

A

The Life

HEART

and Practice of Zen Master

BLOWN

Jun Po Denis Kelly Roshi

OPEN

KEITH MARTIN-SMITH



CHAPTER 4

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

IN THE LATE SPRING 1962, NOT LONG AFTER HIS TWENTIETH birthday, Denis Kelly moved into a residential club in the heart of San Francisco, a kind of youth hostel where one could live cheaply month to month. Located on the corner of Bush and Pine streets, it was a well-run and modest place that was clean but inexpensive. This was at the very beginning of the counterculture movement, and the boundaries of conventionality were being pushed on from every direction in San Francisco.

Kelly met a man named Marty at a gathering not long after he had moved. The two of them hit it off quickly. Marty was a few years older than Kelly and had lived in San Francisco for a number of years already. He was well acquainted with the social scene, the party scene, and even the spiritual scene. Of Portuguese descent, Marty had a copper-colored complexion, thick and wavy black hair, and piercing blue eyes.

As the two men chatted at the party, two people asked if they were brothers. When a third person asked, Marty looked Kelly over more critically. Although Kelly was Irish and fair skinned, he had spent a great deal of time outdoors and was deeply tanned. With a similar complexion and build, it was easy to see why people thought they were related.

"You're six-two?" Marty asked.

Kelly nodded.

"Size forty-four jacket?"

Another nod.

"Eleven shoes?"

Nod.

"Inseam thirty-four?"

"Yup."

Marty laughed. "You're the same size as me, exactly." Marty's rough good looks were very in vogue in 1962, and he was often compared to actor Steve McQueen.

"You know what I can do for you?" Marty asked, smiling to reveal white teeth.

Kelly shook his head.

"Listen, man, I model some clothes for this real groovy chick named Silvia. She's-a Chinawoman, a stone fox, and a designer. Works with that black fashion designer, the feminist chick, Dorothy somebody or another. Anyway, Silvia makes men's suits and has me model them. Always says she wished

she had another man my size so she could put on more interesting fashion shows."

Kelly was intrigued. "What's it pay?"

Marty's smile widened. "There's more to life than money, Kelly." He put his hand on Kelly's shoulder. "Those threads you're wearing, man, they ain't so fab, you know? You look like a man who works with his hands every day."

"I do work with my hands every day," Kelly said, defensively.

"And good for you, my friend. Somebody's got to do it, and it sure as shit ain't gonna be me. But my point is you can work with your hands all you like. You just don't gotta look like you do." Marty offered a thousand-dollar smile. "You dig?"

Kelly nodded.

"So listen, man. Silvia lets her models keep the clothes they model, and she works with other designers too who 'pay' the same thing." He looked at Kelly's worn jeans and workman's top. "In six months, you'll have a closet of handmade clothing, custom tailored to your body." Marty pointed his thumbs at himself. He was wearing a woolen double-breasted suit, charcoal gray, with a silk tie. He took off his coat and offered it, and Kelly slipped it on. It fit him perfectly.

"It's yours," Marty said.

"I can't," Kelly protested, "It's too nice! And I just met you!"

Marty, though, just shook his head. "Take it. Looks boss on you."

"You sure," Kelly asked, smiling sheepishly.

"Don't sweat it, daddy-o." He lit up a joint, offering it to Kelly, who had never smoked pot before. He took a big puff, feeling the fine wool against the skin of his arms. He liked San Francisco. A lot.

Once again Kelly took a job as a steeplejack, but was determined to learn the secret of Marty's life, a life that seemed easy, fun, full, and unburdened with things like an honest day's labor.

"How's the steeplejacking?" Marty asked Kelly on the way to one of their modeling gigs a few weeks later.

"It's okay," Kelly said. "Pay's good."

Marty glanced over. His arm was out the window, and his thick hair, dark and wavy, was blowing. "I used to be a long-shoreman," he said, referring to the highly coveted union jobs working the docks, where men made great money and received amazing pensions.

"Holy shit," Kelly said, "And you gave that up? Great pay, great bennies, great retirement?"

Marty glanced over, smiling. They came to a traffic light, and he pulled a small bag of cocaine out of his pocket, taking a scoop with a key.

"Bump?" he asked Kelly after snorting it.

Kelly shrugged, not knowing what a bump was, but he took the bag and imitated what he saw Marty do.

"I gave it up because a monkey can make a living with his hands," Marty said, sniffing. "It takes a man to make a living with his wits." He laughed.

"Where's your money come from?" Kelly asked. He touched his nose and cheek. "Fuck, my face is half-numb! Is that normal?"

"Good shit, that's why." Marty commented. "And it's normal. I get my money from lots of places. Mostly these days it's from dating older women. You know, older broads who got divorced in their thirties and don't want to hit the scene without a fella on their arm. So I take them out, show them a good time, and they pick up the tab for all the cool, first-class shit I take 'em to. For a little extra, I'll take 'em home and show 'em a good time there, too."

Kelly laughed, shaking his head. "You're a gone cat, man. You're telling me you're a *gigolo*?"

Marty grinned.

"That doesn't bother you?" Kelly asked. "I mean, making your money that way?"

Marty laughed. "Kelly, I drive a new car, live in a primo place, and don't ever get up before noon. What bothers you, man, is those ideals and attitudes of the Midwest. A hard day's labor is a good day's pay and all that bullshit. Fools work for their money, man."

They rode in silence a bit.

"What do you do?" Kelly asked at last.

"Me? I get my money to work for me. We'll talk about that later. But only fools put their money in banks. I got lots of primo shit you can invest in. A whole shadow economy."

They drove in silence for a few blocks, Kelly's head swirling with cocaine and pot and new ideas.

"You said you're a Buddhist," Kelly asked, changing the subject. "What is that? Like worshipping the Buddha as God or something?"

"Buddhists don't believe in God," Marty informed him.

"They don't?"

"Nope. There's a Zen temple right over on Bush street in Japantown. The roshi there's a guy named Suzuki, a real character. It's mostly Japs that come to the center, but word of roshi is starting to spread."

"What's a roshi?"

"It's like a high-ranking person, a teacher and leader and whatnot. To become a roshi you have to complete all kinds of esoteric training in meditation and Buddhist philosophy and shit."

"What do you guys do?" Kelly asked.

Marty laughed, a deep, belly growl. "It's Buddhism. You sit and meditate, man."

"I know that, asshole," Kelly laughed. "I've heard of meditation, for fuck's sake. What kind of meditation?"

"What kind? Shit man," Marty said. "Are you serious? You don't know anything, do you?" He looked over at his new

friend. "Meditation, man — concentration meditation. You sit down on a cushion and watch your breath. Get in touch with your true essence, man. Have you ever experienced true stillness, a place bigger than your ego, bigger than everything you know? A peace and a bliss that comes to you and sweeps you away with it, man?" Marty flicked his cigarette out the window.

Kelly looked over again, feeling the hairs on his arms come to standing. "Actually yeah, I have. Since I was a kid."

"No shit, man," Marty said, unruffled. "A natural. Just my luck. Well, you'd love it then. You learn to get in touch with that shit, and learn to train your mind the way some people train their bodies. It's intense, man, and Suzuki is just off the boat from Japan. He's the real deal. He gives incredible talks about the Dharma."

"Dharma?"

"Just a fancy word for the formal teachings of Buddhism."

Denis looked out the window. "And you're telling me they don't believe in any god?"

"Not only in no god," Marty smiled, "But also in no theory. No philosophy. No truth, man. They teach how to get beyond those concepts, to the freedom that lies outside of your ordinary mind."

"They teach ... the philosophy of no philosophy?"

"Bingo."

"That doesn't make any sense, you realize," Kelly observed.

Marty smiled at him. "I know, buddy, I know. It's some crazy shit!" He lit another joint and passed it over. "See what Suzuki has to say. Challenge him, man. You'll like what you get in response. Here we are," Marty said, parking the car on the street. They were at a small bar and restaurant that was hosting the fashion show. Kelly finished the joint but, as was always the case, felt nothing from it. It would take another dozen attempts to get high.

"Don't forget food and booze are on the house for the models tonight," Marty noted. "And keep an eye out for those middle-aged ladies, man. We got no need to shag ass outta here after the show, so you should try a hand at them. Some of 'em are thick as five-dollar malts, but some are pretty interesting, really. Their rings will tell you if they're loaded or not."

"Married woman?"

"Nah, man. The divorced ones still wear the rings so you don't think bad of 'em. Ain't the world a strange place? Come on!"

They went inside, and the fashion show went well. Afterwards, Kelly watched the dark-skinned Marty work the room, focusing on the older women. Kelly smiled to himself as he sipped a brandy. He loved Marty's enthusiasm and rebellious attitude, but being a gigolo wasn't in the cards for him. He would find a way to make money outside of the system without whoring himself out, and he was willing to bide his time to see what opportunities might appear.

A week later Marty and Kelly entered a modest meditation room, full of Japanese men and women. They sat on zafus — low meditation cushions — toward the back. Kelly was very intrigued to hear what this man, Suzuki Roshi, might say. After a few moments, a short and unassuming man came out from a backroom and began a two-hour lecture. It was Suzuki Roshi himself, and he spoke entirely in Japanese.

Afterwards Marty and Kelly got back into Kelly's car.

"So what did you think, man?" Marty asked.

Kelly shot him a look. "You giving me the fucking run-around or what, man?"

Marty laughed. "I'm not pulling your leg, Kelly!"

"Are you out of your fucking mind? He spoke in Japanese the entire time. I don't know if you know this or not, Marty, but I don't speak Japanese."

Marty, though, just laughed. "Nah. It ain't about the words, it's about the *transmission*, man. It's about the *energy*. You know what I'm sayin'?"

Kelly, though, just shook his head. "No, I don't know what you're saying. When he starts giving lectures in English, feel free to let me know. God, what a waste of time!"

Kelly was skeptical and reluctant to believe in anything without firsthand experience. There would be no leaps of faith in his life, and sitting and listening to a roshi speak in Japanese made as little sense as going back to church to listen to a Latin mass he couldn't understand.

Yet he would find himself back in that center again and again, drawn more to the quiet than to the lectures spoken in a foreign tongue. Even when Suzuki switched to English lectures some years later and the new San Francisco Zen Center opened, Kelly preferred the quiet transmission of the empty meditation hall to the busy sounds of spoken wisdom.

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KELLY SPENT HIS NIGHTS AT A CORNER BAR, DRINKING cognac and honing his skills on the pool table. Michael was a regular there, and was a few years older than Kelly. He was the resident bar scholar and philosopher, and loved to talk about everything from the history of the Roman Empire to the problems with contemporary Christian theology, all the while downing a glass of whiskey, chain smoking, and popping amphetamines.

"You read Huxley's *Doors of Perception* yet?" Michael asked, directing the question to Kelly but saying it loudly enough to involve the group.

Kelly shook his head.

"That's the book that talks about trippin' on mushrooms, right?" a man named Dan chimed in.

Michael scowled at him. "It's revolutionary, and about a lot more than getting stoned." He turned to Kelly, but still spoke

controversial things such as giving the drug to his graduate students at Harvard.

It turned out that he was less adept at managing the fallout from his actions. The wealthy blue blood parents of his Harvard students, connected to all the structures of power at the time, were not amused that this renegade professor was offering their children a drug that was reputedly so powerful — and possibly dangerous. It certainly led many people to a radical change in their beliefs, which was very threatening to many parents and leaders of institutions. Fear, about what LSD could do to people and to the larger society, began to set in. Pressure began to mount to dismiss Leary and his protégé, Richard Alpert (who would later become the deeply respected spiritual teacher and leader Ram Dass). Leary and Alpert were fired from Harvard in 1963, further cementing their fame. Both used the media coverage to convert themselves into counterculture icons.

With private funding, Alpert and Leary set up a "laboratory" in New York State known as Millhouse. There they could study LSD without the burdens of a school oversight committee. But things quickly got out of hand, and their "science" began looking far more like acid parties, even to sympathetic observers. The amount of research being done was questionable, the media attention was intense, and the images of young men and women floating around the property in a free-love atmosphere alarmed many who saw the broadcasts. Leary was utterly at home in the chaos he was creating, but Alpert began to have reservations. Alpert believed strongly that LSD could transform society, but also felt something was missing, and not quite right, about Millhouse. So he left the United States for India in 1967 to see if he could find a larger, deeper understanding of what LSD had shown him. He met and trained with the spiritual master Maharaji, and two years later returned as Ram Dass, transformed through the fire of meditative discipline and true spiritual insight not bound to any external substance.

Given the high degree of publicity LSD was getting, in part through Alpert and Leary, the U.S. government banned the use, manufacture, or sale of LSD in 1968, a ban still in effect to this day. That ban, it should be noted, had virtually no science to back it up. LSD had been clinically proven to be non-habit forming, non-toxic, and in fact left no noticeable trace of itself in the brain or other parts of the body, even when consumed in copious amounts. Things like "flashbacks" have no basis in biology, for LSD-25 is entirely out of the body in a matter of hours. The old stories of LSD being "stored" in spinal fluid are just that — stories — most of which were part of the anti-LSD propaganda put out by the U.S. government in the 1960s and 70s.

While Kelly was very much getting into the LSD scene, he was also very much getting into the Buddhism scene. If the goal

in Christianity is to be saved (for some) or to see Christ Consciousness/know-the-mind-of-Jesus-for-yourself (for others), what then is the goal and purpose of Buddhism? In a nutshell, people go to Buddhism to seek *enlightenment*, a state of being that masters supposedly inhabit in their day-to-day lives. This state of being fuels the wisdom, it is said, of the greatest masters, leading them to be outstanding guides to liberate other men and women from a prison of their own suffering.

The state of Enlightenment has been called *satori*, which might be considered the spiritual "goal" of Buddhism. *Satori* is a state where there is a flash of sudden awareness, of infinite peace, of "getting the joke" of life — in this space there is no time, no ambition, no valuation — there is just the suchness of everything arising just as it should, an endless perfection. Masters are said to be permanently in this space, giving them phenomenal equanimity, calmness, and presence of mind.

"Getting" *satori*, or becoming enlightened, can be thought of in some ways like coming to understand mathematics. Mathematics is taught, but until you have the interior "flash" of illumination — until you "get" it — it is just an abstraction that has no real meaning. We can, for instance, talk about Godel's theories, but to really understand them we have to have had the interior, mental *illumination* of the theory in our own mind. Without this, we are just discussing concepts without any understanding of them, which would cause most mathematicians to roll their eyes if we were to share our uninformed opinion.

So too with Enlightenment. It is said the only way one can "attain" *satori* is through personal experience. You must experience the truth for yourself, not just the idea of the truth. The experience of *satori* is the experience of Enlightenment, a place where suffering at long last ceases to exist. The traditional way of achieving *satori*, and the most typical way taught to Zen students, is through the use of koans such as those found in the "riddles" students use to assist in realization. Examples include, "What was your original face before your mother was born?" or the now-clichéd, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Another method of reaching *satori* is meditation, in Zen called *zazen*. These two tools, *zazen* and koan training, are the equivalent of training your mind in something like a PhD course in mathematics. In a doctoral degree program you study with teachers, internalize the material, are tested, and then "have" the knowledge for yourself. Zen maintains it is the same with mindfulness training — students do koan and *zazen* training, gain the insights, are tested, and then have the *experience* (not just the knowledge) for themselves.

D.T. Suzuki:

... The discipline of Zen consists in upsetting this groundwork once for all and reconstructing the old frame on an entirely new basis ... *Satori* is the sudden



flashing into consciousness of a new truth hitherto undreamed of. It is a sort of mental catastrophe taking place all at once, after much piling up of matters intellectual and demonstrative. The piling has reached a limit of stability and the whole edifice has come tumbling to the ground, when, behold, a new heaven is open to full survey.

Satori comes upon a man unawares, when he feels that he has exhausted his whole being. Religiously, it is a new birth; intellectually, it is the acquiring of a new viewpoint. The world now appears as if dressed in a new garment, which seems to cover up all the unsightliness of dualism, which is called delusion in Buddhist phraseology ... Satori is not seeing God as He is, as might be contended by some Christian mystics. Zen sees into the work of creation; the creator may be found busy molding His universe, or He may be absent from His workshop, but Zen goes on with its own work. It is not dependent upon the support of a creator; when it grasps the reason for living a life, it is satisfied.

Satori is the "goal" of Zen Buddhism and yet Suzuki said, "It's not that satori is unimportant, but it's not the part of Zen that needs to be stressed." This paradox is at the core of Zen teachings, teachings designed to confound and confuse the thinking, logical mind to force it to stop and drop into a deeper insight.

Denis Kelly's life would become an expression of that very truth, that very statement, that very paradox. Kelly was barely past two years old when he had his satori experience on the floor of a rented house in northern Wisconsin. That place — satori — came to him from that moment on, easily and naturally. He had what most of us never dream of having: a safe place to retreat within our own minds. Becoming a Zen master some fifty years later wasn't as much of a choice as it was a response to that first, intense experience. It was Denis Kelly's inability to make sense of it and of his world that drove him first to the intensive use of psychedelics and eventually, a decade after that, to the monastery to train his mind in the vehicle of Buddhism.

When Denis Kelly discovered LSD in the mid-sixties he found a substance that mimicked this enlightened state. He could induce in himself and in others exactly what Suzuki had said: *sudden flashing into consciousness of a new truth hitherto undreamed of. It is a sort of mental catastrophe taking place all at once, after much piling up of matters intellectual and demonstrative. The piling has reached a limit of stability and the whole edifice has come tumbling to the ground, when, behold, a new heaven is open to full survey.*



CHAPTER 8

CLEAR LIGHT WINDOWPANE LSD-25

IN LATE 1968, CHERYL LEFT TO LIVE WITH HER HEROIN addict lover. In the vacuum her absence created, Kelly threw himself into his life. It has been said that suffering is the first grace, perhaps because it propels some to seek a deeper truth and meaning. Although Kelly was eternally optimistic, seldom complained, and would have argued that his life was almost unreasonably good and happy, that was the mask that he presented to the world, and to himself. And certainly there was much truth there. But it was also true he was a survivor of serious childhood abuse, that he had caught not one but two wives cheating on him — including catching one actually in bed with another man — and that he had nearly been driven insane by the United States Army.

Kelly turned to Zen with a newfound passion. What he saw in the men and women he encountered in Zen centers was a transcendent wisdom, a way to rise above the petty smallness of the ego and its dramas, tragedies, and pain. More than ever he wanted to get away from the pain and vulnerability that relationships brought him, to find a place where he could simply be above it all, safe from the turmoil of the world. Because of this, he decided to take longer Zen retreats and to make his own meditation practice a more solid and steady part of his daily life.

In the spring of 1969 he was on a weeklong retreat in the Ventana Wilderness in California, which was owned by the San Francisco Zen Center. Spectacular cliffs and valleys bordered the property, and on the opposite side of the entrance were the exquisite Tassajara Hot Springs, which were free to visit. The easiest way to get to them was to cut across the Zen center grounds, which were not free to visit. Many people paid the admission and then walked or drove across the Zen grounds, the fastest and easiest way to get there.

A formal Zen retreat is an intense experience. Morning services start at 4:55 a.m., and students can expect to be either sitting or in walking meditation for most of the seventeen-hour day. Ending chants are usually sometime after 9 p.m. Some time is set aside each day for physical labor, usually to improve the grounds or the lodgings of the retreat center. It is contemplative work, and is done silently. Kelly was outside

in the warm sunshine, weeding flowerbeds methodically and peacefully when he saw five hippies saunter up, laughing and giggling. The gate was staffed by a senior Zen priest, a middle-aged woman who had, Kelly knew, a disciplined practice, a very robust understanding of the Dharma, and genuine and deep spiritual insight.

Kelly was weeding a flowerbed only a dozen or so feet from the gate, and was within easy earshot of the conversation. Sweating, he wiped his brow with a gloved hand and smiled at the sight of the young hippies. Part of him wished he was with them, smoking grass, laughing, and having fun.

"Hey," a ponytailed young man, not long out of high school, said to the Zen priest. The woman nodded, her close-cropped haircut adding to her already intense look. She stepped from the booth, swathed in black robes, hands tucked neatly inside.

"We're looking to get to the hot springs," the kid said. "We hear they're like totally groovy and shit. Is it cool if we cut across?"

She smiled at them, coldly. Kelly stood and nodded to a fair-skinned young girl, her breasts clearly visible through her white, lacy shirt. She smiled back at him.

"I'm sorry," the Zen priest said, not sounding sorry at all. "But you have to pay. By the person."

The young man groaned. "Yeah, I get that's the rules, but we really don't have much money. We were hoping to just have a nice day in the springs. To go around your property will take hours. Could we just cut across your property? Please. We won't stop anywhere, and we're just going to sit in the springs for a bit, smoke some grass, and be on our way."

"I'm sorry," the woman insisted. "But the rules are the rules." She had placed herself partially in front of them. "You cannot pass unless you pay."

"I understand that," the young man said, "But we're asking you to, like, give us a break. We're just a couple of broke hippies who want to have a nice afternoon."

"You think the rules do not apply to you, but I assure you, they apply to everyone. If you don't pay, you don't pass." There was a glint of pleasure in her eyes. Kelly was suddenly certain that she was taking pleasure in being unreasonable, at having power over a half-dozen stoned kids. He felt his pulse rise and face flush, and approached the group.

"Hey," he said to the woman, "What's the big deal? Just let them pass."

The woman stared at Kelly with narrow eyes. "Mr. Kelly, is it? It is not your place. Go back to your work."

"Hey, fellas," he said, ignoring her. "You're looking to get to the hot springs?"

"Yeah," the ponytailed man said. "But it doesn't look like it's going to happen."

"I'll pay for you. Go ahead," Kelly stated. "Stop and enjoy the Zendo, if you want. The grounds are spectacular. And

there's an open meditation at six in the small shrine room. You guys should check it out."

"You can't do that," the Zen priest replied angrily.

"You said," Kelly replied, glancing at her, "that all they need is money to pass. I have the money — it's in my room, in my wallet. I'll go and grab it, and you'll have your money and they'll have their pass. Everybody wins."

"No," she said, shaking her head. "No."

"Go," he said to the young man. "I'll take care of this."

"Hey man," the ponytailed young man said, "that's like super cool of you. Peace!" He looked nervously between Kelly and the priest, but when the woman said nothing they carefully and quietly walked around her, bursting into raucous laughter a dozen feet away.

The priest glared at Kelly, but all he felt was disappointment, not anger and certainly not any impulse to argue. He wanted to tell her that she would be better suited for the rigid rules and judgments of Catholicism instead of Zen, but checked his tongue. He went silently to his room, retrieved the proper amount of money, and delivered it to her. She took it without comment, he went back to work, and the incident was never spoken of.

As Kelly toiled in the garden, he realized that two things seemed to be true. One was that the Zen priest had a genuine and deep spiritual insight and knowledge. The other was that she seemed to be reacting in a conditioned way with pettiness, cruelty, and contempt for a group of kids that somehow upset her.

A bell was struck on the grounds, meaning he had ten minutes to get cleaned up and be in the retreat hall, or Zendo, ready to meditate. When Kelly took his seat with the twenty-five other retreat participants, his brow was creased and his thoughts heavy. If the Zen priest — who was highly trained and possessed deep insight — was not evolved enough to be past her pettiness, what hope was there for him? How would he insulate himself from the pain of the world, and from the pain held within his own heart?



THE YEAR 1969 SAW LSD USE SPREADING WELL BEYOND California to all areas of the country. Unlike the makers of other drugs, the major LSD manufacturers believed in it, and they were changing the world. It was idealism and not the desire for profit that drove their market. Because of this the major LSD families began to flood the market to create faster change in the world.

This flooding of the market meant the price for a hit of LSD dropped precipitously. In San Francisco, the drug was ubiquitous and could easily be gotten for free. Kelly, Russell, and Larry found themselves with thousands of unsold hits of

the night, of its unrelenting agony, and its unacknowledged pain. The more Kelly tried to surround himself with bright, beautiful things, the more he felt its power. He was only free of it when his consciousness was transformed by LSD, but the effects of the drug would inevitably fade, and there it would be again, where it always was.

He sat more and more at the San Francisco Zen Center, where Suzuki Roshi, a tiny, humble man, would give lectures in his broken English to ever-growing crowds. This simple man would pack an auditorium with eager listeners but seemed immune to their praise, to their attention, or even to their presence. Kelly marveled at the man for he knew the temptations that came from such prominence firsthand, and Suzuki seemed impeccable in every area of this life. After eight years watching him, listening to him speak, and sitting with him, Kelly — suspicious of any teacher or anyone who claimed to know more than he — suspected it was no act. The man seemed to possess something that few others had — a calmness, a confidence, a wisdom. Suzuki seemed to rest in the eye of the hurricane around which everything turned. Was that level of equanimity real, Kelly wondered? Could he obtain it without LSD?

reached around and pinched the nose shut, holding him as close and as tightly as he could, just for a moment.

"It's time to stop taking another breath," Kelly said. "Just like that pinch you felt. Stop breathing. Go, Patrick." He felt his brother's heart come to rest and his body settle solidly into his arms. The animating energy of life passed from Patrick's limbs. There was the tiniest contraction of the body, a flutter of energy, and then stillness. He was gone.

Kelly laid him back on the bed, tucking his emaciated arms across his chest. Death creates a spaciousness that is impossible to describe, but Patrick's essence, freed from the body, filled the room and the mind of his brother. Kelly slowly and lovingly stripped Patrick's body, washing it carefully with warm, scented water, the way he had been trained to do. It connected the living to the dead, and was a last, loving gesture to perform on a loved one. When the body was clean, Kelly dribbled oils onto the skin and face, and then carefully wrapped Patrick in a white sheet, from head to toe. His body, scented, clean, and oiled, was ready for cremation. Kelly bowed and left the room.

He walked out into the street, where the sun was rising. The full humanness of what had happened crashed through him, along with thousands of memories of the two of them. Kelly fell to his knees on the concrete, he cried out, he beat his chest, he sobbed and wept and screamed at the top of his lungs like a madman. And then that too passed, and he went back in the house to play out the last chapter.



TWO DECADES EARLIER, THE EAST BOASTED A SLEW OF internationally known gurus. Many Westerners, unable to find a deeper wisdom in their homelands, flocked halfway around the globe in search of a meaningful life. The East promised an unspoiled land of wisdom that surpassed anything in the West, for it seemed uncorrupted by the things that were tearing Western culture apart at the seams.

Alan Marlowe, a Zen student and professional gardener who Kelly had known for some time in San Francisco, had been badgering Kelly to go to India for years to "drop into the really deep shit" that was happening there. In addition to being a student of Suzuki Roshi, Alan was also a student of Swami Gauribala Giri, a German-born Jew who had first become interested in spirituality after the First World War. He had originally converted to Buddhism, but when visiting India was browsing through the spiritual section of the Lanka Book Depot on KKS Road in Jaffna town. An old man snatched the book from his hands and said, "You bloody fool, it's not found in books!" The man's eyes were like two pits of fire, and Gauribala was instantly in rapture. He had met his guru, Yogaswami of Nallur, and began studying with him immediately.

Alan was a practicing Buddhist but his heart was with Swami Gauribala.

"You have to meet Gauribala! He's fully enlightened, and he has something for you!" Marlowe would say, at least a few times a month.

"Yeah, yeah," would usually be Kelly's response, "then why don't you stay with him?"

"Got a family, buddy. Gotta play dad. Hard to do that from Sri Lanka. Besides, Roshi's got it going on, too. He's just not as crazy as Gauribala. You'll see."

"Yeah, yeah...."

Patrick Kelly, keeping his side of the bargain, took a straight razor and shaving cream to his brother's long hair. With a newly bald head, Kelly used Patrick's phone to call Alan Marlowe.

"Alan, it's Kelly," he said into the phone. "I'm going to India. Tonight."

"Well, hey there, Kelly," Alan responded, not at all put off by being called and told this out of the blue, first thing in the morning:

"Tonight," Kelly repeated.

"Yeah, I heard you the first time."

"You want to come?"

"Sure. When's the flight?"

Kelly paused, his own impulsiveness to go to India somehow trumped by Alan's utter willingness to fly halfway around the world on twelve hours' notice. "Well, I don't know," Kelly admitted. "I still have to call the airline."

"Well, call them and then call me back. You're ready to see the Swami, huh?"

"I'm ready." Kelly hung up the phone and smiled. He had some great friends, that much was certain.

He booked the flights. Patrick had at long last gone to bed leaving Kelly with the run of the apartment. The next step was to find Jesse and Pretty Boy, his two business partners, and tell them that he was through with the business. No more dealing, no more drugs. His business was to be Awakening people, and drugs were not the answer. He phoned Pretty Boy's house, but the call went unanswered. He tried Jesse's house in Bolinas, a hippie community north of Stinson Beach. After two dozen rings, a voice tiredly answered.

"Christ," it said, "somethin' on fire?"

"Jesse. Frank," Kelly said. "We need to talk."

"Christ, Frank. Can't it wait until a civil hour?"

"Is Pretty Boy there? It's important."

Jesse sighed. He knew that Frank didn't cry wolf or add unnecessary drama to anything, so if he needed to meet the two of them, it was important.

"Why would Pretty Boy be at my fucking house, Frank?" Jesse asked tiredly, his voice heavy with hangover and cigarettes. "I'll track him down for ya. Come over after three. I think I know where he is, but I gotta make a few calls."

CHAPTER 10

THE AGE OF THE GURU

ALAN MARLOWE AND DENIS KELLY FLEW TO BANGKOK in the spring of 1970. It was Kelly's first time to Asia, and as he and Marlowe saw the sights, he was nearly overwhelmed with the otherworldly beauty of Thailand. It was a kind of paradise. But after a week, it was time to go. The great teeming mass of India was their destination.

India was like nowhere in the world. It was a place full of the extremes of wealth and poverty, of asceticism and indulgence, of squalor and grandeur, of hell and heaven on earth pressed so tightly together they bled into each other in ways that were as confusing as they were intoxicating.

Marlowe and Kelly flew into Delhi and took a few days to settle into the culture, feeling utterly alien in a land so different from theirs. They moved through northern India as awkward tourists, watching the turmoil of the millions of people and the nearly unimaginable conditions in which they lived. They noticed everything and were noticed by everyone. Kelly, at six-two, and Marlowe, two inches taller, towered above the native Indians. Both men had blue eyes and pale skin, and both had the rugged good looks that Indians had been seeing on billboards and in poorly-dubbed Hollywood movies for over a decade. They attracted nearly as much attention as one might expect of a movie star, with people often pointing at them and staring without embarrassment.

Their plan was to travel eastward through northern India, stopping in the town of Almora for a long stay. From there they could walk to visit a famous Buddhist teacher with whom Alan had studied. Lama Govinda lived on Crank's Ridge, named so because a lot of spiritual cranks had made their homes there. Govinda was German by birth and had fought in the First World War before becoming interested in Buddhism in his early thirties. He became a student of a Tibetan meditation master, Tomo Geshe Rinpoche, and traveled through much of the East seeking to deepen his understanding and his wisdom. A gifted fine artist, he also wrote *The Way of the White Clouds*, an autobiography that had come out four years before Kelly and Marlowe touched down in India.

Almora was an ancient town with narrow streets, cobblestone walkways, and arched buildings built onto steep hillsides. Kelly and Marlowe arrived by bus and rented a government-built hut. It was surprisingly modern, with running water and an

in-house "toilet," which was a hole in the floor with feet prints next to it, directly under a showerhead. They settled in and on their second day hiked out to see Lama Govinda.

Marlowe had been to visit the Lama many times, and knew the way to his small, modest hut on Crank's Ridge. It had a beautiful stone walkway leading one off the path and to the front door. The house itself was of modest Indian construction. The Lama lived peacefully and quietly with his photographer wife, Li Gotami. He was nearing his 60th year. He had already traveled much of the world, including Tibet, and was considered by many to be a master of meditation in the Tibetan tradition. He was renowned for his scholarship, intellect, humor, speaking style, and gentle being.

Kelly and Marlowe knocked on his door without any advance notice, and were greeted by a frail and ill-looking man who Kelly thought looked more Chinese medicine man than German. He was narrow of build with a white beard and long white hair. His eyes were large and kind and very blue, and he had a prominent nose, full lips, and large teeth. He looked, Kelly thought, like a wizard.

"Alan!" Govinda said kindly. "Goodness! Wonderful to see you. Please, come in." His English reflected multiple dialects, but the hardness of a German inflection was plain.

"Govinda," Marlowe said, bowing his head. "This is my friend Denis Kelly."

Govinda took Kelly's hand with both of his, and Kelly saw the man's eyes were as intense as they were open. "Very glad to meet you, Denis," he said. "Now, come in!"

The three of them sat in a small study overlooking a tiny courtyard. They talked through the late afternoon. As the sun began to set a dark-haired and beautiful woman entered.

"Gentlemen," she said, "Anagarkia is not well. Please — he needs his rest."

"We are almost finished, my love," Govinda said. "Alan and his friend Denis came all the way from San Francisco, after all. Denis was just telling me about his first meeting with Alan Watts. And his friendship with the Grateful Dead." He looked briefly at Kelly, a twinkle in his eyes. "A very interesting young man."

"Nevertheless," she said, "You need your rest."

Govinda chuckled, nodding his head. "Yes, my love, you are correct. But let me attend to the dharma with these young men first."

She nodded, but turned the lights off when she left the room, no doubt to hasten their departure. As they continued to talk, the sun crept toward the horizon, leaving them in a gathering darkness that came so gradually no one noticed it. The room transitioned from sun-filled to dark, but the three men were so engaged in conversation not one noticed they were sitting in a dark room, lit only by moonlight.

"The dharma is being radically changed," Marlowe was saying, hours later, to Govinda. "In America, people are

ripe for it. I mean, there's an explosion in awareness. People everywhere are tuning in and dropping out, and working to make a whole different kind of life."

"Mmmm," Govinda said, stroking his beard. In the low light, all that could be seen of him was the white of his beard and the glimmer of his eyes. "Perhaps. I've been to America, many times. I'm not so sure."

"The evidence is clear," Marlowe pressed. "The old structures are breaking apart, and there's a new energy and a new embrace of spirituality blooming in that space."

"These people of whom you speak, they have a practice?" Govinda asked.

"Some; but it's more than that. It's like Jung said — the collective unconscious of the species is itself evolving; people are getting spiritual insights without having to follow the old forms."

Govinda nodded his head. "Perhaps. But I'm not so sure it is that easy," he said. "And you?" he asked of Kelly.

"I agree with Alan," Kelly said. "Some people are in it for the good times, sure. But a lot of people are serious about waking up to a deeper truth — about treating the sickness in America with love and with kindness."

"Love is an interesting idea," Govinda noted, "but it's one that can imprison some minds rather than free them. Like fire, it depends on the mind using it to see how it will ultimately be used."

"Sure," Kelly said, "but you need to see it with your own eyes. I mean, all the structures that used to tell people what to do and how to live are falling apart. There are communes now where dozens of people live together and share all their food and expenses. Free love has replaced possessive relationships. Marriage is seen as bondage to an idea, to a concept, that enslaves women. Blacks too are finding not only a strong voice but a place within our larger culture." Kelly, passionate about these things, now sat on the edge of his chair.

Govinda nodded sympathetically. "Those sound like good things," he agreed, "and time will tell if they are lasting change or a simple reaction to what has come before — a kind of pendulum swing, if you will."

Kelly shook his head, unwilling to concede the point.

"Let me ask you, Denis. You and Alan are both students of Buddhism, yes? Of Zen?"

Kelly nodded.

"And you believe this same revolution is touching Buddhism as well? Reshaping the insights of how to best realize Enlightened mind?"

Kelly nodded aggressively. "Yes," he said. "I mean, if you think about the number of people who reach Enlightenment, it's like what, one percent of practitioners, probably?"

"It depends," Govinda said, "on a great many things. In the Tibetan culture, for instance, there is much more room

"Mr. Marloff tells me that you make your living off of a kind of drug that transforms the mind."

"Yes, Swami," Kelly replied. "It's called lysergic acid diethylamide, and it's a chemical"

"Yes, yes," the Swami interrupted, "Based off of the similar chemical process that produces common aspirin. Made from the ergoline family and first synthesized by Albert Hoffman in 1938."

Kelly looked at him, surprised. "That's correct."

The Swami was wearing a white sari, and he rested his hands on his ample belly. His eyes always had a light in them as if he had just gotten the punch line of a great joke, and might burst into laughter at any second.

"I know what it is, Mr. Kelly. What does it do?"

It was Kelly's turn to smile knowingly. LSD was his area of expertise, and he was like a modern shaman transforming the consciousness of thousands with his particular potion. "The best ways to describe it, Swami, is that it lets you see the face of God."

The Swami's dark eyes opened wide. "But you don't believe in God, Denis, so what do you see?"

Kelly shook his head. "I neither believe nor disbelieve in God, Swami. But on LSD-25, even I see God."

The Swami laughed. "I see God all the time, right now, here between us!"

Kelly nodded. "I don't doubt that."

"Tell me, do you have any of this LSD with you?"

"Yeah," Kelly said. "About seven doses or so — 1,050 micrograms."

The Swami stroked his beard, thinking.

"I think that LSD is going to transform the way the world works," Kelly started, getting into his preacher mode. "I think we can break people out of their habitual patterns and self-destructive stories and create a better, more open world. LSD opens people's inner doors to their own true nature. It gives them the experience of that firsthand. So instead of being just an abstraction, it lets people"

The Swami held up his hand. "Let me see the LSD."

"I have to go and get it."

"I'll wait."

Kelly was unable to keep from smiling at the lack of pretense. Gauribala was about as different from the reserved and contained Suzuki Roshi as one could imagine. Roshi was always impeccably shaved, his crisp robes folding perfectly along their seams, and his voice measured and thoughtful. His Zen center was the picture of order and discipline, and it was run with far greater efficiency than a military barracks. Gauribala, by contrast, looked like a spiritual madman — hair askew, food in his beard, stains on his sari, and what appeared to be little to no sense of self-importance. The ashram was nearly always in a state of near-chaos, and it was only through the efforts of a few enormously dedicated students that the

whole thing didn't devolve into anarchy.

Kelly fetched the acid, returned and handed over the small glass vial containing three hits of LSD-25. Swami G inspected them thoughtfully through the glass before dumping them into his hand. He popped all into his mouth.

"Whoa!" Kelly said, "That's a lot!"

"Now, leave me," Gauribala said. "I will see you in the morning." Swami G stood up and, with his hands clasped behind his back, made his way back toward his quarters.

Gauribala spotted Kelly in the morning coming across the ashram grounds.

"Denis!" he cried, running with all the enthusiasm of a child.

Kelly, more self-consciously dignified, waited for the Gauribala to reach him. "How was your trip," Kelly asked. "Did you see the face of God?"

Gauribala smiled. "I keep telling you, Denis, I always see the face of God. But I write in four languages, and I was forgetting all of my grammar. The mind forgets." He tapped his temple. "But that stuff you gave me allowed me to remember all of my forgotten grammar, so I stayed up all night writing and translating — I got so much done!" He clapped Kelly on the shoulders. "It was the most productive night I've had in years. I feel great today! I had no idea that's what LSD does. No wonder you like it so much. Do you have any more?"

Kelly stared back, at a loss for words.

Gauribala looked puzzled. "It doesn't help you get work done?"

"No," Kelly said at last, "Not exactly."

Gauribala shrugged. "Do you have any more?"

Kelly shook his head.

"Oh well," Gauribala said, turning. "I got a great start on a lot of projects last night. Hopefully the grammar will stick with me this time."

Kelly watched him walk off. LSD had, without exception, created profound effects on every single person Kelly knew who had tried it. Some people struggled with the way the drug broke down concepts and pre-formed ideas about how the world worked, some people loved the way it broke these things down. Some, like Pretty Boy, would swim in the lap of the Divine and lose themselves, even if the experience would be dismissed as mere hallucination the next day. Kelly had seen thousands of people on LSD, and never once had someone reacted the way Gauribala had.

If LSD broke apart the ego and let you see the Divine always present behind it, the way Huxley suspected, what happened to someone who took the drug but had already freed themselves from their ego? Did that mean they could then remember lost languages? Since they weren't attached to their egos or operating exclusively from them to begin with, when LSD caused the ego to fall away could it be their view of the

"Looks like people."

"Impossible," Kelly stated. "Out here? Where would they have come from?"

Yet as the Tata sped closer, it became obvious that there were indeed four people walking together. They were wearing the orange robes of monks. When they were thirty feet away, Kelly let the car roll to a slow stop. The dust kicked up by the tires blocked their vision for a few moments but, as it settled, four ancient swamis could be seen standing only twenty feet in front of them. Their wrinkled faces and shaved heads looked as old as the rocks at their sandaled feet.

Swami Gauribala laughed and excitedly exited the car, hurrying up to the men and embracing each one.

"You can turn the car off," he called back to Kelly. "Marloff, come. It is time."

"How can this be it," Marlowe said, leaning forward. "Dude, look at those guys! They're older than the fucking dirt! How the hell did they get here?"

Kelly turned the ignition off. "I don't know," he said, turning to face his friend. "I'll remind you, again, this was your idea." Marlowe grinned.

Kelly and Marlowe got out, and stood behind Gauribala.

The five swamis spoke to each other in Veddah, or at least that's what Kelly thought it might be. At one point Gauribala pointed to Kelly and Marlowe and all five men laughed. Kelly and Marlowe exchanged a look.

"Glad you're the one doing this," Kelly said, smiling. "And I thought the San Francisco Zen Center was an intense place." Kelly wiped sweat off his face.

"Come," Gauribala said, and the four swamis stepped aside. Only thirty feet away was a low hut with a rounded roof, no more than five feet off the ground at its highest. "Fuck," Kelly whispered to Marlowe, "I might have driven into that thing if we hadn't stopped. Did you see it?"

Marlowe, his eyes wide, shook his head.

"Come," Gauribala called again, less patiently. "Come now. She is waiting."

There was an opening in the hut's mud-and-animal skin roof, and smoke trickled out of it. Swami Gauribala lifted a leather flap at the front of the hut, indicating that Marlowe and Kelly were to go in. They had to drop to their knees and crawl, and found themselves more or less blind when they entered, for their eyes were used to the searing light of the midday sun. For a long moment, Kelly could see nothing at all. The hut was very hot, and smelled of herbs and smoke and incense and age. The floor was slightly dug out, so that Kelly could stand if he bent over at the waist. He dropped first to his knees and then, as he saw more, sat down on the surprisingly cool earth.

The whole hut was no more than fifteen feet across, with a fire in the very center. Marlowe moved toward the light, and as Kelly watched him he saw Guru Ma take shape out of the

shadows. She was sitting on a straw mat in front of the flames, the flickering light falling sharply across her face.

She was far older than any living thing Kelly had ever seen: her face was deeply lined in a way that suggested the passage of much more than a century. The deep pleats around her mouth gave way to smaller channels of wrinkles that gathered in great numbers about her eyes. The collapsed shape of her lips suggested she no longer had any teeth to push against them. Absolutely white hair was pulled back tightly against the skull, flowing down her back in a long ponytail. She said nothing to them and instead hummed to herself in a soft, rhythmic way, her gaze deep in the flames. Her two hands, bent with age and swollen at the knuckles, occasionally stirred a small pot suspended over the fire. She would add herbs and then hum, giving no indication that she was aware of the two young American men sitting close by.

As Kelly watched her, he had the strangest sensation of youthful energy circling about her, light and playful, trapped but not contained in an ancient, grizzled body.

Kelly looked to his left and his right, realizing that the hut reminded him of a Native American sweat lodge. When he glanced back to the fire, Guru Ma was looking at him. Her eyes, even from ten feet away, were like nothing he had ever seen. They burned like black diamonds in her face and held a wisdom that was not of this world — a Divine Madness that saw right into his soul. He felt part of his mind give way and break free. Her lips parted in a toothless smile, and she cackled as Swami G crawled inside. Her laughter shook the very universe, and Kelly pulled himself up against the very back of the hut, knees to his chest, as far from her as he could get. His heart thudded against his ribs and blood swirled through his temples.

Marlowe glanced back at Kelly, all eyes.

Guru Ma spoke in Veddah to the Swami, and the two of them talked in low tones. She sat in front of a small fire; Marlowe and the Swami sat on the other side of it. Gauribala pointed to Marlowe, and Kelly saw Marlowe's body jolt when she looked at him. She spoke at length to the Swami, who translated into English, but Kelly was forgetting what was said almost as soon as it was spoken. She closed her eyes, and began chanting rhythmically, rocking back and forth on her little straw mat. The air grew thicker. She opened her eyes and cackled again, speaking to Swami Gauribala, who showed no trace of his usual self. He reminded Kelly more of Suzuki Roshi — set, serious, focused, almost menacing.

"Open your mouth," he said to Marlowe. She took a handful of brown, foul-smelling goop from the kettle and put it in Alan's mouth, then handed him a bottle of palmetto liquor. Alan grimaced and swallowed, and she smiled a toothless grin at him.

Kelly let out a breath of air. It was almost over. Guru Ma and the hut were making his head spin, and he longed to feel

suddenly shouted, "Stop! Stop the car!" The driver brought it to a slow halt.

"What, what? What's the matter?" Marlowe asked, alarmed.

"There," the Swami said, pointing to the right. "A Ganesha shrine!"

"So what?"

"A Ganesha shrine?" Kelly asked. Ganesha is the Hindu deity who appears as a multi-armed elephant.

"Yes. Ganesha is my patron saint. He protects travelers. I must walk around the shrine once while offering prayers whenever I am traveling."

Kelly looked at him flatly. "You've got to be kidding me."

"No, Baba. I am serious." He didn't look serious, and Kelly very reluctantly got out, leaving the door open for Gauribala, who did a kind of running waddle toward the temple.

"So this is your guru," Kelly said to Marlowe. "Holy elephants in a country full of elephants? Multi-armed ones at that?"

Marlowe lit a cigarette. "Who knows with him," he said with a shrug. "Can never tell if he's serious or not."

"Hmmm," Kelly said. "I don't see roshi in a loin cloth running around worshipping elephants."

"I don't see roshi making huts and four old men and one old woman vanish in front of our eyes, either," Alan retorted.

Kelly nodded. Point made.

The Swami, now sweating, came back to the car. "Okay," he said, breathing hard. "Now we go."

"Great." They piled back in, and the car started off again. Two miles later, the Swami again shouted for the car to stop at another Ganesha shrine. Kelly was even more reluctant and even less polite in allowing him to get out of the car. He checked his watch: 2:15. Once Gauribala was back in, they started moving again, going this time maybe half a mile before the Swami called for the car to stop. The driver let the car coast slowly to a standstill. Kelly looked out the window where all he could see was an ancient pile of rubble with a red ring of earthy paint around it.

"There's no shrine, Swami," Kelly said, not budging, his arms folded squarely across his chest.

"That once was a Ganesha shrine. We must stop at all the shrines, or Ganesha will get very angry with us."

Kelly turned to him, "Swami, you're an educated man. How can you believe in such nonsense?"

"Nonsense! How can you say that?"

"Come on, Swami. I mean, clearly you're plugged into something powerful. What do you need with these cultural trappings of religion? It's no different than praying to St. Anthony or to the Virgin Mary — fictions."

"Ganesha is not a fiction, Denis."

"The East," Kelly lectured, ignoring him, "has much to teach the West, that much is sure. But the West has a few things to teach the East. One of them is critical reason. Driver, keep going."

The driver, who was being paid by Kelly, stepped on the gas. "No, Denis! Ganesha will not like that."

Kelly, feeling a touch of malevolence, all but snarled at the Swami. "I'll deal with your fucking elephant karma."

The Swami shook his head. "Oh, Ganesha is *really* not going to like that."

The car headed south, and soon went into a narrow road that cut though the rain forest. The road was in poor condition and rutted, and the trees thick and dense on both sides. The temperature dropped as the sun was hidden under the canopy of leaves, but the humidity became intense. Kelly checked his watch. 3:15. He looked around the driver's shoulder at the speedometer: forty kilometers per hour. Kelly did the math in his head. About 25 miles an hour.

"Driver," Kelly said leaning forward.

"Yes, Me-ster Kelly," he said, not looking back.

"Can you go a little faster, please?"

"Yes, Me-ster Kelly. But it is not a good idea."

"Look, I know the road is narrow, but there's no traffic, and we're late as it is. Step it up to sixty kilometers an hour, will you?"

"Yes." He stepped on the gas, and the Tata moved faster down the road. Kelly leaned back, and sighed again. The Swami was chanting quietly to himself. Marlowe was smoking as usual, and gazing out the window. The road dipped down and then came sharply up before making a sharp right turn, the driver not slowing down to take it. Kelly had to hang onto the door to keep from slipping across the seat. As they came around the turn, Kelly looked up along the road. Not far ahead someone had cut a tree down and placed it on two handmade sawhorses. It stood about five feet above the ground, was blocking the road entirely, and closing quickly.

"Driver!" Kelly shouted. "You see that barricade?"

"Yes, Me-ster Kelly," he replied conversationally.

"Are you going to stop?"

"I warned you, Me-ster Kelly, that it was not a good idea to go faster. The brakes are not so good." The driver then simply fell to his left so that he was laying flat on the seat, out of harm's way.

"Oh shit!" Marlowe yelled. The tree was set high enough that it would be hard for a car or truck to ram it off the road, and so it hit the Tata square in the windshield. The glass, which was not the shatterproof glass of modern cars, exploded inward in a thousand tiny projectiles.

Marlowe and Kelly, already ducked down, noticed at the moment of impact the Swami was still sitting upright in the seat, eyes closed, chanting. They grabbed him at the same time, pulling him forward and probably saving his eyes. The top of his head was shredded by the flying glass, though, and almost immediately began to bleed profusely.

The car coasted to a stop before the tree rolled off the hood and onto the ground. Sitting up, the driver wiped glass off

his body, inspecting the shattered front of the car. The windshield frame was bent, and nearly all the glass was missing.

Gauribala was bleeding from the scalp, but upon closer examination they saw the wounds were superficial. They wrapped his head in a white towel that was lying in the car, making the white-bearded Swami suddenly seem like some kind of Sufi teacher. "I told you Ganesha was not going to like it," the Swami said quietly.

"Don't even start," Kelly said curtly. The driver was outside on the road, inspecting the car and muttering to himself about the boss man.

"I'll pay for the damage," Kelly called. "And take responsibility. Just get in the fucking car and get us out of here. That's a roadblock by a Commie guard station we just rammed."

Marlowe looked back. "Where are the guards?" he asked, looking at the deserted hut next to where the roadblock had been standing.

"Who knows? Taking a piss, maybe. Doesn't matter if we don't stick around to find out."

Marlowe nodded.

The driver, with a long face, got back in and pulled off, this time going far slower. All four men, looking miserable, squinted into air rushing in through the open windshield. Kelly, in a furious contraction, realized he had to take a piss. "Fucking mother of...." he muttered. "Driver, pull off. I gotta piss."

"But Me-ster...."

"I said *pull off*."

"Yes sir."

Kelly, bordering on rage, stormed fifty feet into the forest on a footpath, smelling the intensity of decay wrapped so intimately in the smell of life and growth. He unzipped his pants just as there was a tremendous crash in the underbrush. He froze. By the sheer amount of noise he expected a tank to come rolling into view, flattening the forest as it went. There was a rush of gray motion in the distance, and more branches crashing down as the earth shook. A few smaller trees were ripped from their roots and tossed aside, and suddenly a fully-grown bull elephant was standing fifteen feet from him.

Kelly took a fumbling step backwards.

The bull's ears stood erect from his body while he shook his head from side to side, enormous tusks tearing loose the low-hanging branches. The elephant's trunk rolled up as his ears flattened. Breathing savagely, the huge head lowered itself closer to the ground, and grew still. The breath slowed and steadied itself, and Kelly realized, in a moment of profound horror, the elephant was about to charge. He looked around frantically for something to defend himself, but against an elephant one needed an elephant gun, not a stick. There was nowhere to run or hide or take shelter, so he did the only thing he could think of: he held out his hands, palm up.

The elephant roared and shook itself once more. Kelly closed his eyes, surrendering to the crushing death that was

coming. There was the sound of wood being shorn apart, trees crashing down, branches being ripped loose, and then silence. Kelly opened one eye, then the other, his hands still out in front him, shaking madly. The bull was gone. All that was left was devastation. Overturned trees and deep fissures ripped into the soft earth made it look like a bulldozer had drunkenly attacked the forest.

Kelly, zipper still open, stumbled back to the road, heart in his throat. Peering into the clearing was the squat image of Swami Gauribala, prayer beads in his hands, head wrapped in the white towel.

He was smiling. "I warned you," he said, "that Ganesha would not like this."

"Let's just get going," was all Kelly could manage to say.

When they got into the car he looked over at the smiling Gauribala.

"Should I thank you?" Kelly asked.

Gauribala smiled. "Thank Ganesha"

They stopped at four more Ganesha shrines, and Kelly joined the Swami in his prayers and in walking around the temples, with no disparaging comments about worshipping elephants. To this day Denis Kelly considers himself a devotee of Ganesha. That night, they made it to the Island Hermitage long after dark, well after Kelly's carefully scheduled plan had predicted.



THE TWO OLD GERMAN GURUS HAD A TEARFUL AND BEAUTIFUL reunion. They utterly forgot about Marlowe and Kelly, who spent a few days meditating and enjoying the scenery, while avoiding snakes and swatting mosquitoes.

Kelly and Marlowe were walking one night after sunset.

"It's time for me to go, Marlowe," Kelly said quietly. "The driver was paid to go both ways, so just call that number I gave you to arrange to take the Swami back."

"I figured," Marlowe said, with his usual good nature. "How long ago was it that you told Swami you were going to leave?"

Kelly laughed. "At least three lifetimes ago."

Marlowe nodded. "You're telling me. You find what you're looking for, Denis?"

Kelly sighed. "It's crazy, given all we've seen and experienced. But no, I don't feel like I found what I came here to find. I think it's still out there."

Marlowe, seldom judgmental, nodded. "I can dig that, man. You gonna say goodbye to the Swami?"

"No, I don't think so. He knows, anyway."

"Where you heading?" Marlowe asked.

"Back to India. Back to the road. I'll see what arises, and see what there is to see."

that had a lock on the procurement, manufacture, and sale of Clear Light Windowpane LSD throughout the United States and parts of Europe.



THE SAN FRANCISCO LAB HAD BEEN SHUTTERED AND THE Oregon lab was up and running at full capacity. Frank, Jesse, and Pretty Boy took lower profiles. They didn't feel any additional heat from the Feds after Kelly's car chase, and since the family was impossible to penetrate with informants, all three began to relax.

In late 1970 Kelly decided to make another quest, this time to visit a shaman whose fame was legend in counterculture circles. María Sabina was a Mazatec curandera, or folk healer, who lived in a modest house in the Sierra Mazateca of southern Mexico. She was known through the American banker and ethnomycologist Dr. Gordon Wasson, who had a life-altering experience with her. Dr. Wasson wrote about that experience in *Life* magazine, and brought spores of the fungus back to Paris with him. Its active ingredient, psilocybin, was duplicated by Albert Hoffman, the now famous chemist who first synthesized LSD-25.

Kelly traveled with his good friend Johnny, who was always up for seeing what lay over the next hill. Johnny looked a little like Kelly's old friend Alan Marlowe — he wasn't as tall, but he had a large build and a strongly masculine face. His hair was dark and wavy. His deep-set eyes were intelligent and intense.

Kelly and Johnny rented a Volkswagen "Thing," an ugly, square car that was basically shaped like a steel brick. It was slow but reliable, and it managed to get the two men through most of Mexico without incident. They met the Mexican Mazatec curandera, ate mushrooms with her, and explored the countryside before driving back toward the United States.

Kelly reflected on something that came as a surprise. Although his experience had been interesting and entertaining and poignant, it lacked the force of his trip to India. In some sense, his trip to see María Sabina felt like a spiritual dead end, with no real lessons or penetrating insights. No huts had vanished to make him question what reality was, no enigmatic koans had been issued and received, no glowing monks had been seen walking at dawn. As Mexico faded behind and he and Johnny entered southern California, Kelly realized that he was still seeking *something*. Despite his money, power, and amazing life, there was still an emptiness inside of him — a deep desire to connect to something that was outside of time and place and longing and death. As Johnny talked about girls and cars and their next vacation, Kelly wondered what it was he really sought. Why couldn't he just accept things as they were, like Johnny managed to do. Why couldn't he just be content with his wonderful and magical life? Why was it

that even the masters — Govinda and Gauribala and Suzuki — that he *knew* spoke a truth he longed to possess for himself, why were these men also not enough for him?

San Francisco appeared in the distance, the beauty of the city shrouded in the swirling mists of the Pacific Ocean. As Kelly tasted the ocean on his tongue and smelled the fine salt being carried through the air, he realized he wanted to *know*. He wanted to take his seat in wisdom and to stay there. And for the first time, he wondered if hallucinogenics could get him any further, or if they had served their purpose.



DESPITE THAT INSIGHT, HE HAD A BUSINESS TO RUN AND responsibilities, and it didn't take long for Kelly to settle back into the ease of his daily routine. He lived as an underground shadow celebrity, known by many but virtually no one knew what he did to make his money. There were rumors, sure, but Kelly was very careful to never talk about where his money came from. Kelly too, while social, was far more reclusive than other counterculture fixtures. Not much of a partier, he would sometimes slip into gatherings to socialize with friends, and then just as quietly slip back out again. He was a study in contradictions: he tried many drugs but never became addicted to any; he was a counterculture icon, but also highly disciplined, often rising with the sunrise to practice yoga, run, and meditate. The counterculture was beginning to split along the seams. Those like Kelly, a small minority, were using drugs to expand their consciousness and heading more deeply into spirituality and deep inquiry. The rest were using drugs to deaden consciousness or to bolster their egos, and they were heading in a different direction altogether. While this split was not yet obvious, it was beginning to be seen in the lifestyles of those around him.

One of Kelly's routines after completing a new batch of LSD was to drive back and forth between San Francisco and the property he and the boys had purchased in Oregon for the new lab. There was a small restaurant along the way that specialized in organic vegetarian food. Kelly always stopped there to eat, and he came to know the owner well. One Friday he was on his way north, and pulled into the restaurant's parking lot after closing time, hoping to get a bite before everyone went home. There was only one car in the lot, and Kelly parked and walked up to the front door, peering in through the glass. He knocked.

"Hey Frank," the proprietor answered dispiritedly, unlocking the door. He was a true hippie, with hair that came down nearly to his waist, and a thin blond beard.

"Hey David," Kelly said. "I know you're closed, brother, but could you just give me some greens or something, man? Been a long drive, and I'd rather not put crap in my body if I can help it."

and honest relationship with a woman he had met in a lingerie store, before going to India in 1970. Brenda was an athletic blonde whose blue eyes were quick and steady. She was the perfect complement to Kelly — grounded and calm, she had little interest in metaphysics, meditation, or in changing the world. After she and Kelly became lovers in 1971, they quickly became best friends. Her pragmatic and unemotional nature was a powerful obverse to Kelly's fiery and wild one, and they entered into a decade-long open relationship that would define both their lives.

The austere and rigid discipline of Zen grounded Kelly amid what appeared, from the outside, to be a wild and carefree existence, although the truth was far more complicated for a man who rose at 5:45 to meditate daily. The Zen retreats Kelly attended meant not seclusion and quietness, but an utter lack of privacy through communal housing, along with a 4:30 a.m. rise and lights out at 9 p.m. Food was simple, and beverages limited to coffee, water, and tea. Every minute was accounted for, and the roshis made no distinction between the rich or poor, the personable or awkward, or men or women. It spoke to his meticulous nature and his deep curiosity about what truly drove the insanity of life. In a world where he could have and do just about whatever he wanted, the humility, simplicity, and clarity of the Buddhist temple was deeply nourishing.

By 1974, Kelly had personally turned thousands of people onto the insight and power of LSD, and had watched as the experience of the drug transformed their lives. Part of this was the fact that when people did LSD in his presence they were drawn in by Kelly's insight, confidence, and expansive mind. As a kind of urban shaman, he was able to draw out the type of experience he wanted people to have. The horror stories of people having "bad" or destructive trips were not something he experienced. When Kelly came across someone who had experienced a dark LSD trip, he would explain how the drug showed a truth of their own mind, and would offer to guide them on their next trip to brighter and more insightful places.

His belief that a spiritual practice, combined with the regular use of LSD, was the most effective way to open the mind to the truth of the universe was as strong as ever, and so in 1974 he, Jesse, and Pretty Boy decided to purchase a second property outside Portland, Oregon, through a myriad of dummy companies, and built a new and larger lab.

The Brotherhood of Eternal Love, the biggest producer of LSD in the world, also believed LSD was changing the world for the better. They knew of Kelly, and donated a new formula for processing LSD that would increase productivity from twenty to nearly one hundred percent. Kelly rented an industrial storage unit outside of Portland, and planned to move his lab's equipment there to be refitted.

With the new formula, they now had the ability to make five times the amount of LSD they had before, without changing anything else. Kelly, Jesse, and Pretty Boy hatched a



eating out at restaurants and attending yoga classes and lectures in town. They lived as if they had nothing to hide and were quickly welcomed by their neighbors. Kelly began to be drawn, with increasing intensity, to the dharma — Buddhist teachings and Buddhist communities. Kelly had legally become Charles Stephens, a new alias and the name of an unfortunate child who had died 35 years before.

By 1977, Kelly had heard of a very unusual Tibetan Buddhist teacher named Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Trungpa was born in 1939 in Tibet and was only three years older than Kelly, and he too had lived a remarkable life. In 1959 (when only 20 years old) he was the head of the Surmang monasteries in eastern Tibet, but was forced to flee from the invading Chinese to India, going over the Himalayas on foot. He moved to Scotland in 1963 to study comparative religion at Oxford and gave up his monastic vows. He saw that Western students were too distracted by the exotic dress and culture of Tibet, and that he was too distracted by Western women to remain celibate. In 1970 he moved to the United States and became known for his ability to present highly esoteric Buddhist teachings and concepts in easily understandable Western terms.

In 1973 Trungpa had established more than 100 meditation centers throughout the world. Originally known as Dharmadhatus, these centers are now known as Shambhala Meditation Centers. He followed in 1974 by founding Naropa Institute, which later became Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado — the first accredited Buddhist university in North America. Trungpa believed that an enlightened society could be actualized and he taught and wrote relentlessly about spiritual matters. The practice of his Shambhala vision was to use mindfulness/awareness meditation as a way to connect with one's basic goodness and confidence. He believed that secular meditation would bring dignity, confidence, and wisdom into the lives of those who practiced, and would change the world. Kelly, who was still quite attached to changing the world via the distribution of LSD, was naturally drawn to the ambition and philosophy of this teacher.

As Trungpa became more famous and had more and more Western students flocking to him, his teaching style began to shift. Like the enigmatic koans in the Zen tradition, Trungpa started to intentionally confuse and misdirect his students in an attempt to dismiss their expectations. A truth that every spiritual teacher eventually comes to realize is that as long as the students think the teacher possesses something special and extraordinary, they will never have the insight for themselves. Eventually Trungpa's style of teaching came to be known as *crazy wisdom*, meaning he said and did outrageous things to help jar his students out of their self-inflicted ignorance. These startling pranks were supposed to help free people from their habitual stories and emotions and thoughts by shocking them into a larger and deeper spiritual reality. His reputation was

friends). Crazy was killing him, and killing those he loved. Crazy was Kandinsky whispering to him on the army base about necklaces of ears, crazy was the Kali worshipper covered in blood with topless women behind him, crazy was Swami Gauribala making a hut and an old woman and four ancient swamis vanish into thin air in defiance of everything that was possible. Crazy was Kelly's *life*. He had enough of crazy to last a lifetime.

Although Brenda loved and supported Kelly, she was relieved to hear he had left his teacher. Perhaps, she thought, he might make meditation and Buddhism more of a hobby and a side interest, like going to the gym or taking up a new sport. And for a while, Kelly did just that. His home practice was set and disciplined, and he rose before sunrise to sit, usually practicing the form of concentration meditation taught in Zen. He was still not looking for a teacher, but rather someone who might embody the perfect teaching, and through whom Kelly could deepen his own insight. He was still in charge, still the boss of his own life, and utterly unwilling to give away much power in any relationship, be it with his partner or with his so-called guru.

In 1978 he came across an article by the Rinzai Zen master, Eido Shimano Roshi, who pleaded that no more PhDs be sent his way. "They already know everything," he had written. Kelly, who was a two-fisted intellectual, loved the description. He was drawn to Zen already and Eido Roshi had just opened a monastery through the Zen Studies Society in the Catskill Mountains, not that far from Woodstock. He decided to drive down and investigate further.

The drive was magnificent. Located on 1,600 of acres at the end of a climbing, two-mile private drive and bordering a state park, the land around the monastery was heavy with old sugar maple trees and thick grasses, the roads were seldom used. The first thing to come into view was Beecher Lake, black-green in color, and surrounded by deep forest on three sides. The 19th-century Beecher House, the name of the family who once owned the land and where Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, passed by on Kelly's right. And then the Zendo came into view, in all its perfection, and Kelly's breath caught in his throat. It was like love at first sight. The main building was huge and perfect, a Rinzai Zen temple in the American forest built to the absolute standards of perfection insisted upon by Eido Roshi. A team of monks, nuns, and laypeople labored over the building, lavishing attention on every detail so that it appeared as if it had been built only hours before.

Like something out of Imperial Japan, the buildings on the temple grounds were white structures with brown framing, their roofs sloping downwards on gentle, upturning angles in classic Japanese style. Kelly got out of his car and went inside, where he came across rooms with tatami flooring, meticulous



meditation halls with rice paper walls, a wooden kitchen that was about the cleanest thing he had set eyes upon. For decoration, there were immaculate porcelain vases, detailed pottery, wooden carvings, and fresh flowers. Kelly felt like he had been transported halfway around the world and two centuries back in time, and he loved the timeless feel of the spaces and the orderliness that defined every inch of every room. This was a world where everything made sense, where every item had its proper place, where a clear and unquestioned hierarchy ruled over everyone, and that had but a single purpose: to Awaken.

He stayed for a public meditation, and immediately signed up for their next long retreat, a 100-day Kessei.

"A four-month retreat?" Brenda questioned when informed. Her lips tightened. She and Kelly were sitting in their beautiful kitchen, the afternoon sun filtering in through the large window. Dinner simmered on the stove a few feet away.

"Three months and ten days, really," Kelly corrected.

"Do you remember what you told me when I took too much LSD?"

Kelly smiled. "You can never take too much LSD, Brenda. You always take the right amount."

She shook her head, ignoring the comment. "I saw myself as completely, utterly alone in the universe, unable to connect to anyone or anything," she said, tears coming to her eyes. "It was the most frightening thing I ever experienced, and when I told you later on, do you remember what you said?"

"Not really," Kelly admitted.

"You told me it was *fantastic*. That most people never had that thought of aloneness, much less the experience, and that it was a gift."

"In that case, I agree with myself."

She sighed. "You're not getting what I meant, or what I mean. What I mean is that we — that all of us — live not just in separate worlds, but in separate universes. Every single person. We are all alone, Denis, all completely and utterly alone. That was what I experienced, and I don't want to experience it ever again. How do you think it feels to have you vanish from me for months on end? Do you think it's pleasant?"

"Come with me," he offered. "You can live on the grounds too, do some of the sits."

"No," she stated, hard and certain. "Meditation is like LSD. It brings up those same feelings for me, Denis. Of being alone."

"I know," he said gently, "I know that feeling, Brenda. I know it better than most. You stumbled onto the truth, though. You did. It seems scary, because you're viewing it from the perspective of our small, battered egos. We come into this world naked and alone, and we leave the very same way. Everyone dies alone, Brenda, regardless of their power, gender, family size, or any other external fact. You can't take any of it with you — the money, the friendships, the memories, the

For Kelly, it would take years of discipline, practice, failure, and frustration. It was only his word to himself — wake up or die — that would keep him in the monastery for the next six years.



TO UNDERSTAND KELLY'S EXPERIENCE FROM 1987 THROUGH 1993, it is important to understand what a Zen monastery does, what the point of training in one ultimately is, and what it means to surrender yourself there.

Kelly entered Dai Bosatsu with the experiences of LSD-25 firmly rooted inside of him. LSD-25 allowed tremendous insight into the true nature of reality, but that insight was not grounded in a disciplined practice that gradually allowed someone to internalize and adapt to the radical truths it allowed the mind to see. Eido Roshi would help Kelly to ground his insight, make it stable, whole and complete, through practice and repetition.

Life in a Zen monastery is a very beautiful, very controlled thing. It is, in essence, a benevolent dictatorship where the roshi teaches the "dharma" — the sacred teachings of Buddhism passed down for thousands of years, refined and augmented by each generation of masters. The goal is to help students "wake up," or realize their own true nature, and to pass on the dharma to the next generation.

What does that mean, to "wake up?" Beyond the ego or the higher self, there is another place, a place from which those two kinds of ego arise. This is the "ground" or "suchness" of being, where we can see not only our ego, but also the higher self that contains it. This "ground" rests in a place of paradox when seen from the ego, or even from the higher self. When one is "in" this place, there is no time, no need, no grasping after things to make us "full" or "happy" or "free of pain." The ground of being is a place where everything arises, the ego, the world, the very fabric of the universe. When one is in touch with this place, one is imperturbable, unmovable, beyond even the conception of fear or contraction. And this place does not come and go, it does not arise and disappear — the realization of this place might arise and disappear, the ability to sit in this place might come and go, but the ground of being is the ground of being — it is always already present. It is the only true thing one will experience in life, for the simple reason it does not come and go. This is what is meant by "waking up" or "Enlightenment" or "Enlightened Mind." The word "Buddha" simply means "awake" — the historical Buddha awoke from the dream of his own mind to see a deeper reality. It was this state that Eido Roshi had mastered, and it was this state that Denis Kelly was seeking.

A Buddhist monastery is designed to help the men and women there to not only have this realization of the "ground

of their being," but also to stabilize that realization so that it is no longer fleeting. To "take their seat" there, preparing them to go into life and marriage and conflict and love-making and bankruptcy and death with a realization that is permanent and unshakable, that is no different from the very mind of God.

When a student has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the teachings and attained a high level of "realization," he will usually become a lineage holder, and be given the designation "roshi." (In Tibetan Buddhism, this same process takes place except realized teachers are given the title "lama.")

Life in a Zen monastery is not easy. Morning meditations start before 5 a.m., life is highly structured and regimented, and there is virtually no privacy or free time. For those like Kelly that came to study the dharma seriously, they begin an intensive meditation practice and an intensive study of Zen koans, 1,400 "riddles" that are designed to help break the ego free of its habitual conditioning and understanding, allowing a man or woman to have the realization of the ground of being — to "wake up." A "koan" (pronounced ko-on) is a question designed to have an answer that creates a paradox in the small mind or ego. The paradox can only be resolved when one has a deeper realization — from that realization the paradox ceases to exist. It is through koan training and practice that Rinzai Zen masters will test and ~~train~~ their students.

A less confusing way to think of this might be mathematics. There are very complicated "proofs" to mathematical problems that can only be solved by very deep insight into the nature of mathematics. A student must train his mind in the arcane language of math, and then have a mental insight into the problem before he can solve it. He must not only give the correct answer, but also demonstrate how he got to the correct answer — the "proof."

So the now-classic koan, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" has no answer in the conventional, logical mind. One hand cannot make a clapping noise by itself. In a Rinzai Zen monastery, a student will be asked to answer this koan, or one like it, in the presence of the roshi. If the answer is incorrect, the student will be sent back to the meditation hall to contemplate more, sometimes for months before they are asked back to try the answer again. What happens is that most of us try and answer the koan with our ego, with our small mind.

It's not so much that there is a correct answer as there is a correct "place" from which one answers. There is a famous story about Suzuki Roshi, who founded the San Francisco Zen Center, lecturing to his students about a question concerning the teachings. The next day, he asked the same students a question, and one of his students answered him by repeating exactly what Suzuki said the day before.

"No," the roshi said, shaking his head. "That is incorrect."

The student, flabbergasted, protested. "But roshi! That's exactly what you said yesterday!"

Suzuki Roshi smiled. "Yes, but when you say it, it is wrong. When I say it, it is right."

The other students laughed, but the point was a serious one: the student's answer was incorrect because it lacked the insight behind the words. It was the equivalent of the virgin telling you that sex was "something that's amazing." The answer is correct, but it lacks the insight of experience.

Zen "koan" training is the same thing. There are about 1,400 Zen koans, those enigmatic riddles designed to help a practitioner "wake up." They are broken into five divisions. The first division is designed to help the student gain insight into the true nature of mind, insight into the true nature of Buddha Mind, to get out of their dualistic, evaluative mind. The second division of koans is about physically embodying that realization, to be able to answer with more than just your mouth. The third division is about language koans, embodied awareness, usually expressed through poetry. The fourth division is the difficult-to-pass koans, ensuring that the student has truly mastered their insight and cannot be tricked into giving an answer from their dualistic, limited egos. The final division involves the Ten Precepts in Buddhism, or in how to live one's life now that one is Awake, which should flow naturally and spontaneously. Compassion for all beings, for instance, arises naturally and effortlessly when one has given up attachment, a paradox from the ego's perspective, which thinks that non-attachment could mean non-compassion.



EIDO ROSHI GAVE DENIS KELLY THE CLASSIC FIRST KOAN of the 1,400 koans to master. It was what is known as the "mu" koan. The koan is simple: A monk asked Joshu (a Chinese Zen master), "Does a dog have Buddha-nature or not?" What he was asking was Buddha-nature, or that ground of being, "true" for a dog — was it true for *all* sentient beings? Or was it only humans that had this "ground of being." Joshu answered "Wu." In Japanese, this translates to "Mu," which when translated to English is often translated as "no," "none," or "no meaning." Kelly's task was to sit with this koan, for months and months on end and train his mind around it. He and Eido Roshi met regularly, in the sacred ceremony of dokusan (a meeting with an Enlightened master and a student) and discussed the koan.

"So," the roshi would say in his deep, slow voice, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature?" And Kelly would answer. Sometimes he would say "no," sometimes he would say, "Not-knowing," sometimes he would say, "mu," but his answers were always met with Eido Roshi shaking his head. Kelly knew the answer was *mu*, but Eido Roshi never accepted his answer.

"Back to the zendo, Jun Po," he would command, and Kelly would return to sitting, hour after hour, day after day, week after week.

afternoon a few months after Kelly had , Eido Roshi and Kelly were relaxing outside overlooking some gardens. hi," Kelly said, "you told me that Jun Po men "

m," Eido Roshi said, cocking an eyebrow. came from a military family and knew the formation for navies included a slow air minimally armored destroyers, supply ships, and, of course, cruisers. Cruisers kept it safe — they ensured that the ~~com~~ point B unharmed, and had an idealized power, armament, and speed.

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Eido Roshi looked at Kelly for a moment. He cocked high into his forehead. "Noooo," he said put his hands up on an imaginary steering wheel like...Toyota!" Eido Roshi gave the steering wheel a nary turns left and right.

Being demoted from a huge naval vessel to an inn was simply too much, and Kelly Jun Po let out a ~~laugh~~ it was heard all across the grounds of the monaster

The monastery was its own kind of voluntary in many ways much harsher than Pleasanton Correctional Facility had been. There was communal sleeping, communal eating, rigidly enforced wake up and lights out, and a restricted vegetarian diet. Privacy and freedom were non-existent. Kelly had committed to staying in the monastery until he "woke up" — until he shattered his old patterns and took his seat in freedom. Eido Roshi's training for all students centered around the "Mu" koan (does a dog have Buddha-nature?), and Kelly had failed again and again.

Towards the middle of this first year at the monastery, Kelly resolved to sit until he got it. Kelly, like the historical figure he was, decided he would not move, eat, or do anything until he got the Mu koan correct. For 72 hours he sat in the meditation hall, taking no food or water or ~~water~~ sat. He sat until his legs were numb to the waist, as though it might fail him, his eyes looked like ground glass into them. At the end of his third week, manic, he had his breakthrough. He crawled off the floor, dragging himself to his feet and, lurching through the monastery, sought the roshi. He found Eido Roshi in his study, and with bloodshot eyes, bad breath, and a smile so deep he could hardly tell the waking state from the sleeping one, he gave his answer. "Mu," he said.

Eido Roshi gave a short shake of his head. ~~With~~ Kelly felt all the energy flow out of his body, al

One afternoon a few months after Kelly had come to the temple, Eido Roshi and Kelly were relaxing outside on a small deck overlooking some gardens.

"Roshi," Kelly said, "you told me that Jun Po means 'dharma cruiser.'"

"Mmm," Eido Roshi said, cocking an eyebrow.

Kelly came from a military family and knew that the classic military formation for navies included a slow aircraft carrier, fast but minimally armored destroyers, supply ships, personnel carriers, and, of course, cruisers. Cruisers circled the fleet and kept it safe — they ensured that the convoy got from point A to point B unharmed, and had an idealized combination of firepower, armament, and speed.

"So when you say dharma cruiser," Kelly asked, "You mean like in the navy, the lightly armored ship that protects the fleet?"

Eido Roshi looked at Kelly for a moment. His eyebrow cocked high into his forehead. "Noooo," he said at last, and put his hands up on an imaginary steering wheel. "More like...*Toyota!*" Eido Roshi gave the steering wheel a few imaginary turns left and right.

Being demoted from a huge naval vessel to an imported car was simply too much, and Kelly Jun Po let out a laugh so loud it was heard all across the grounds of the monastery.

The monastery was its own kind of voluntary prison, in many ways much harsher than Pleasanton Correctional Facility had been. There was communal sleeping, communal eating, rigidly enforced wake up and lights out times, and a restricted vegetarian diet. Privacy and free time were non-existent. Kelly had committed to staying in the monastery until he "woke up" — until he shattered his old habitual patterns and took his seat in freedom. Eido Roshi's initial training for all students centered around the "Mu" koan (does a dog have Buddha-nature?), and Kelly had failed this test again and again.

Towards the middle of this first year at the temple, he resolved to sit until he got it. Kelly, like the historical Buddha, decided he would not move, eat, or do anything until he broke through and got the Mu koan correct. For 72 hours he sat in the meditation hall, taking no food or water or rest. He just sat. He sat until his legs were numb to the waist, his back felt as though it might fail him, his eyes looked like someone had ground glass into them. At the end of his third day, utterly manic, he had his breakthrough. He crawled off the cushion, dragging himself to his feet and, lurching through the halls of the monastery, sought the roshi. He found Eido Roshi in his study, and with bloodshot eyes, bad breath, and an exhaustion so deep he could hardly tell the waking state from the dreaming one, he gave his answer. "Mu," he said.

Eido Roshi gave a short shake of his head. Wrong again. Kelly felt all the energy flow out of his body, almost as if the

life was taken from him. He collapsed. He would never get it. He would never wake up. He was unteachable, a true barbarian. Eido Roshi looked at his student closely. When Kelly met and held his eyes, Eido Roshi began to tighten his face, screwing his features into a ball of contraction. His face turned violently red, his jaw muscles distended the skin below his ears, and his nostrils flared as breath came and went violently. He had Kelly's attention.

Roshi then brought his right hand up next to his face and drew it into a fist, the knuckles white and the arm shaking from the force of the contraction. The whole of Eido Roshi's being was under tension, bound in on itself. His eyes shot out an unrelenting rage and frustration; they bristled with contempt, with ambition, with self-hatred. Kelly saw a parody of himself in them, and he sat forward. Eido Roshi then let it all go in a flash: The tension vanished from his face, the color drained from his skin, and his eyes grew calm and open. He was as still and as calm as a lake in the midsummer sun. Only his fist was still tightly clenched. Eido Roshi then broke eye contact, turned his face and blew on his fist, *phewww*. As the breath crossed his hand, he opened it, then turned and smiled at Kelly with a body that was utterly, completely relaxed.

Kelly popped. In a flash, he got the koan, he got the joke, he woke up.

"Jun Po," Eido Roshi said very gently and very slowly, "Does...a...dog...have...Buddha...nature?"

Jun Po, eyes alight, smiled and shook his head. "Muuuuu," he said in a rumble, speaking from the pit of his belly. Eido Roshi nodded his head. "Muuuuu," he said again, laughing. Jun Po Denis Kelly had passed the koan test. Like the story with Suzuki Roshi and the student who had repeated, verbatim, what Suzuki had said, Kelly had finally answered the koan from the right place. It wasn't just the correct answer, but rather the correct answer from the correct understanding. It was an insight spoken not from his conceptual mind, but rather from the depth of his actual realization and understanding. He was revealing his insight, not talking about what that insight might look like. Kelly had experienced the truth of "Mu" in a profound, experiential way, and that was what Eido Roshi had been pushing him to do all those long months.

The shift required in Kelly's mind to make this leap, to have this understanding, was enormous. No longer seeking the manic disintegration of LSD-25, he had deconstructed his own ego without any external chemicals to aid the journey.

What Jun Po told Eido Roshi was "Nooooo" as in "know the truth of your own mind, know the truth beyond duality, beyond the very question. Know!" It was "know/no" — what he revealed to Eido Roshi was saying no to dualistic mind and to any conceivable dualistic content. It was Joshu's *mu* manifesting through Kelly. It was an Absolute "no!" speaking to the very dualistic nature of the question, and from that place, one should "know" a deeper truth. *No! Know!*



In the weeks and the months afterward, Eido Roshi and Kelly began to go through the 1,400 classic Zen koans, selecting 108 of them to be used for training other students at the monastery. The second part of Kelly's training was ready to begin. The koan insight was important, but so were the ethics that came from the realization. How does one live one's life in the context of the realization of the ground of being?



"So," EIDO ROSHI SAID A YEAR INTO KELLY'S MOVE TO the monastery, "Next month I leave to return to Japan. It has been many years since I go home, and I plan on staying one year." Eido Roshi's round face was as always, a mask of restraint and calm. He exuded an air of deep authority and awareness, and there was little doubt that he was in charge. "So," Eido Roshi continued, looking Kelly hard in the eye. "Will you take the monastery?"

Kelly stared back. He had been a priest for only a few years, and was far from the most qualified or tested student in the monastery. Much more importantly, he wasn't a dharma heir or lineage holder, and putting him in charge would be bound to create a real headache of bruised egos, internal politics, board of trustee arguments, and backroom deals to undercut Kelly's authority. Kelly immediately suspected, of course, that Eido Roshi was all-too-aware of this.

"Roshi," Kelly said at last, "You want me to run the monastery even though I'm not your dharma heir? Even though you haven't empowered me?"

"Yes, Jun Po."

"I've heard some bad ideas in my life, but this is the worst one I've ever heard."

Eido Roshi smiled.

Kelly considered. He was already running the monastery. And it would be an interesting challenge.

"Okay," Kelly said, slowly. "But if I'm to be responsible for all *your* children, then you have to promise me something."

Eido Roshi ever so slightly raised a thin eyebrow.

"You have to leave me alone *completely*. It's *my* monastery. I run it as I see fit. No phone calls, no checking in, no interfering. Do that, and I promise that when you return it'll be in better shape than when you left."

Roshi's eyes narrowed. "Okay, Jun Po," he said deeply. "We have a deal."

True to his word, Eido Roshi departed for Japan a month later and left Denis Kelly as the acting abbot. He was to not only run the sesshins — the seven-day long intensives that including rising at 4 a.m. and spending seventeen hours in either sitting or walking meditation — but also in conducting *daisan*. Daisan is the sacred ceremony in which those on