

## Marie-Louise Marshall

Six years ago my life was turned upside down by the very sudden death of my dear mother. I harboured sorrow and anger and resentment for many months afterwards, and found it hard to forgive the perpetrator of the accident which caused her death.

Four months later I discovered a lump in my breast. My preference was to ignore it, but I was eventually persuaded to take it to the doctor. After a distressing operation and many weeks of equally debilitating radiation treatment for breast cancer, and a heart-breaking inability to pick-up and cuddle my eighteen month old baby, I was pronounced medically cured.

A further two years on I was again in the depths of the medical morass with a total hysterectomy and discovery of tumours on both ovaries, more radiation treatments, endless pain and distress and eventually a medical prognosis of incurable widespread bone cancer and a maximum two year limit on my life. I have become almost unavoidably caught up in the net of orthodox medicine, and while I was determined to fight my illness, it was a physical enemy that I was fighting and the battle was exhaustingly hard work.

Many messages were given to me during this early period, mainly in the form of poems written by my mother, which I would discover for the first time at crucial and highly appropriate moments.

The first of which was while I was sitting in the hospital waiting room. After several weeks of extraordinarily debilitating radiation treatment to my ribs and spine during which time I could scarcely leave my bed, I had very nearly decided to tell my specialist that I did not wish to continue. I could not quite think how I was going to say this as it meant breaking off in the middle of a prescribed course of treatment. My diary fell open at a page into which I had hastily tucked one of Mummy's poems, but I had never read it before:

### CONSCIOUS JOY

Accept, accept  
your true identity.  
Admit its present radiance — its right  
to coexistence with the only light,  
the central sun of Love.

Reject, reject  
the dark imaginings  
so subtle conjured out of nothingness.

Refuse to entertain a host of lies —  
the ghosts of hearsay dressed up in  
disguise,  
coming from nowhere  
with nowhere to go.

The light can see no shadows  
nor can you.  
The laser-beam of Love can cut right  
through  
the tensed up pressures  
that would find in shade  
some substance which  
was never really made.

Enjoy, enjoy  
this moment of well being:  
it's now, it's here!

Be very still and feel  
How close and sure and vivid is the spark  
that kindles your acknowledgement of light —  
The love-dimension, which outshines the dark.

Here was my answer. It was easy to tell the specialist that I was very grateful for all he had done, but that I had decided to take my own course from now on. He accepted my decision and informed me that the treatment was not in any case 'curative' but merely a 'palliative'. This strengthened my resolve in the step I had taken. The 'Laser beam of Love' was the only radiation I needed.

Freed from the detrimental effects of the medical treatment, my next stepping stone was towards a much gentler treatment in the form of a relaxation, meditation and diet programme at the Bristol Cancer Help Centre. The atmosphere here was unbelievably loving and comforting and a well of warmth would greet everyone who entered the front door. Reliance was placed not on any magic remedy from without, but a drawing of resources through love and understanding from within.

I followed this for two years and was radiantly healthy within myself and cheerful most of the time; however I had constant pain and my bones would break for no apparent reason. They were brittle and painful to the touch. Walking became difficult and bouts of chronic pain would leave me bedridden for several days, but with a few exceptions my hopes were high.

I made more discoveries of amazingly helpful and appropriate poems by my mother. I shared these poems with the people who came into my life at this time with similar problems to my own, and they were greatly helped by them. Most notably by "Conscious Joy", and this one titled "Security":

### SECURITY

What did you say?  
The bottom has dropped out of your world?  
What world?  
Where is this world — this universe?  
Is it out there or in you?  
What holds your concept of place?  
Is it outer space  
or inner room?

If inner room,  
what is the sort of world  
that you accept in it?  
Not a chaotic one  
where any minute  
a load of deadly missiles may be hurled  
to raze it to the ground.

So strong and sure  
your inner world of peace —  
nothing can invade its sanctuary.  
The secret place, unshaken by the storm —  
the conscious point of reborn energy  
gathering fresh momentum —  
this is the only world,  
complete, intact.

I did well by medical standards and my doctor and specialist appeared to be very impressed with my progress as they were expecting far quicker and greater deterioration.

I was taking many vitamins and homeopathic pills during this period, and also one maintenance drug left over from my medical days which I had never been happy about, but had been reluctant to relinquish as I felt it had not produced harmful side effects.

How wrong I was! I began to slide downhill towards the end of 1986 and in the first few months of this year my condition became so bad that finding myself much of the time unable to walk and even unable to support myself in an upright position as my spine had virtually collapsed, the temptation came more and more frequently to give up. It was so much easier just to lie in bed on large doses of painkillers and not to face the pain and the inability to do the most taken for granted things. My appetite had been decreasing for months, I was faced with the ultimate decision, to give up or not. I wanted to, but then I remembered that I was at the exact end of the medical prognosis of the limit of my life.

At this stage I turned to God, and the religion in which I had been brought up. It is a healing religion, but does not require a mystical blind faith. One has to work at it and understand the teachings which produce the healing.

The preparation at Bristol had been a wonderful stepping stone towards a more spiritual approach.

Because I felt I must make a complete stand, I relinquished all my pills, the vitamins, the homeopathic and most important of all the medical drug. What a relief that was! I soon realized how many of my agonizing problems such as "bone fever" flare ups lasting for several days and constant nausea causing an inability to eat had been due to the side effects of this drug.

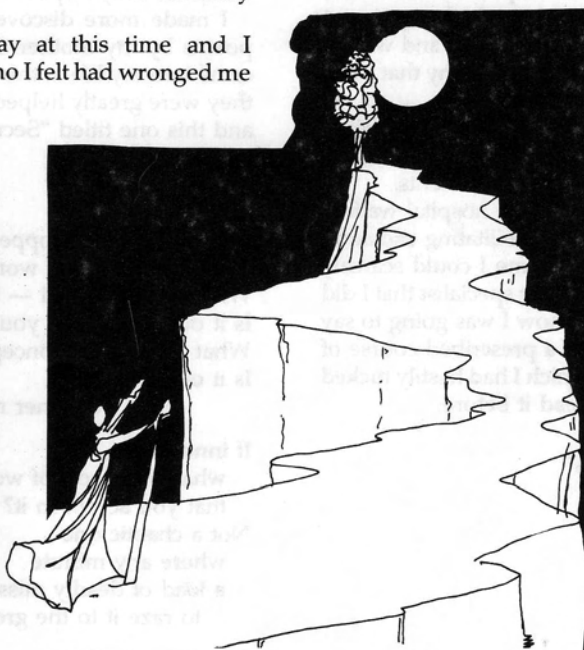
This was not an instant cure. On the contrary things became quite severely worse for some weeks due to the withdrawal symptoms from the cancer drug and attendant anti-inflammatory drugs. However, I was now determined not to look back and pursued my spiritual path with a single-minded concentration.

"Not my will but thine be done, Oh Lord".

I remained for the time being on the painkillers, as I found I could not think and study while I was distracted by pain.

My husband had been so amazingly patient and supportive over the years since the beginning of my problem, but during the last few months in particular I could never have managed without his constant attention and devotion, and his taking over totally the running of the home and family. He supported me in whatever I chose to do in my path to healing.

Many hardened attitudes dropped away at this time and I experienced forgiveness towards all those who I felt had wronged me and mine.



### NEWNESS NOW

No dreadful past  
or fear of future shock  
can shake unchanging Truth —  
The timeless rock  
The basic harmony  
of conscious being,  
forever with its  
love-filled source  
agreeing.

Look through the panic —  
Still the latent dread,  
The Christ, the Truth  
upholds your sinking head,  
and lifts your eyes  
beyond the nightmare dream —  
For see — you never slept  
nor lost the beam —  
of light in living form —  
The glorious you —  
Securely conscious  
and forever new.

# Bristol to Take Away

by BARBARA SEED

"I eat well, and I drink well, and I sleep well — but that's all" (Thomas Morton "A Roland for an Oliver").

Surely not the confession of anyone who has visited Grove House? No, no, no, of course not... the Cancer Help Centre is not simply a place of eating, drinking, and sleeping, now is it? What about meditation, visualization, art therapy, counselling, healing, sharing experiences, developing awareness, growing stronger in an atmosphere of caring, nurturing and supportive Love.

Sometimes I feel that one of the most healing and strengthening activities at Grove House is simply *talking*. Not idle surface chatter, but *real* conversation, the honest communication which develops spontaneously between people who are bonded, who trust one another, who are living with the realities of life, 'living on the line', as I like

to call it. Witness the little groups of people all over the house, talking, laughing, expressing their pain, pleasure, fears, hopes, joys, sadnesses, discoveries, realisations — a microcosm of the human condition unravelling week by week in a Georgian house perched atop a leafy Clifton hillside.

It seems to me that here is the philosophy of self-help in operation; people actually helping themselves by sharing their own resources in a joyful spirit of empathy and camaraderie. How we scribble addresses on odd scraps of paper! How we juggle with phone numbers and local dialing codes! How we hug and kiss each other, promising to keep in touch and hoping to meet again soon... and how we mean to, oh how we mean to!

Set alongside these, are the intentions of putting into practise Bristol therapies, indications for healthy living, guidelines for

leading whole lives, determinations to get well, to cease being victims, and to start running our own lives without worrying unduly about some white-coated, ever-so-learned-but-horribly-misguided person who keeps telling us every five minutes we're going to drop dead! A lot on our plates indeed, and I'm not just talking about grated carrot, tofu and brown rice.

Where does one begin on arriving back home? After the initial, practical activities of finding healer, counsellor, vitamin supplies, organic produce etc. we have only to get on and do it! We often seem to round on 'the diet' first of all. We are all concerned about physical nourishment and rightly so, since food is an important part of our lives (look at me, I can't even stop writing about it!). Yet I feel that what we are engaged upon is a healthy way of eating rather than a 'diet', which smacks of deprivation, 'meal replacement' mixes, and 'before and after' pictures. However, because food is tangible, and something we generally tangle with three times a day, we can easily begin to focus most of our attention upon it, whilst ignoring, or forgetting the non-tangible, invisibles like meditation, visualization etc. It is at this point that our confession, if honestly spoken, may