one on each side of her head. The background is a soft, hazy mix of green and brown, with several bright, ethereal light rays or beams of light shining down from above, creating a magical atmosphere. The overall style is painterly and somewhat ethereal.

MY LIFE BEFORE THE ENCOUNTER

S. A. Tower

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To protect the privacy of individuals referred to, names of persons, places, and some other details have been changed.

INTRODUCTION

Many have asked what, if any, warning signs led to my occult involvement? I had a typical childhood. I cannot place blame on the era of television shows such as Bewitched and Dark Shadows, though admittedly I watched them. Neither can I point my finger at childhood games such as; Light as a Feather - stiff as a board, the Magic Eight Ball or even my naïve, and occasional crack at the Ouija board. The sources at work in my life were more sinister, more sophisticated and loomed in the shadows from the moment of my birth. These uninvited guests imposed on my innocence. Even then, in my ignorance, a war raged between dark and light. Yet, I wasn't alone, for the Most High protected me. I didn't know it then, but God had a plan for my life, and the enemy sought to destroy it. This short prequel reveals the events that tailored my way to a decade of witchcraft revealed in my book, "A Witch's Encounter with God".

~ S. A. Tower

CHAPTER I

It was a clear fall day with temperatures soaring above the norm, ushering in the official Indian summer. Thomas Tower may have had a small frame, but he was huge in compassion, and one who all too often let worry get the best of him. This morning was no exception, as he paced the waiting room floor, rubbing his hands together, with his eyes practically glued to his wrist. It seemed the hands on his watch barely moved while his thoughts raced a mile a minute. "Of all days, please not today," he silently pleaded.

Anna had been laboring throughout the night with their second child. He wondered about his wife and baby. Would they have a girl or a boy? More important than the sex, of course, was a healthy child. By the time the light of dawn made its appearance, it was obvious this birth would ironically fall on the anniversary of his grandmother's death. At half-past six in the morning, it happened. The nurse walked in, greeted by the wide eyes of anticipation of several waiting fathers-to-be. "Mr. Tower, congratulations, you have a brand-new baby girl."

I was the second child born into a low-income family with a middle-class state of mind. After a week-long hospital stay, my parents brought me home to their inner-city duplex, where my big sister, Melinda, anxiously awaited. A few weeks later, my godmother purchased a delicate satin and chiffon gown and dressed me in it, and then my parents brought me to the Anglican Episcopal Church that my family considered their own for my christening. It would be the same church where I later heard my first Bible stories. Mom was the one who ruled the roost in the Tower household; however, it was my dad who was the driving force behind our weekly church attendance. I grew up believing God was somewhere far beyond the sky and it would take death to meet Him, or so my young mind thought.

During my early childhood, my best friend, whom my parents called an imaginary friend, lived within my mom's vanity mirror in her bedroom. She was the complete opposite of the blond-haired, blue-eyed me. Her hair was dark brown; she had brown eyes and a dark countenance. I regularly slipped away through to the other side of the mirror... a portal where I'd get lost with my friend for hours on end. It was my secret place, and my friend made me

promise not to tell anyone about it. My mom would question why it was so quiet and begin looking for me. More than once, she couldn't understand how she found me where she did, having just looked there minutes before and yet, hadn't seen me. She did not know that I was engaged in paranormal "play" with spirit guides and had traveled far from her room and sight.

It was 1963 when my first favorite song, "Puff The Magic Dragon" by Peter, Paul and Mary, littered the airways and Mom bought me the 45-rpm record. I would swing for hours in the backyard, shouting the chorus until my aunt Marie, who lived with us, would try to coerce me into doing anything other than sing, questioning both my musical taste and attraction towards these so-called "beatniks." It would mark the start of my lifelong fascination with people and things off the beaten path.

I haven't forgotten the call that sparked a health scare for my aging grandfather. Grandpop Tower fell, resulting in his hospitalization for a fractured hip. But that wasn't the worst of it; the doctors believed a stroke had caused his fall. The Towers were mostly Catholic, all except for my grandma, though neither had been to church in

years. It was during this time that I witnessed the power of prayer and had a hint that maybe God wasn't so far off after all. Feeling powerless to help our Grandpop, Melinda and I made our bedroom into a makeshift sanctuary. We used a long vanity chair as the improvised altar and covered it with a tablecloth before adding the family Bible, prayer book and a crucifix placed on top. To replicate church pews, we gathered a mix-match of chairs and stools from around the house, leaving an open aisle in the center. With hymnbooks in hand, we joined our choir procession, marching our way up to the altar. After reciting the Lord's Prayer, Melinda read a prayer for healing from the prayer book, and we petitioned for our Grandpop to get better. This daily ritual continued, and each day Grandpop made it through to see another day. Then, as children often do, we became preoccupied with our dolls, friends and cartoons, and before long we had stopped praying altogether. It was a chilly March day when my dad got the call that Grandpop had gone on to heaven. At that point, heaven seemed far away and mysterious, yet amid my sadness, a hope emerged. "Melinda!" I ran to my sister's room eager to share my new revelation. "Did you notice when we prayed, Grandpop lived and when we stopped, he died?" I questioned.

Despite my eagerness, Melinda didn't share the excitement about my thrilling news. Perhaps out of guilt, she pounced back, "We had nothing to do with it!"

The concept of God actually hearing and answering our prayers was very disturbing to Melinda, but for me... it awakened a thirst to know more.

The Tower siblings gathered at Grandma Tower's house to make funeral arrangements, and my parents dropped us kids off at my other grandparents' house. My mom's parents moved frequently but had recently bought a house in a neighboring town and planned to stay put for a while. Neither were believers, though my grandmother had some limited exposure to the Christian faith growing up. I normally reveled in the attention from my grandfather, especially being his favorite, but this time the visit was bittersweet. I was always in the spotlight on their kitchen chair stage performing my grandfather's personal song of choice... "I've Written a Letter to Daddy" from the psychological thriller, "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane." This time, however, I jumped down from the chair stage before his standing ovation, solemn and confused between the reality of prayer and death. I wondered about God and His answer to prayer, but there was no one who could help me understand.

Except for my grandparents, we associated little with Mom's side of the family. In fact, while I'd heard about my great-grandmother, I had never actually met her. She was a mysterious woman, and while Grandpop tried to convince Mom to include his side of the family, she never did, but I was curious to know who my great-grandmother was. It took some coaxing by my grandfather, but eventually Mom reluctantly agreed to let me go for a visit. The small ground-floor apartment was dimly lit, and our arrival was far from the red-carpet treatment. Great Grandmother had long, beautiful white hair, pulled back in a ponytail, but my ice-breaking compliment failed to move her. In fact, only her boyfriend acknowledged my presence with a hushed, "hello." Within a few quick minutes, Grandfather left me in this eerie place with my estranged relatives despite my protests. I felt as though I were an uninvited guest but tried to make the best of it. Great Grandmother barely uttered a word, but her talking caged bird made for a pleasant substitute, and that's where I planted myself during my entire visit. It seemed my grandfather had been gone for hours, and I grew tired of sitting in the stifling apartment, and there wasn't even a phone to call home.

At last, Grandfather returned, and with great anticipation I ran and jumped up, latching my arms around his neck, but I came to an abrupt halt before kissing his

cheek as I caught a whiff of his favorite drink. Finally, we were going home. Grandfather stumbled over the doorstep on the way out the door, then fish-tailed several times on the drive home. I never asked to go back again, nor wanted to.

CHAPTER II

A few years had gone by, and at last Mom was going to make another visit to our aloof and peculiar side of the family. I wasn't so eager to go this time, but Mom insisted as my grandmother didn't drive and she had asked Mom to take her. In her younger days, Grandmother had been close friends with her sister-in-law, but it had been years since she had seen these particular relatives.

We drove to a street of carbon-copy brick row houses in the inner city and joined the other porch dwellers camped out front. The adults sat on folding or kitchen chairs, while we kids played hopscotch or jacks on the porch steps. To me, these family members did not differ from strangers. My grandfather's youngest half-sister, Lilly, was there and offered to take us for a walk up the hill. Surprisingly, Mom gave the okay but set limits, saying we must not go past the yellow street sign. I had only taken a few steps before I felt the uncomfortable grip of Lilly's hand, yet the others walked along without restraint. The walk up the hill seemed long... my hand was becoming sweaty, and I wiggled it, hoping to be released from my escort's hold. As we neared the yellow sign, my aunt and sister turned and headed back, except Lilly yanked me forward.

"I'm not allowed past the sign!" I protested. In my squished fingers I could feel my pulse, and Lilly's voice became cunningly sweetened.

"It's alright, your mom won't mind so long as you're with me."

I turned around hoping to see Mom standing there with her hands on her hips.

"Yes, she will!" I insisted and quickly jerked my hand away from my prisoner. A second later, the gripping pain held my fingers again. "Ouch! You're hurting me!" I struggled to break free from her vice-like grip. "I want my Mom!" I demanded.

I tried to pry her fingers away, but I was no match. I tried to yell, but her other hand muffled my voice, covering my mouth.

"Hold still and I'll take you to your mother."

I looked in desperation to see if anyone was watching, but we had wandered all the way up the hill to an overpass.

"First, I have something to show you," she coerced.

I tried to dig my feet into the concrete sidewalk, realizing she had no intention of keeping her promise. She pulled me towards a low concrete barrier on the overpass that stood between me and the road far below.

"Do you want to see what's down there?" Her voice sounded seductive while she pulled me closer.

“NO!” I firmly replied and struggled to get free.

“Don’t you want to see what it’s like to fall down there?” I could hear my heart pounding in my head, yet no sound came from my lips when I opened my mouth. The rough concrete surface scraped my thighs. I looked down. It was a long way down, and there were cars driving past on the road below.

It was then I heard them shout, “Ally!” Immediately, Lilly let go of her hold!

I turned to see Melinda and Marie running up the hill just in the nick of time. “You’re in trouble!” Melinda mimicked. “You know you weren’t supposed to go past the sign!” I was never so happy to hear my sister threaten me and to head back for Mom’s scolding. I hurried down the hill, with Lilly following close behind. Just before we reached safety, Lilly grabbed hold of my hand again and whispered with an evil grin, “Wait till next time.”

I pulled my hand away from her and ran as fast as I could to my mom’s lap. Mom seemed embarrassed by my reaction, but her reprimand was like music to my ears. “You know better than to go beyond where I told you to go!” I came alongside of her and attempted to whisper in her ear, but she would not have it. “It’s impolite to whisper in the company of others, Ally... what has gotten into you?” I froze; all eyes were on me. “But Mom,” I begged.

“You can say whatever you have to say in front of everyone.”

“I wanna go home!”

I wrapped my arms around Mom’s neck as tight as I could and clung on for dear life. “What’s gotten into you? Get down and go play,” Mom said, annoyed at my behavior. I was just glad to be alive!

I sat down on the pavement right next to Mom’s feet. The grown-ups seemed never to run out of things to say, and the afternoon was long and lasting. All I wanted was to go home, and then my worst fear played out. Lilly proposed a question to my mom: “If it’s okay, I’ll take Ally for another walk?”

My heart sank in my chest, and my breath froze for a moment as I hoped against all odds that Mom would say no. Then I heard the unthinkable: “Sure, she can go.”

My mind went blank for a moment, and then I began shaking. I climbed back onto my mom’s lap. Why couldn’t she see through this madwoman and realize she wanted to murder me? This time, I hung on for dear life. “Ally, stop acting this way!” Mom instructed. I normally would have listened, and the last thing I wanted was my mom’s backhand for putting on a scene, but I dared not move. I could picture the scene at home as Mom worried over what the family thought of her parenting skills? How could she explain the behavior of a bratty child?

Her face flushed with embarrassment as she apologized to Lilly. "I'm sorry, I don't know what's gotten into her."

I knew I was likely to feel the sting of the wooden paddle when I got home, but I didn't care. If I went with Lilly, the drop from the overpass would be my deathbed. When my grandmother was finally ready to leave, I ran as fast as I could to the car and jumped in. I slumped down in my seat, clenching my fist and holding my breath until the car pulled away. I opened my mouth and let out a big gulp of air... I was safe at last.

CHAPTER III

Moving to a new neighborhood was quite a culture shock for a ten-year-old. For some odd reason, it seemed all my peers had already lost their innocence and were pushing the boundaries of promiscuity. During after-school activities, they put discrete anatomy lessons to the test in back alleys. In response, I resorted to hanging out with a few Catholic girls in my neighborhood and spent a good bit of time with my family.

My grandmother came over every Sunday for dinner and always reminisced about the old days. She often retold stories of my great aunt, Gracie, who at the time was a reverend of a nearby Spiritualist Church. One particular story often shared was of Gracie's early years reading the tarot, and a man who refused to believe the reading and heed the warning she had given him. Grandmother relayed how someone discovered the innocent victim dead several days later in a freak accident... hanging from an old iron fencepost. I prodded Grandmother for more details, but she always took a vow of silence, leaving me both morbidly curious and intrigued.

That winter, we had off from school because of several feet of fallen snow, and I was outside playing with my friends, Sherry and Jamie. We walked to the apartment that was rented by a few Englishmen who had recently come to America. They often toyed with us young girls, giving us a thrill from their interest. This day started no differently than any other, except one of our British neighbors was a bit on edge. Jamie and I walked away, but Sherry, who at the time had a tendency of babbling nonsense, stayed behind. Our neighbor's behavior caused Jamie to realize that he was high as a kite and in the middle of an awful trip that might put Sherry in danger; thus, we attempted to coax her away. I picked up a snowball and threw it at Sherry, hoping a snowball fight would distract her and we could head towards home. Instead, we got into a catfight, and Sherry went home with an injured face and pride. I was sorry for what had happened but believed I had done my best to keep her out of a potentially dangerous situation. Next thing I knew, there was a knock at my door, and her college-aged sister was calling me out. Mom intervened and saved me from the wrath of an angry older sibling, but it made me mad. I was so enraged; I ran upstairs and sought solace and revenge in the back of my long, narrow closet with a small dark-haired doll as my puppet. I was clueless as I positioned pins and wrapped the doll with

string from waist to thigh to close her womb. The words that came from my lips were unbeknownst to me and certainly not something picked up on television or read in a storybook. After my fit of anger and rage, I soon forgot about that bound doll in the back of my closet and, like many young girls, we restored our friendship. I had no clue that I had just engaged in the practice of the dark arts, nor did I have knowledge of Scripture that would have warned me against doing so.

Growing up during the tail end of the “hippie culture,” I dressed the part, donned in hippie-inspired faded bell-bottom jeans, with long straight hair held in place with a leather headband and of course, fringed moccasins. Having a peace, love and flower power mindset, there was no room for a faraway God who restricted the youth’s rebellious attitude towards society. Joan Baez and Bob Dylan sang anthems of protest and social justice... practically everyone got stoned on pot. I jotted down my philosophy in poetry on the subject that was met with opposition by my eighth - grade English teacher. Miss Jackson was a devout Christian who portrayed God as an interactive being who actually had an interest in people. I

spent my lunch periods in her classroom, hearing about Jesus in a way Sunday school had never taught. It was here, she confronted my stoned poetry logic that God had created marijuana and it was there for my enjoyment. Miss Jackson didn't argue, rather simply advised, "If you really want to know the truth, then pray and ask Jesus to show you." She concluded with a word of caution: "Don't ask unless you really want to know because He will answer your prayer." Miss Jackson even handed me a Christian tract as I walked out of class one afternoon.

That night I knelt by my bed and recited the sinner's prayer from the back of the tract and asked Jesus if marijuana use was really wrong. The school year ended, and soon after I received a surprise package in the mail. It was a Good News Bible from Miss Jackson but, try as I may, I couldn't understand what I read.

I quickly forgot all about the questions and the prayer of salvation, and continued on my chosen course until the next school year was well underway. My best friend and I had saved our money and went in on a dime bag of weed. That high would haunt me for years to come.

We lit a joint behind the schoolyard, which had become a favorite hangout, and shared it with another friend we were turning on for the first time. I remember

leaving the schoolyard and walking down the street. The first sign of trouble was a lit-up cross on the Deliverance Church. The sign's message blazed before me larger than life: "Jesus Saves and Jesus Heals." I felt some guilt knowing what I was on. We continued walking... enjoying a good high until my surroundings changed. Suddenly, I felt distant, as if I were floating out of my body. I panicked and desperately wanted to get back. It seemed I was losing ground and couldn't keep up with my friends, nor my body. This was no longer a normal high. I turned to Sherry and yelled, "Wait! Hold up!" but she looked puzzled, not missing a step. I was on a familiar street, but something didn't seem right. The twilight had an auburn ambience that seemed surreal... as if I was quickly becoming devoured by this prevailing darkness. I was terrified, feeling separated and totally unconnected. I resisted the feeling of being pulled further into this reddened abyss, and I wanted out! It was then that I had this disturbing sensation that I was fast approaching the gateway to hell. My chest tightened, and I found it difficult to breathe. I knew I had to do something quickly, or I'd enter the place of no return! That's when I lost it! I screamed, "Help! Help me!" I kept screaming while standing in the middle of the street. Sherry grabbed my arms. "It's okay! It's alright." That was no solace in the cruel fate that beckoned me. I screamed louder, pleading for help.

A concerned driver stopped his car and asked if I was okay. Sherry thought quickly and told him it was a silly prank as she yanked me out of the street. I held my head between my hands, terrified until Sherry, at a loss for words, remembered my God conversations with my teacher. "God is with you!" Sherry repeated. "It's okay... God is with you!" In an instant, my fear subsided, and the dark auburn faded. I looked around; now realizing I was standing in front of a hospital. I still felt disconnected from my body, but the feeling of losing myself was gone along with the pull into oblivion. Those words of reassurance echoed in my head: "It was going to be okay, God was with me." Sherry held onto my arm and hurried me away from the large glass hospital windows, where waiting room patients and their loved ones looked on. We walked to her older sister's house that was close by, where they brought me inside and gave me a cup of tea. I was safe at last.

I went home to go directly to bed only to face a restless night, trying to piece together what had happened? This was like an awful trip, but the only thing was that everyone knew you didn't trip on pot. I couldn't shake the prayer I'd prayed over a year prior when I asked God to show me if smoking marijuana was wrong. How could God, who existed far out in the universe, actually know me and affect my life here on Earth? Had He actually answered my

prayer? Fear consumed me at the thought and, as the new day emerged, I set out determined to find a logical explanation for this paranormal experience.

I flipped through the pages of the phone book and called every drug rehab place that existed and shared my experience. They all seemed convinced that marijuana influence did not cause this episode. But what was it? I even took a bus to skid row because a man at this rehab center seemed hopeful to supply an answer. But when I got there, he thought I was hiding something and had actually taken a hallucinogenic drug.

I walked out of the center disappointed and more afraid and bewildered than when I entered. I hurried across a small park just in time to catch the next bus. There was one last number in the phone book for me to call; one that I was trying to avoid... it was a pastor that had a drug rehab ministry. I called and shared my story, and he said the words I didn't want to hear... "Yes, God is real and could intervene in my life!"

You would think those words would be reassuring and I'd run into the arms of my Heavenly Father, but I turned further away. I was afraid of Him, afraid that He actually had the power to influence my life and surroundings. My guilty, sinful lifestyle exposed me, and I could no longer deny His spiritual existence. It was a reality

that I wasn't ready to face, nor wanted to, so I hid away in the quiet of my room. Afraid to go out with my friends, I slowly became reclusive and depressed. Mom did everything she could to force me out the door, even calling my friends for their help and encouragement. Almost a year went by before I finally emerged from my self-imposed solitary confinement. I continued denying any spiritual existence, yet the impact was sufficient that I exchanged my use of weed for a natural high.

CHAPTER IV

A few years after high school graduation, my friend Sherry called to tell me her older sister, Marie, had become a Christian, and we talked about how she was making a big mistake. Since I was out of work, Marie asked me to house-sit at her new home for a furniture delivery and electric hook-up. The house was completely empty except for a Bible, some tracts and a battery-operated tape player with nothing to play but sermon tapes. I browsed through some of this stuff as there was little else to do until she came home. When Marie arrived out of the blue, she invited me to go with her church to a Jesus gathering at Giants Stadium. I thought this would be a good way to get out to a free music event and hide in a crowd, with no dogma or individual attention focused on me, so I agreed to go.

Marie's fiancé parked his small compact car, and we headed inside the stadium. Over 40,000 people attended this "Jesus' thing", which totally bewildered me. We sat halfway up the bleachers for what they told me would be an afternoon of music and teaching, yet I did not know what to expect. Shortly after we entered, the entire stadium was singing praise to Jesus, with what seemed to me, half of them singing in another language. They gave me a crash

course in “tongues” that made little sense to me. This was an entirely different church experience than I had ever had before. Then an amazing thing happened... as I looked up, the impending storm clouds were rolling in, and we had brought no rain gear or umbrellas! I thought rain might lead to its cancellation. Ironically, you could see the rain pouring down everywhere except within the stadium. The clouds soon broke open to a blue sky, and the sun shone down on this gathering of Jesus people. I felt chills down my spine as my heart melted, remembering the Jesus my eighth-grade teacher had spoken of long ago. The gathering ended, and the seed planted within me so long ago received water. A few days later, I walked to a local park and sat on a bench where I once again prayed the prayer for salvation, but this time, I made a devout commitment to begin my daily walk with Christ.

At first, I went back to the church I grew up in and shortly after, started teaching Sunday school and becoming one of the Youth Group advisors. Every Sunday and Wednesday evenings, I regularly attended a Pentecostal church to learn the Word of God and to be filled... using them as a spiritual catalyst for my teachings in my Sunday school class. I made a few new Christian girlfriends and became active in young adult events.

CHAPTER V

One of my newborn-again friends invited me to a healing and deliverance church called New Zion Christian Fellowship. They were also a discipleship church, and there I developed a close relationship with the pastor, John, and his wife, Joan. Over time, they became my spiritual parents. It was at their dining room table that I first met my future husband, Michael. Joan and I went shopping for ingredients one day to make homemade lasagna... Joan had pre-arranged my meeting with Michael that night, playing somewhat the matchmaker. She said that, knowing both of our hearts, we might make a good couple. I nervously set the table as Michael came in with a loaf of garlic bread. We hit it off... and the night ended with Michael inviting me to The Basic Youth Conflicts Seminar in Ocean Grove that was coming the following week.

Each day Michael would pick me up in his mini, yellow and black, pickup truck and we'd drive to The Great Auditorium just off the Jersey shore. At the end of each seminar night, we would emerge in conversation while walking along the sandy beach. We both enjoyed nature, and the roaring ocean waves added a romantic feel to the backdrop of a moonlit sky. Following the conference, I did as the conference pastor suggested in ridding myself of any ungodly possessions. Michael helped me as we shattered all

my rock albums and tore my bohemian hedonistic poems into a multitude of tiny bits and pieces. I did this act of obedience unto the Lord, believing it was what He would have wanted me to do.

We dated for a year before we made plans for our wedding day. It seemed this was a match made in heaven. The first year of our marriage was any girl's dream come true; Michael was a sensitive and caring husband that would put most men to shame. I believed that God truly blessed us and wanted our marriage to glorify Him in every aspect. Within a few months, we rejoiced when I conceived our first child. Our entire focus changed as we embraced our new parental role. One of the first things we had to do was move from our little two-room bungalow to make room for our baby-to-be. A deacon in our church and his wife had a two-bedroom apartment connected to their home, and their tenants had just moved out, so we went over to check it out. The apartment was pleasant, large, and even had a backyard for our dog. I had one big reservation; the rent. I addressed my concern with Michael, Deacon Dave and the couple's father, Brad, one of the church pastors. "We can just barely afford the rent now, but what happens when I have the baby and am no longer working?" All three men reassured me that God would provide for our needs. In fact, I was told

how God had opened the doors to providing for Deacon Dave and his growing family needs. Besides, as Pastor Brad shared, it would be a great fellowship for us to be right next door. I was still apprehensive, but wanting to be the submissive wife, I agreed, trusting in the leadership that was over me.

While we were decorating the nursery in our new apartment, my mother-in-law seemed to have already planned a pre-emptive strike, and had Michael's baby crib set up, made and waiting for our new arrival. She had seemed to have our baby's life all planned out, including the baby spending every weekend with her, even knowing I planned on nursing. Her obsession would become a permanent wedge in our relationship.

After the birth of our son, Michael gave up his construction job for what seemed to be a dream management position at a bakery franchise owned by another church elder, Tom. They promised him the same pay as his former job, including benefits after only two weeks of training, but neither the pay nor the benefits ever materialized, leaving Michael struggling to support our new family on minimum wage. To make matters worse, he had become known as the shop "Don-Juan," engaging servers with sexual innuendo. This did not amuse me, and I

wondered what type of Christian husband would behave this way and where my sensitive husband had gone.

That Christmas, Michael chose an enormous tree that practically filled our living room, yet we couldn't afford to put presents beneath it. To make matters worse, I received a gift as a bank savings account statement in the mail to find a zero balance! Panicked, I called Michael.

"Our bank statement just arrived with a zero balance!" There was silence on the other end of the phone. "That's our house savings; did you take it out of the bank?"

"I know nothing about it," Michael responded with an eerie silence.

"Well... somebody took it out, and I know it wasn't me!" I had hoped he would have some explanation, but my gut feeling told me I wouldn't get a truthful answer. "I'm going to call the bank and find out what happened."

I called the bank, my heart pounding, as I inquired about our life savings. After the service representative verified the zero balance, I took a deep breath... "This can't be. We've got several thousand dollars in our account from our wedding!" The rep was extremely sympathetic, but further research yielded the same results... an empty account. "Can you tell me whose name is on the withdrawal

slip?" I asked, not sure if I wanted to hear the answer. After a few minutes on hold, the rep returned with the verdict... it was several withdrawals signed by Michael. I insisted it couldn't be, since Michael had said he knew nothing about it. The bank rep explained how to come in to file a federal investigation into fraud. I hung up the phone furious because the evidence was irrefutable. Yet, when I called Michael back, he still denied it.

That night when he came home from work, I greeted him with a frown and a bank statement, but he seemed unconcerned over our missing money.

"Michael!" I demanded, "If you didn't withdraw this money, then I'm going to the bank in the morning to file for fraud. The bank said It's a federal offense."

Michael looked away, but I wasn't about to relent until I received his confession. It took a long time, but he finally admitted to emptying the account. "And a Merry Christmas to you," I thought to myself.

"I had to pay bills!" Michael explained, but while the money was gone, I found out that he still had not paid the bills.

That was all I could bear at that moment. The rage I harbored burst through as I let out a loud scream, and I grabbed the trunk of our enormous Christmas tree as I screamed, "You lied!" I pulled harder until the tree popped out the front door, then through the narrow landing on the front porch with a trail of tinsel and broken bulbs trailing behind. Michael stared in disbelief for a few moments before attempting to console me as I burst into tears, but my pain wasn't in the loss of money but in his trust.

By now, we were living off our family and the church. Michael was supposed to pay whatever he could for the rent, and the church helped by paying the difference. My mom would drop off groceries and diapers by the boxload. I questioned whether this all was a lesson in humility or a direct attack against my desire to give? This was not what I had hoped for my son or the new baby that the pregnancy test had just revealed I was carrying. My cries out to God became my daily prayer, not knowing where I had gone wrong.

Deacon Dave and Pastor Tom came to visit us early Saturday evening. Pastor shared how his own son, who was in a backslidden state, had just impregnated his girlfriend. They were going to be married (what I considered a “shotgun” wedding) and needed a place to live with someone nearby to disciple them. Our friend and deacon, Dave, suddenly revealed to me that Michael hadn’t kept up on our portion of the rent and he was giving us notice to vacate the apartment so his brother-in-law could move in. I felt a tremendous rush of emotions and protested... after all, we were told the church was paying the rent we weren’t able to pay. Pastor Tom advised us that the church couldn’t possibly continue to pay our rent and Dave needed the money to make his own mortgage payment. It wasn’t hard to see this had nothing to do with the church’s ability to help. The words my dad used to say smacked me right in the face for family: “Blood is thicker than water.” I had debated him on this before... the Bible said believers were family and, in my understanding of scripture, the spiritual family was thicker. My faith and theology were being tested to the core.

Things became really ugly as they forced us from our home without the financial means for a move. Our spiritual family sided with their own flesh and blood. So much for defending the Biblical view and my siding with them! My

dad was right; blood was thicker, and our eviction was proof. Amazingly, the deacon quickly found an apartment for us we could afford. Moving day came, and we went into the new apartment to find Deacon Dave had torn up the carpet from the old apartment we had rented and laid it in the new as though it would somehow make it a better place. To me, it made no sense. Why go through all that work when this would just be a temporary fix? The drama went on until I finally revealed the secret... as they rushed to prepare our old apartment for their new baby; they forced us, with our toddler and another baby on the way... out of our home. That first night, we lay in our bed with the aroma of pot seeping into our space. Our son awoke as we heard a continual flow of footsteps in the hall outside his bedroom door, and as a storm broke above us, we hurried to rescue him from his rain-soaked crib.

Our big break came when Michael's friend's dad offered him a permanent, decent -paying position where he worked. For a while, it seemed the hard times were behind us. The house next door to my sister became vacant, and we moved in. We now had a house with a yard and my flesh and blood living right next door for emotional support.

We continued going to church at New Zion with the love and support of our spiritual parents, John and Joan, despite the breach between our other spiritual brethren.

CHAPTER VI

It was a warm spring day, and I had just put my son down for his afternoon nap, and planned to take a shower while he slept. I walked down the hall and checked the closet to find there were no clean towels, so I headed for the stairs to get one from the dryer... when, mysteriously; I gazed down to the floor and saw my motionless body lying there. I felt like an outsider listening in on several voices engaged in a conversation. At first, I remained a silent listener until someone asked me a question. I vaguely remember what the question was, but the answer I gave remains vivid.

“No, I don’t want to leave my children.”

Despite the advice that much suffering and pain would fill my life if I stayed, my answer remained the same: “I don’t want to leave my son.”

“I sensed that all would be well with them.”

Someone advised me that if I remained, I would go into the enemy’s territory, yet I was assured that I would not lose my salvation.

“I need to be here for my children... I don’t want to go...”

The phone rang. I lay there semi-conscious. In my mind, I thought to get up, but my brain’s signals were not being transmitted and my body didn’t react. The ringing

grew louder. Finally, I struggled to my hands and knees. My head was spinning, but determined, I pulled myself up and stood. It took all I had to stumble into the kitchen and pick up the receiver to a dial tone. Feeling lightheaded, I leaned against the wall to brace myself and began calling everyone who might have been trying to reach me. Only my dad answered, but he hadn't called me. My stomach churned. I felt as though I might be sick, but I remembered I'd best shower before my son awoke. I made my way back to the stairs, clinging to the handrail as I slowly climbed what seemed like Mount Everest.

Once in the bathroom, I turned on the shower and climbed in. I ran my fingers through my hair, which already felt wet and clumped together, and it shocked me when my hand turned red.

I'm bleeding. Why am I bleeding?

The water cascaded through my hair until it ran clear. I stepped out of the shower and stood in front of the mirror to examine my head for the wound, but there wasn't any. Not even a scratch. I still felt dizzy, and my head continued to throb, but I got dressed and headed downstairs when I noticed the blood-stained carpet. What had happened and why was there blood on my rug, I silently

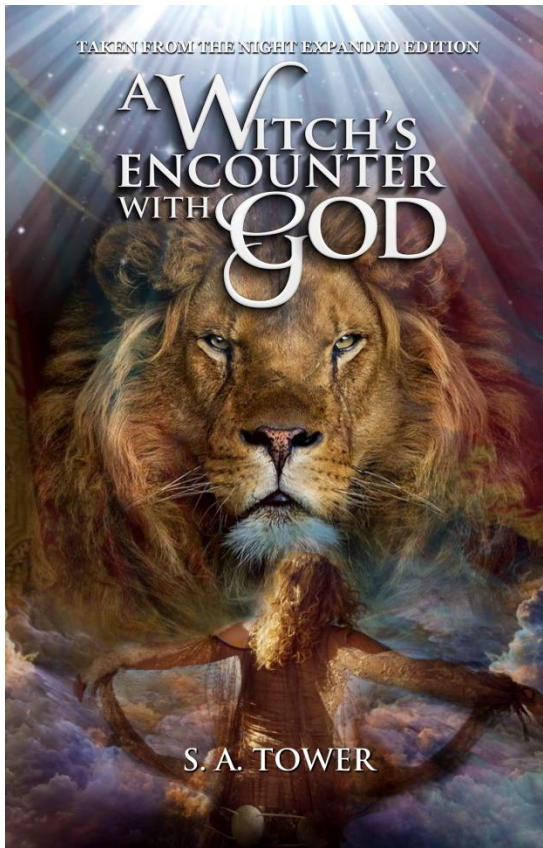
questioned. Then I remembered seeing myself lying on the floor and the mysterious conversation.

“What did it mean I would go into the enemy’s territory?”
After all, there was no way I would ever walk away from Jesus!

*My story continues in, "A Witch's Encounter with God"
available at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com and all major
e-book retailers.*

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"A Witch's Encounter with God engages the reader immediately and transports them to the battlefield of the soul. A young woman became entangled with a coven of white witchcraft and her ensuing journey to be delivered. This compelling narrative pulls no punches about church life, family struggles, and the darkness that often parades as light!" - **Dr. Ron Phillips** - Senior Pastor of Abba's House and Author of over 30 books.



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BIO

As a former initiated witch, Author S.A. Tower has experienced the unseen battles in the heavenlies firsthand. Being delivered and set-free, she is blessed with a keen gift of discernment and the ability to foresee spiritual warfare that simultaneously affects our earthly reality. An emerging fresh voice in the literary community with a deep spiritual background, Ms. Tower is the author of the highly acclaimed true story, *A Witch's Encounter with God*. Ms. Tower is the site author and blogger of *The Insightful Scribe* and maintains her well-liked S.A. Tower, Facebook Author page.