And You Learn How to Live, a sequel to the saga of Lucy Davis

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Chapter 1: Lucy on the Gurney

December 19, 2014

We –
We are like driftwood
Brought to shore
By the sea, resting
A while
Until the next tide.

Some go.
Some stay.
Some new ones come.
We (must go away),
Must drift alone
Upon the sea,
And end up where
We ought to be.

A week ago, deputy warden Mary Hendrickson asked me what I wanted for my last meal. With perfect honesty I told her I just don't care. Food never meant that much to me which is why I've been so puny all my life, especially during these past twenty-two years I've been stuck existing on death row. Prison food is green eggs and ham, Sam I am. Not too much else.

I almost jokingly told the warden I'd like a chunk of raw venison liver and onions! But truthfully, I requested a Hershey's chocolate bar, Reese's Pieces, and a glass of cold chocolate milk. And I'm serious. Then I told Mrs. Hendrickson, as we girls on the Row call her, what I really want to do before they put me down is call my Aunt Lu and that's what I did last night.

Thirty days after the judge issued my death warrant, three guards came to my cell in the Lumley Unit at Perryville Prison and escorted me to Condemned Row in Florence. We "bad girls" on death row call Lumley the Lovely Unit. It has a better ring to it.

I didn't know the guards who retrieved me from the Lovely. Two men and one woman in stiff grey uniforms with merit badges, shackled me while I stood in my cell. Then they led me to a MCSO van and helped me into the back where the woman guard chained me down to a side metal bench and sat across from me with her sniper rifle. I avoided looking directly at her.

She was a rather stoic and chunky female, possibly gay although she could be a mother and wife. I certainly didn't ask. We had nothing to say to each other, not even cordial words. She never smiled and she avoided looking directly at me, too. But I knew she was watching me closely with her peripheral vision in case I attempted to escape which was a preposterous notion because she had me tightly pinned down in chains and I'm certainly no Houdini.

During the bumpy two-hour ride to Florence, I was trying not to think about what lay ahead. The notion of my impending doom is simply too dreadful. I spent much of the time thinking about the only woman Arizona has ever executed. That was back in 1930, way before the 1992 reinstatement of death sentences. Her name was Eva Dugan and they hung that Lovely bitch during the time my grandparents and their parents established farms outside Missoula and some great-great uncle headed on to Oregon and established the McGrew ranch where the McGrew and Davis families gathered to hunt deer ever year when I was growing up.

I wonder if my ancestors heard about Eva Dugan's hanging. It must have been in the news because I don't think they hung many white women back in those days. Or in these days, for that matter. Percentage wise, the courts sentence very few women to death, compared to men. But it's pretty much common knowledge that men are way more likely to be violent psychopaths and serial killers or murderers in general, than women.

I wondered if Dugan was an evil person or a woman led astray by a wayward man. As her story goes, she was a frontierswoman who drifted from town to town looking for work.

Maybe she was a prostitute or a housekeeper, the kind of work that so many unfortunate women fall into. What else could women do back then except marry and have babies. It seems that Dugan met a rancher near Tucson named Arthur Mathis and she worked as his housekeeper and perhaps as his live-in whore. Who knows? I don't. Are times that much different now, ninety years later? Somehow, I doubt that the moralities of people have changed all that much since the beginning of human existence.

What happened is typical of many murder cases, except for my own set of crimes. Although, a man was the spark for what they've accused me of doing--murdering three innocent homeless victims. My crimes weren't in self-defense or the defense of another. Perhaps they were heat of passion crimes, I sometimes think. Anyway, in Eva's case a young man named Jack moved in with her and Mathis. After that, Mathis disappeared and Dugan and Jack left town. The Pima County Sheriff located Dugan when she and Jack tried to sell Mathis' car in Amarillo. Eva got away but authorities tracked her down in New York and arrested her for grand larceny.

Meanwhile, a rancher near Tucson discovered the shallow grave of Mathis. Two plus two equals four and the courts sentenced Eva Dugan to death by hanging. I'm lucky. The State now executes us by lethal injection because when the trap door of Eva's gallows sprang open, her body fell and her head popped off. Wonder if she had any last words. Wonder if I will. But most of all, I'm hoping some miracle will occur and the governor will grant me a stay or a reprieve or clemency or some such legal sanction.

The Court of Appeals has recently exonerated Debra Milke because the cop who got her to confess to the crime was a crooked liar. For a few years, Milke was my death row Lovely mate, although we rarely interacted except for passing a few notes to each other. The prison prohibits death row inmates from having any contact with other inmates and so for the past

twenty-two years of extreme punishment for my crimes I've been pretty much isolated. My own mind has been my primary companion except for my encounters with the prison guards and wardens, letters from pen pals, and visits from reporters and my aunt Lu who has tried to do whatever she can to help me win my appeals. She's the only member of my family who's shown any concern or love for me. I hope and pray that her efforts will somehow pay off before it's too late. For her and for me.

While all shackled and sticky in that stuffy MCSO van and thinking about Eva Dugan, I wondered what if my head falls off the gurney? What a show that would be for the witnesses anxious to see another woman bite the dust. But these days, I remember thinking, all that happens is the sucker forced to die, coughs, gasps, and maybe vomits green grasshoppers onto the gurney. The thought made me chuckle and the chunky female guard across from me tightened her grip on the rifle, I could tell, but she didn't comment or ask me what was so funny. That would've been some kind of social gaff, I'm sure. You just don't make small talk or joke around with someone the State's about to kill. Even a condemned bitch deserves a little respect. Know what I mean?

I'm unfamiliar with Eva's background, as a frontierswoman, but I doubt she was a traumatized little girl, abused and neglected like some of my colleagues on death row. Like myself. Really, I think she was just a greedy heedless vamp. I don't understand what gets into the heads of women who end up on the Lovely. Don't even know for myself and I've had a good twenty-two years to think about it. Something definitely got into my head and I don't think it was just that asshole Brian Potthoff who made me into as much of a joke as my horrible brother Scottie ever did. But I don't dwell on things too long or I'll end up going down another rabbit hole. And I hate rabbit holes maybe because I helped put down my share of rabbits back at the

pound, along with dogs and cats. It's an ugly matter. A job someone's got to do or so they tell me. I bet this is what technicians in the gurney room think. *How do you feel about putting someone to death? Well, Sista, it's a job someone's got to do.*

After Debra Milke left the Lovely, two other gals arrived. But I don't see them in the same light as I see myself. We are each unique individuals thrown together by the circumstances of our lives and shaped by our individual psyches. In truth, some of the ladies on death row are hardened murderers and that's not me. Maybe. But I'm not a psychopathic serial killer. At least, I've never mistakenly thought of myself that way even though much of the world probably does. I do have emotions. I do care what other people think about me. And I don't exclusively think about my self-centered urges and needs. But to the outside world, I'm a serial killer so my opinion doesn't matter. No one gives two shits about me except for those liberal anti-death penalty protesters who will be hovering outside the Florence prison on the night of my execution party, and my aunt Lu.

People have made my entire life -- from my unfortunate birth into a pathetic family until now, into one big joke by preying upon my vulnerabilities. Do I bear responsibility for my actions? Yes, of course I do. I'd be a fool or a sociopath to think otherwise. But I didn't have a privileged life. Instead, the world bombarded me with unfair and unjust treatment.

No. I didn't say much in the way of good-bye to my Lovely gal friends. There's Wendi who's been in the Lovely almost as long as I have. She killed her husband who was dying of cancer. Was that a mercy killing? We all ask. Like my supposed crimes. Well, it was a rather brutal killing. She took a kitchen stool and pummeled his skull. I would say that the homeless killings they condemned me for were gentler, but I've never copped to anything. Why should I?

During Wendi's trial the prosecution made her into a hussy and a floozy. This is a very sexist stereotype strategy. What if it were racist stereotypes? The prosecution couldn't get away with stereotyping black traits, or Native American traits. Or maybe they do when they bring up stereotypes that got nothing to do with the murder. Oh this (black) guy sold drugs; therefore he could easily be a murderer. Oh, she was a loose woman, therefore she could easily be an evil murderer. . . Oh, but it's a proclivity, the prosecutor might say. If you act this way, you're a bad person and therefore capable of a capital crime!

During Wendi's appeals she got an attorney to write an amicus curiae which is a brief from a "friend to the appellate court." The brief pointed out all the sexist stereotypes that the prosecutor had used to paint Wendi as a tainted woman to sway the jury that she was a "bad girl" and therefore deserves to die for what she did. Using sexist tactics against women is an unfair strategy that seems to work and Wendi is still on the Row. They should try a person for the crime, not for a lifestyle perception. But that's how the justice system works. That's how they uncover the truth and perhaps cover it up. What do I believe? That everyone deserves a fair and just trial. Sexism is a smear campaign, just like racist disparagements. And what the fuck is a proclivity anyway?

My other roommate on the Lovely was Shawna. In my opinion, she is more of a clear-cut murderer or do I dare say murderess? She was an activist at the Arizona border with Mexico and they sentenced her to death February, 2011 for the murder of Raul Flores and his nine-year-old daughter Brisenia. Maybe Shawna didn't shoot the gun that killed these two victims, maybe the guys she was with did the dirty work, but they accused her of orchestrating the caper to rob the man of his drug money to use in her vigilante border patrol efforts. The Minutemen, they called themselves. As it turned out, they never found any drugs in the Flores house and the question

remains whether Raul Flores was even a drug dealer. He wasn't an illegal alien. He was a US citizen. And Brisenia's mother who was also in the house during the botched robbery, survived the encounter but had heard her little daughter beg for her life. It's a terrible story that put Shawna away for good. Did she really think she was on the right side of justice? Her own form of justice? There's nothing in this world I hate more than the brutal abuse and or murder of an innocent little girl. It's the extinguishing of an angel's flame because little girls are angels from heaven. This is something my aunt Lu likes to say.

When I made my last phone call to Aunt Lu, neither one of us mentioned a funeral or anything like that. Last month we had already spent an hour at the visitation booth talking about my funeral arrangements. Aunt Lu said it had to be done although neither of us wanted to even mention a funeral for me and she was sure to emphasize "if it should ever come to that" because she still has high hopes that the Lord will bring forth a miracle and the governor is going to grant me a stay of execution.

It's such a morbid thing to decide what I want done with my dead body. At first, I said to my aunt *Who cares? Let them toss me to the desert vultures and coyotes like they used to do to those euthanized pound animals.* But then I realized how much my aunt cares about me and my life so I took the task seriously. And once we got started, I had fun playing around with the idea of a dead Lucy Davis with tons of mourners at her funeral.

In my mind, I gave myself a funeral and invited all my past and present friends. But who am I kidding? I have no friends except for Aunt Lu and her old lady friends from Bethany Church, and my pen pals, and the reporters who like to interview me. I told my aunt that her entire congregation and neighborhood could come and see me dead. It was supposed to be funny

but she gave me a stern look with a slight frown of disappointment, so I asked her where we should hold the ceremony.

Aunt Lu perked up and said, definitively *We'll hold it at Mountain View Cemetery in Mesa. The memorial gardens have a parklike setting with bougainvillea, lantana, and rose gardens, towering Mexican palms, and statues of angels and Jesus welcoming the dearly departed to heaven.* She then told me that the cemetery lies in the foothills near Apache Junction on the way to the Superstition Mountains. *Me and Cecil used to camp in the Superstitions, years ago, before he got sick* she affectionately recalled her husband who had died maybe forty years ago.

Lucinda had fond memories of the Superstitions and Usery Mountain. When I first arrived in Mesa at the tender age of twenty-three, my aunt had taken me to these places for short hikes. We never camped because it wasn't something I liked doing and Lucinda hadn't camped since before Cecil passed away and she spread his ashes in Saguaro Lake, according to his wishes.

December was a good month for camping and boating on Saguaro Lake Aunt Lu remarked while we were supposed to be organizing my funeral. As always, I let her say whatever she needed to say out of my undying respect for her even though our time together during visitations happened no more than twice a month and only lasted an hour each time.

Cecil loved fishing. Never went hunting she was sure to emphasize. *He didn't come from a hunting family like your parents.* My aunt knows I don't like talking about my childhood deer hunting trips to McGrew Ranch in Eastern Oregon and she's always been careful not to distress me in any way. She knows that I'm sensitive to certain childhood experiences. But she didn't understand the full extent of my trauma until my mental collapse and the subsequent trial and

mitigation hearing when they hung all my dirty laundry on the public clothesline. Everyone read that I was a sick fuck with a brother who molested me. The mitigation hearing at the pre-sentencing part of my trial had only added to my torment and delusion about myself. But who cares about all that at this point in my life? Not me. I'm fixing to get put down.

My aunt has always deeply cared about me even when she refused to take my cat Sylvester, the one animal I rescued from the pound where I was working. Brian Pottoff, my live-in boyfriend at the time, made me get rid of Sylvester and I had no one else to turn to and my mind was in such a pickle at that time.

Long ago I forgave Aunt Lu for not taking my cat. I've realized she cared about me even then and was just trying to make me more responsible. It had been a very confusing time because I was living with an abusive drug using cad that I thought I loved and it was shortly before I really lost touch with reality and made some terrible choices. It had been a time when the horrors of my childhood were re-surfacing and clouding up my perceptions.

My aunt had no idea that my brother Scottie had been sexually abusing me when I was a little girl. It's something good good people don't discuss, something they push under the rug. But after the trial and all the subsequent years I spent on death row, my aunt acknowledged that such trauma was not something to pretend never happened. There are consequences to abusive behaviors, especially toward little girls. And Lucinda has always loved me as if I'm her own little girl. I believe I've shown my aunt, through my life's example, that there are many factors to a person's life well beyond what people think should be a prim and proper existence.

I ended up telling Aunt Lu to have me cremated and to place my ashes in a maple urn kept in a columbarium niche at this cemetery she so fondly described. *That way* I said *you can come visit me and pay your respects*. My aunt smiled at this. I think it's what she wanted. And I

didn't want her keeping my urn on her mantle shelf like some kind of shrine nor did I want her to spread my ashes anywhere. I feel superstitious about this. Why? Maybe I feel like my soul would vaporize and quickly find its way to heaven. And I don't want to go there and be among the Lord and his angels. I just want everyone to leave me alone. Let me RIP. For eternity.

At the end of our discussion, just before the guard cut off our visitation and led me in cuffs away from my seat at the plexiglass window, my aunt said to me *This is really the funeral I want for myself, Lucy. I'm hoping to die before you do. Then you can see to my wishes.*

I know, Aunt Lu I told her with empathy. *But it doesn't look like that'll happen unless all your hard work pays off and I get my reprieve.*

The governor will give you clemency. I know it. Those were her parting words on that visit. I love my aunt more than anyone else in the world and only played along with making these funeral plans for her own peace of mind. Like I said, she's the only member of the family I was born into who has been a staunch supporter of me throughout my entire life. Through the good and the bad. I believe that this is the definition of truly loving someone else.

As for the rest of my family--Mom, Dad, and Scottie are all dead and the others are as good as dead to me. I have no idea about my youngest brother Philip, who he is or where he's at. My oldest brother Charlie, well, he's okay. Over the years he's sent me cards and wrote about Tracy and my niece Jewel Anne, the baby my older sister had out of wedlock when I was just a kid. Charlie said that when Jewel Anne turned twenty-five, she met Tracy for the first time and that he had flown to Portland and met Jewel Anne. Tracy wanted Jewel to know Charlie, that's how close Tracy and Charlie have always been. Charlie tries to keep up with everyone and that's why he also has a connection to Jewel Anne and to me, I suppose.

In one of his cards Charlie asked if he could come down for a visit sometime but I told him no and that I wouldn't include him on my visitation list. Why would I ever want to see him? What would we talk about? *How ya doin' Sis? Long time no see. Isn't this a fine pickle you got yourself into? No,* I'd tell Charlie *I'm just stewing in a nest of wasps!* The truth is, I don't want to see Charlie. I'm not exactly sure why. Maybe because I've never gotten over the fact that he kicked me out of his house when I had been feeling so good about taking care of his two girls. It doesn't matter that he did so because of his stupid bitch wife Roxanne whom he divorced a few years later anyway. She pushed him to make me leave because she decided I was too weird to be around her kids.

Or perhaps I'm embarrassed about landing on the Lovely in the same way that my bitch sister is embarrassed about me. It doesn't matter. Tracy's not on my visitation list either. Only Aunt Lu and a few reporters and pen pals who requested visitations. But most of my pen pals are from far away and when I wrote my final letters to them, I said *Don't even think about coming to Florence to protest outside the prison.* It's not something I'd like to happen. I don't want to look through the glass panel into the crowd of stupid spectators and spot someone's face whom I've respected from their letters. I don't want to see anyone shedding a pitiful tear for me. No, go away! And that would be my final thought. It's just too gut-wrenching and I can't stand the thought of it. Go away, all of you hangers-on. Let me die in peace!

It's five hours before my scheduled execution and the guards have moved me to the Death House where they're holding me until they escort me to the Death Chamber. A trustee actually brings me three Hershey bars and a bag of Reese's Pieces and I savor each morsel with swallow after swallow of Hershey's chocolate milk. It's the kind I used to make at the kitchen counter

when I was a little girl. As I stirred the milk, I'd look out the breakfast nook window into the backyard at the old, half-dead apricot tree and the robins and sparrows looking for the kind of nightcrawlers that Daddy used when he went fishing with his brothers or his buddies from whatever construction job he currently had. Bob Schmidt and Steve Faucet, I remember two of them. When I made my chocolate milk, back then, I had to add lots of sugar because for some stupid reason Mom bought the bitter kind of powdered chocolate. I told this to the trustee and he added sugar when he brought me my last meal request. That was maybe half an hour ago. Now I'm waiting for the Chaplin.

Deputy warden Sinclair had asked me my religion when setting up this meeting before my death takes place, as if he were asking me *how do you like your steak--rare, medium, or well done? What's your preference?* I told him Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and maybe even Native American. Sinclair probably thought I was being a smartass. I wasn't.

Long ago, while on the Lovely, I embraced all religions so that I didn't leave out any god on my visitation list. But I settled for a Christian Chaplin and I suppose he, or she, is going to pray for my pitiful soul which isn't something I want to happen. Only I and I alone can make peace with my Maker. Not my Daddy, who liked to shove his version of good good goodness down my throat like the chunk of venison Scottie and his pal Martin made me eat as a joke during one of our deer hunting trips to Eastern Oregon.

My life is not a joke and I don't know how some version of a god-person is going to make my soul. . . what? Better? For whom? For myself? For a god? For all mankind? It's all too wrung out. Just kill me like those sick and unwanted animals at the pound. Get on with it and leave me be as I fade into obscurity. Into the ozone clouds of oblivion where I belong.

People have told me that I'm cynical and here's what I think about that. Fuck you.

My visit with the Chaplin isn't so bad because it turns out to be with a Native American woman with long black hair and turquoise silver jewelry. She's about my age and she's very pretty. Warden Sinclair did take me seriously. The Chaplin and I have a good talk. Mostly, I talk and she listens. She doesn't ask me if I feel remorse and all those typical questions people want answered when you're on the Lovely. I talk about my pen pals from India and Canada and places like Washington State and Oklahoma. Anti-death penalty types.

Her name is Moon Deer and I tell her about my deer hunting trips with my family when I was a little girl because she asks me if I have any fond childhood memories. Obviously, she knows all about the abuse and neglect I suffered as a little girl. Everyone who reads up on me knows that story. It came out during my trial and during all my appeals. But Moon Deer helps me think about a pretty memory during those deer hunting trips. I describe to her how I would wade along a cool stony brook near the hunting camp, holding a cattail reed that was about to burst its feathery seeds.

"I walked beside the aspen trees," I say. "The round leaves were yellow because it was the fall and when the wind blew the leaves would rattle and make me think that God was sifting piles of golden coins. I waved my cattail wand and the white feather seeds flew into the aspen trees and I tried to make magic happen then, and I want to make a miracle happen now."

Moon Deer says that the memory is beautiful and enchanting and I say, almost defiantly, "Yes. There were times that I liked being a little girl."

Moon Deer doesn't ask me about my brother trying to shoot me during one of those trips which I'm sure she knows about because that also came out during my trial and in all the post-trial publicity, like the abuse and neglect. Moon Deer is a beautiful spirit. That's what she tells

me I am and she actually makes me shed a tear which I didn't want to do. But she brings it out of my eyes when she helps me remember the golden aspens and the many wishes I made to Jesus. Even though none of them ever came true.

After Moon Deer leaves, I sit alone in my cell and listen to the guards approaching from down the corridor. I hear their individual footsteps, one at a time, the clinking doors, the voices casually talking about trivial matters *oh, so your wife. . . yeah, that's for sure. . .* then they arrive at my cage, I mean, my suite at Hotel Florence.

One guard is a big white dude, too big for his own good. He shackles my wrists and ankles. The other guard is a more modest looking Latino guy. He asks me if the shackles are too tight. "No," I say. "They fit me just fine, like a silver charm bracelet with trinkets from the past twenty-two years."

My remark makes both men nervously chuckle. Their assignment isn't exactly a pleasant job. And I'm sure they really don't know what to say to me. No one ever does. *Hey, Young Miss* although I'm not so young anymore *How's it going?* It's all bullshit no matter what any of us say at a time like this. So, nobody says anything. They simply do their job, a job someone's got to do.

The air smells stale and rancid. I think one of the guards, the big white dude, has BO. But it doesn't overwhelm the looming smell of doom. Nothing can.

Big man and Latino silently lead me by the arms down the corridor to the gurney chamber, the Death Room, which they've sanitized like I used to do at the dog pound lab a long time ago when I first moved to Mesa from Butte and before I even met Brian Potthoff, the crackhead asshole. Aunt Lu got me that job through one of her church friends and I took it because I've always loved animals and my aunt thought the job would prepare me for nursing

school. Back then I wanted to become a pediatric nurse because I also liked children. But nothing ever came of that goal. It was just another pipe dream that slipped into oblivion. Like I'm about to do. What a life I've had!

Both guards help me onto the padded lab table with leather straps and arm rests that make the gurney look like a cross made from popsicle sticks. They strap me down because I might jump up and try to kill everyone in the room, the technicians, the guards, the warden, and maybe even the innocent spectators in the adjoining witness room. I can't see them right now because no one's opened the black drapes. The show hasn't yet begun.

On the gurney, I feel like a piece of driftwood waiting for the tide to come ashore and take hold of me, my corpse that is, and drag it out to sea. I contemplate my little veins of hope that the governor will grant my stay of execution and I think about my life on the Lovely and the other women equally privileged to live out their last years on Perryville's death row.

I pray to Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Allah that the governor grants me a reprieve. That the US Supreme Court steps in. That's my only thought until I feel my heart beat like a son of a bitch. Once it takes off, I can't stop it from beating like this. I'm nearly fifty now, maybe not in such good health. Don't know. Prison food isn't the best. Green eggs and ham. And the chocolate bars probably are making my heart and mind race. All that sugar in the chocolate milk. What a mistake. I should have requested a gourmet organic salad. Then maybe my mind and heart would be still and I'd now be resting comfortably on this cozy gurney. Prepared to drift out into the middle of the ocean.

The guard at the controls draws open the black drapes revealing the plexiglass window partitioning me from the witness room. I see the empty black benches in front of the gas chamber's glass cubicle. Then I watch the witnesses pile in, one by one, like orderly little second

graders. I know a few of the reporters who already informed me that they were attending my bon voyage party. *Forty spectators will be at your execution* the warden had previously told me. *Who?* I had asked. *Law-enforcement, prosecutors, politicians, and relatives of the victims.* So nice of Mrs. Hendrickson to let me know who will be attending my party.

I look at the ceiling because I can't stand looking at all those somber faces glaring at me, the spectacle, which is something I should be used to because, after all, I've made a spectacle of my life.

I force myself to look back at the people staring at me in awe. The martyr? The bad bad girl? Who are they? I don't know any of them, except I do. The reporter Cadowsky, attorneys, politicians. The victims' families? No. Vicki's son isn't present and the other victims had no family to speak of. The old man John Doe forever remains an unknown soldier of the streets.

Nobody is out there for me, personally. Even if I had invited her, my aunt wouldn't be here to witness this. No. I ain't got no family, no friends out there, and that's a double negative, unless you consider sympathetic reporters as my friends. I really don't. Maybe Aunt Lu can get their names and invite them to my funeral at Mountain View Cemetery in Mesa. She can tell them the memorial gardens have beautiful rose gardens with angels and Jesus welcoming me to heaven. No. These folks are probably assuming, or hoping, that I'll be going straight to hell! Why kid myself at a time like this?

I remember the warden saying that a large crowd of my supporters will be holding a vigil outside the prison compound. When she said this, I assumed she was just trying to cheer me up and I remember thinking how stupid! But now, as I lie uncomfortably on my gurney, I'm pretending that I hear these people, these supporters, shouting my name *Lucy Davis, Lucy Davis.*

. . The second woman Arizona is going to kill, after Eva Dugan. What a tribute to Lucy Davis. To the world. Hurray for Ms. Lucy Davis!

The technician covers my lower torso with a white sheet and then sticks into my right arm two tubes meant to deliver a sequence of three drugs. The prison doctor has carefully explained this to me, like my trial attorney Chris Stevens used to explain the details of his failed defense! He couldn't even buy me my life. The prison doctor told me to prepare for 12:05 AM on the dot when an anesthetic of sodium thiopental will be surging through my veins. I'm now the unwanted dog at the pound. A cur. I'm my own victim. But phenobarbital, the drug I used on my homeless victims, the drug used at the pound, is a weak ineffective drug to use at a human execution.

Then they will inject you with pancuronium bromide, an agent that will completely paralyze you. Your heart will stop beating when the potassium chloride enters your veins.

Gee thanks, Mr. Hotshot Doctor, for telling me what I really don't need to know. But please do get into the gory details. Will my chest heave several times, my neck veins twitch, my fists clench? Will my skin turn more ashen than it already is? And then will my eyes glaze over, roll back, and close to the world forever?

Yes, yes, Lucy Davis. And if everything goes well, the State medical examiner will rule you're dead and sign the death certificate.

The liquid mercury has not yet entered my tiny veins and I still have a moment to reflect upon dying. Do I feel remorse? Do I ask for forgiveness? Or do I face all the stupid mental issues caused by an abusive and neglectful childhood and a pathetic relationship with a crackhead? What's wrong with me? What does it matter now?

Is there any forgiveness or redemption for brutalizing a little girl? Ask my brother Scottie who is now living with Beelzebub. I'm hoping the governor comes through with a clemency stay so I won't come face to face with that sick, asshole brother of mine. He deserved what he got for what he did to me all those years of my childhood. He stole my right to be a happy little girl. No, he didn't kill me, like those border vigilantes killed nine-year-old Brisenia. But Scottie tried to kill me to cover up the atrocities he committed against me. If it wasn't God who sent him to hell in a car crash, it was Scottie himself. He did it to himself because he was the spawn of Beelzebub, there's no other way to look at it. I'm not like him; despite the crimes I've committed.

Lucy, I tell myself, *you must face yourself, confront how you spiraled out of control and then spent years in isolation and self-reflection*. But I can't make magic happen because only God can stop a person from dying. And much of the time, I don't believe that there is a Creator God.

I look to my audience. The spectators. Take a bow with my eyes. My heart is still racing with my mind.

"Do you have any last words," the warden asks.

It stinks in the death chamber, like the chemicals they're about to inject into my veins, like the disinfectant used to kill all the germs left behind by the last poor sucker the State euthanized. Like someone's cheap cologne.

"Yes," I say, not really looking at one face in particular. They're all the same and blur together. No one sticks out like an individual. They're a group of people, the witnesses, a coalition of lottery winners who get front row seats. "Yes," I say again. "I have remorse. I'm sorry for what I did. And for what people have done to me. My life is not just me and my issues

in a Petrie dish. Lots of people are accountable. My parents. Scottie. Brian. People who used me for their careers. Reporters. My attorneys. Publicity seekers. But yes, I'm thankful for those who've tried to help me—most notably my aunt Lucinda and my pen pals. I'm not mentally impaired but I believe mental disorders plague most of society. . ." I pause and tightly close my eyes. I really really want to say something profound, like Aileen Wuornos did.

"Beautiful life. Beautiful life," my words spring forth without any thought, as if I'm hearing someone else speak on the TV or radio. "What a chore you have been! Why am I so sad and afraid to leave you?"

Chapter 2: The Eulogy

December 29

Nameless faces,
Shrinking time,
Endless places,
Once were mine.

Now alone
Along the shore
I pass eternity
Once more.

Who has come,
To soothe this pain?
Away from me
Falls silent rain.

It's nearly a week after Christmas and the rain is loudly pelting the chapel roof at Mountain View Cemetery in Mesa where she wanted us to hold her funeral. Elderly ladies from Bethany Church fill most of the pews, with a few family members. The maple urn, just as she wanted, sits on the front altar surrounded by roses that scent the room but can't mask the lingering odor of death.

The minister, Mr. Paul Hannaford of Bethany Church, stands before the congregation and finishes his eulogy. He then asks church friends and family members to offer a few words. Sixty-year-old Charlie is the first to take the podium. He's tall, gray, but fit, and wears a brown tweed suit and loafers with a polished sheen. He doesn't wear a wedding band but has a diamond clip on his paisley tie.

Charlie introduces himself then seems to have difficulty thinking about what to say. "I never went to visit her," he starts. "Mostly because of my job and when I had vacation, I had my kids and now grandkids to take to Glacier National Park or Yellowstone and other places close to Butte. It's how it was. What a pity, now that I look back on it, that I let the years slip away and didn't pay attention to a member of my family. After my parents died, I kept up with my sister Tracy. My brother Scottie died in a car crash a few years before mother's death in 1990, and my youngest brother Philip attended our mother's funeral but then he disappeared as if he wanted nothing more to do with anyone ever again."

"This eulogy, however, is not about me and my regrets. It's about a beloved woman who strived to make her life work under difficult circumstances. Lonely circumstances. Some families are close-knit. Some aren't. Why do we pick and choose who matters to us? She was still a blessing no matter how remote she had become to our world in Butte, Montana."

"I asked my sister Tracy to come but she didn't want to attend the funeral. She's a director at Pacific NW Bell and claimed she couldn't get away from her job and that she was too tied up with her grandsons, but I detected something was amiss. Instead of pressing her, I invited her daughter to attend the funeral. And now I'd like to introduce to the congregation and to my Aunt Lucinda, my niece Jewel Anne. I've asked her to say a few words about the aunt she never knew in person but knows about through family lore. How do we really know a person, a family

member, without trying to know who they really are? What factors shape a person into who they become?" On that somber note, Charlie returns to his seat in the front row of the chapel.

Dressed in a pale blue suit, forty-one-year-old Jewel Anne walks up to the podium. Her suit matches her eyes, her blouse is the color of her short golden hair. "I never knew Aunt Lucy," she begins. "I also didn't know my biological mother until fifteen years ago. But family is family and I'm grateful I got to know my uncle Charlie who has accepted me for who I am because he accepts my partner, Beverly Lee Bolton." She nods to a beautiful African American woman sitting in the front row by Jewel's vacant seat next to Charlie. Beverly has a bright full smile, clear hazel brown eyes, and her shoulder-length hair hangs in tiny braids with beads. The congregation is mostly silent except for a slight collective gasp.

"I feel privileged and honored that Charlie considers me a member of this family. I know how frail and fragile family ties can be. My adoptive parents have accepted me for who I am and maybe my biological mother is having a difficult time. But reality is reality. And this is not about me but about honoring the life of my aunt. I wanted to come to the funeral and introduce myself as a member of her family and offer my support in celebrating her life. Now, please let me introduce my Aunt Lu whom I've only recently met. She has embraced me and my partner because she knows what it means to be different. To not be part of the staid status quo. She's had a difficult twenty-two years on death row and then another two years serving a life sentence at Perryville prison. What she's been through, I can't imagine. People, my Aunt Lucy knew my great aunt better than anyone else and she is the one person who can offer the best tribute to Lucinda Bowers on this rainy Arizona day, December 29, 2017."

Jewel Anne takes her seat and I rise from mine on the other side of Bev. For the funeral, I had my dishwater blond hair cut in a short perm and I bought a black jumper dress and black turtleneck sweater to wear. I wanted to look appropriate.

I stand at the podium and look at the faces in the congregation and think about the faces in the jury box at my trial long ago, then I think about the faces on the clemency board—serious and solemn faces judging me.

These faces before me now look pleased and happy, anticipating my words about their dearly departed Church Lady friend. Maybe they're critical of me, I don't know. People are usually shocked when they learn who I really am, a woman who served time on death row for capital crimes.

I smell the fragrant roses and touch the turquoise and silver cross dangling from my neck. Lucinda gave it to me on the day they released me from prison last January. I haven't been before an audience since I lay on the gurney in the Death Chamber three years ago. But here I am now. I must summon courage and not succumb to the overwhelming sadness in my heart because I'm paying tribute to a wonderful person, my savior and mentor, my Aunt Lu. I take a deep breath and begin the oration I've been preparing since Christmas.

"My dear Aunt Lucinda grew up on a farm outside of Missoula, Montana with five brothers, my father being one of them. When a farm equipment salesman named Cecil Bowers arrived at the Davis farm, Lucinda fell in love with him. They eloped when my aunt was only 16. Back then, I'm guessing Montana considered her a full-grown woman." The congregation chuckles and I feel a little more confident.

"Cecil brought my aunt to Arizona where she lived for over sixty years. Unfortunately, after twenty years of marriage, Cecil became ill and left my dear aunt a widow. They were

unable to conceive a child and my aunt had always wanted children. Instead, she got me. I'm the daughter she never had and my story intertwines with hers. I loved my aunt even when I didn't know it, when misty clouds filled my mind."

"I'm here today before you because of Lucinda Bowers. She spent years trying to help me overturn my death sentence. In the end, she convinced the governor to grant me a stay of execution and reduce my death sentence to life in prison. I learned the news at exactly 11:59 PM on the night of December 19, 2014. I was lying on the gurney prepared to meet my Maker, as they say. But my aunt came through at the very last second and saved my life with her hard work and dedication to me."

"I spent two years in prison serving a life sentence which was a different, new kind of experience for me. I no longer had execution dates hanging over my head. You can't imagine what that's like. Sure, we all know that one day our time will come and we're going to die. No one is immortal nor has anyone ever been so, I don't care if fantasy fiction says otherwise."

I pause a moment and look at the faces of the elderly church lady friends of my aunt. They're smiling and I continue, "On death row, you're assigned an expiration date while trapped in a life that offers nothing but that date. There's very little hope which is why many chose to take their own lives in advance. Can you blame them? It gives them one last shred of dignity, one final moment to say No you won't. I take control of my own life and death."

"But evidently my sentence reduction wasn't enough for Lucinda Bowers. She wanted me free, to have a second chance at life, maybe a first chance, and so she convinced me to file a petition to the governor and ask for a pardon and a release from prison. Lucinda even met with the governor to personally show her my exemplary prison record, my letter of plea, and the letter from my mom that revealed my childhood trauma. My aunt's pure and simple petition

emphasized I had no prior criminal record before my crimes and that I had been working hard with the goal of becoming a pediatric nurse. January 19, 2017 was the governor's last full day in office and she used her clemency power to grant a few commutations. I was one of the lucky recipients. Or was it fate? Or was it simply because I was fortunate to have an aunt who cared so much about me that she fought for my life with every ounce of hers even into her late seventies."

I look at the elderly faces in the funeral chapel and get the feeling that many aren't exactly following me because once a condemned felon, always a condemned felon. Some people find it too difficult to believe that such a person could possibly rehabilitate because that person's character is permanently flawed. I don't think everyone feels this way but it's certainly a creepy feeling I'm getting as I stand before a group of both strangers and even people I know.

People by nature are judgmental. How can they not be? I've often asked myself. It's the flight or fight instinct. The deer in the headlights, or the deer pursued by the predator who is out to maim and kill it. I've known lots of good good people who can't shed their biases. Oh well, I keep telling myself and forge ahead with what I have to say in honor of my aunt who never judged me because she loved me unconditionally. She took that to her grave and so will I.

"God blessed me with eleven months to live with my dear aunt. During this time, Arizona sentenced another woman to death for the horrific crime of killing a ten-year-old child named Ame Deal. Please allow me to honor this little girl by sharing her story. Ame had suffered a short life consisting of abuse from her own mother and relatives. The court sentenced her caretakers to prison for child abuse and Ame ended up under the care of cousins who equally abused her until they locked Ame inside a plastic trunk as punishment for helping herself to a popsicle. The little girl suffocated from the Arizona heat. My aunt once told me that little Ame was an angel and

that her evil family had extinguished her flame before she even had a chance to spread her wings. Lucinda believed that all little girls were angels from heaven."

"But this eulogy is about my Aunt Lu who I owe my eternal gratitude." From the podium, I walk over to the maple urn, touch it, and say, "I love you Aunt Lu, even in death we'll never part from each other at the shores of eternity." I look at the nameless faces in the congregation, the elderly friends of my aunt, some are in their nineties, most are in their seventies.

I return to the podium and continue, "After my release from prison, I had a terrible time adjusting. I stayed in isolation at my aunt's house. I didn't want to go anywhere. Didn't want to learn any of the new technologies. Lucinda didn't have a computer, internet, or smartphone, anyway. Like most of you fine ladies of the congregation, I'm sure." I pause a moment for the ladies to chuckle.

"We played gin rummy every night, sometimes during the day while we watched the TV soaps or played her country classic albums—Hank Williams, George Jones, Tammy Wynette, and Conway Twitty. I was happy. Didn't want to add anything else to our lives. Although Lucinda encouraged me to go to college and pursue becoming a pediatric nurse. I told her that I no longer wanted to chase that dream. And she encouraged me to try another occupation, something to fall back on. I didn't want a job. I felt so incapable. But she believed in me and told me I could find myself even later in life. And she encouraged me to write my memoirs about my life on death row."

"Then it happened, on Christmas Eve Day last week. I woke up early, feeling a chill in the house that penetrated clear to my bones. At first, I thought a nightmare had jolted me awake, perhaps a haunting dream about the path I took nearly thirty wears before. Then the chill turned

to fear and I called out for my aunt. Not for her to come comfort me, like a child calls for her mother in the middle of the night. But a call of concern for her."

"It was dark and the kitchen stove clock said 3 AM. I again called for my aunt. The chill now filled my every corpuscle and I quickly hurried to her room. Her door was closed which was somewhat odd because she generally left it slightly ajar. I knocked then entered calling her name. There was no answer."

"The room was pitch black which was another oddity because my aunt always had a wall socket nightlight turned on throughout the night because of her need to use the toilet. The room reeked of cigarette smoke and I noticed a lit Merit on her nightstand ashtray. It was the only source of light in the room."

"I quickly turned on the light and saw her, my Aunt Lu, on her back dressed in her pink corduroy housecoat. Her head was calmly resting on the pillow. I approached her, stunned with worry. I knew about her heart condition but believed her powerful spirit would keep her going well into her nineties. To me, Aunt Lu was a young eighty years old. I believed her to be immortal."

"When I saw her face, I knew her spirit had departed probably the moment I woke and called her name. It was something I felt deep inside. I repeated her name again and again as I slowly approached her bed. I didn't want to worry her with any kind of haste on my part if she were only sleeping. Then I noticed that she held something at her chest. It was a blue paper plate with a popsicle stick cross surrounded by cotton ball clouds and a crayon-colored rainbow. I had made it for her when I was an Angel Bluebird in second grade, that was the name of our troop. My dear aunt had kept my simple little handmade gift for over forty years. My heart began to patter, my eyes water, and my breath felt shallow like something was pressing down on my

chest. I wondered if she had been reading the Lord's prayer that I had carefully printed on the plate so long ago. Or if she had been embracing her love for me and my love for her in her last moments on Earth."

"Before I called 911, I held my hand over her face to confirm that she was no longer breathing. She was still warm. Obviously, her spirit had only just left for the next world. A better world. A world where she belonged among the other living angels."

"I then told my aunt Lu that she was now truly my guardian angel although she had been so since my childhood, through my years on death row, and into this last year we had together to enjoy her country classics and play gin rummy."

"Hoping to somehow hear her voice respond to me, I took her hand on the blue paper plate, and sang to her our Bluebird troop song."

"Bluebirds, bluebirds, dear and olden bluebirds," I begin singing to the tune of School Days, School Days, Dear Old Golden Rule Days while trying not to break into sobs. "Camping and learning and being good. Faithful to God and our sisterhood. Unlike what other girls may do, for we are the Angel Bluebirds."

I look at the faces of the elderly congregation and see that my little song and story has moved them deeply. Old ladies are dabbing their eyes with tissues and smearing their face powders and rouge with tears.

I suddenly feel very happy when I take my seat and the minister invites everyone to have tea, coffee, and cookies in the adjoining room. In my heart I know my aunt has heard my song and is now showering me with feathery seeds and golden coins to bring me joy, peace, and make all my wishes come true.

Chapter 3: Adjusting to a New World

2018-19

These eyes grow old and tired–
Yet on they wear each day–
With everything that guides them,
With all that comes their way.

These eyes of mine are growing old–
I may even watch them die.
But seeing's all I'll let them do,
For I'll never let them cry.

Lucinda left me everything including her house where I'm now comfortably living. During her visits to death row, my aunt talked to me about what she wanted to do with her estate. Her priority was to somehow free me, at least from my death sentence, but she also wanted to leave everything to me. Her love and devotion stun me even now and it's this same love that embraced me during my years on the Lovely at Perryville. Lucinda also told me that if for some reason my appeals and her efforts failed, she wanted her assets to go to the charity of my choice. I told her I'd like to help children and animals and on her next several visits she showed me brochures from St. Jude's and Shriner's hospitals, PETA, ASPCA, the World Wildlife Fund and a few other charities that I could select for her donations.

As it's turned out, here I am alive and well, thanks entirely to my aunt and she's in heaven strumming a harp at the throne of Jesus, singing the Lord's prayer and all the psalms. I pray to her every night, along with my prayer to Jesus, Krishna, and the many faces of Buddha.

After the funeral, I invite Jewel Anne and her partner Beverly Lee to stay with me for a week before they tour Arizona. For two weeks, they plan to camp at the Grand Canyon, Organ Pipe, Oak Creek Canyon near Sedona, and nearby campgrounds such as Usery Mountain Park, the Superstitions, and Picacho peak. I help them with their itinerary based on all the places Lucinda used to take me to when I first arrived in Mesa nearly thirty years before.

As it turns out, my niece and her partner are outdoorswomen although they pay great attention to their feminine appearances, down to their polished nails, designer clothes, eye makeup, coifed hairstyles, and perfumes. In contrast, I prefer comfortable clothes from GAP, I keep my graying hair straight and don't wear any makeup or perfume. I imagine that my drab prison apparel for nearly twenty-five years has something to do with this. They ask me to join them on their tour but I explain I'm reluctant to leave the house except to shop for my essentials. "It took everything I had to attend my aunt's funeral," I say.

I give my niece and Bev my old bedroom and move into Lucinda's. I know it seems a bit morbid but I feel closer to her spirit in her room. I air it out to clear away the years of my aunt's smoking but the trace odors don't bother me. Her presence comforts me.

During the week my niece and her lady are staying with me, we grow to know one another quite well, like a close-knit family. We spend our time sitting in the living room or at the kitchen table in the same way Lucinda and I used to do, although the girls aren't into playing gin rummy and they don't care for Lucinda's country western classics or the talk radio programs I like. Besides, my favorite talk-radio program, the Jeffers Hour, went off the air during the eleven months I lived with Lucinda after my release from prison.

It's a mutually beneficial arrangement for me and for the girls, as I call Jewel Anne and Beverly. I suggest they call me by the same name I called Lucinda, Aunt Lu, as an honor to her memory. We get along so enormously well it's uncanny. For hours, we discuss our lives, political matters, and the vast array of new technologies that weren't around when I first went to prison.

I have a lot of readjusting and updating to do. I went to death row when the first Bush was president at the time Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Now, I'm not sure what's going on

in this country. The girls loved Obama, as did I, and they don't have much regard for the current POTUS. They don't like his biases against immigrants, Muslims, and women.

I ask my girls to tell me all about themselves, how they met, how they fell in love and all the juicy details. They enjoy telling their story. They met five years before when they were students at Seattle University School of Law. As it turns out, Jewel is ten years older than Bev and went to law school at age 35 because her adoptive father Richard Cox is an attorney and she wanted a new career. Jewel has a BS in civil engineering but wasn't satisfied with her work for the transportation department because she had to live in Olympia and didn't like the capital city of Washington State. As far as her love life, Jewel had been dating members of the opposite sex since high school but never had a long-term boyfriend and was never engaged or anything like that.

"I dated a few men," Jewel admits as we're drinking coffee at the kitchen table. It's about 7 AM and I've made buckwheat pancakes like Lucinda used to make for me. "I didn't want to get pregnant because, I don't know, maybe because I'm adopted and my real mom gave me up. The truth is, I just didn't care for sex. I didn't understand why my relationships with men never worked out for me until I met Bev during my first year of law school."

"We met in Con Law," Bev adds while she pours heated maple syrup on her pancakes.

"That's right," Jewel says. "We sat together and got so antsy during the lectures that we used to write on our desks the time remaining before the class ended."

"20 minutes, I'd write then Jewel would write, 15 minutes, then 10, 5 and so on," Bev adds.

The girls are so close and in sync that they finish each other's thoughts. It's pleasant being around them because I've never been in sync with anyone in my life, not even Lucinda. I

often was quite surprised by my Aunt Lu's opinions because they seemed so old fashioned and out of date. So, elderly. Ironically, now I'm the one who's old fashioned and out of date compared to my girls. I've a long way to go before I learn all the new technology and ideas that have infiltrated society since my incarceration.

"I couldn't stand it when the professor randomly called on me to recite some bullshit law or facts about a case," my niece says. We all chuckle. "I just don't have a brilliant legal mind and when professors called on me, I felt like they were picking on me. Bev agreed with this and we had lots of good laughs because we had so much in common."

"We were both law school misfits," Bev adds.

"That's what I was in high school," I say and tell them how shy I had felt all through my school years. "In fact, I felt so insecure that I often hid in the bathroom stall just to avoid the other students. That was a long time ago and I'm distracting you from your story. Please continue. How did that ultimate spark happen? How did you discover you were meant to be together?"

The girls reassure me that I'm not interrupting their story because mine is just as relevant to them as theirs is to me. "We want to know about you as well, Aunt Lu, because we are family," Jewel says then continues with her law school love affair story. "Bev and I started going out for coffee after class, to decompress. I knew she was gay. It wasn't something she hid from anyone. But I didn't know it about myself until she asked me out and I agreed. We went to a gay nightclub, The Rainbow Deck, and I never had such a wonderful time dancing, holding hands, getting drunk. . ."

"And ultimately making love. . ."

“And falling in love!” Jewel emphasizes. “Then I understood what had been wrong with me, concerning my dating men.” She reaches over to hold her partner’s hand. Beverly’s smile illuminates the kitchen. “With Bev, I felt ecstatic in ways I’d never felt before. I came out as we say. And haven’t looked back since.”

“Are you from Seattle,” I ask Beverly.

“No. no,” she says. “I’m from Pittsburg but I left my hometown to get away from an abusive relationship that had been going on for too long. I’d always wanted to move to Seattle because I loved the grunge music of Kirk Cobain and Nirvana and I thought I’d love the NW even the rain and mist. I landed a job at Microsoft as a software programmer because my BS from Temple is in computer science.”

“Why did you go to law school?” I ask getting up to pour everyone more coffee.

“To meet Jewel Anne,” Bev says and we all chuckle. “Seriously, at age 25 I thought I could advance my career and become a corporate attorney for Bill Gates, so to speak. . .”

“But after we met and fell in love,” Jewel interrupts. “We decided to quit law school and take jobs as paralegals at different firms in Bremerton where my parents live. Our goal now is to make enough money to start our own business. When Charlie called and asked me to come to the funeral, I agreed mostly because both Bev and I wanted to see the Grand Canyon, Sedona and all the other sights in Arizona. And we wanted to meet you, Aunt Lu. The famous death row lady your lady governor decided was worthy of having a second chance at life.”

“All of us should have more than one chance at life,” I suggest and sip my coffee. “Life is simply too difficult and chaotic for people to get it right on the first try.” The girls agree and I ask Jewel if she has any kind of relationship with her biological mother, my sister Tracy.

"No! Not anymore," she says emphatically. "When I was growing up Tracy sent me a few cards and my adoptive parents let her know about me. But Tracy never tried to meet me. When I was twenty-five, I drove down to Portland and showed up at her house. She became distraught, I could tell, although she acted like she was happy to finally meet me. But she hadn't told her husband and daughter about me and she didn't want them to face me, all of a sudden.

"She offered me the keys to her beach house and asked me to stay there and she would meet me the next day. I told her it was all right and I drove back to Olympia where I was living at the time. I had no idea that I was this big dirty secret and it upset me. I went on with my life and forgot about her. She sent me a few cards and had my uncle Charlie call me.

"Then one weekend she invited me to meet her and Uncle Charlie at her beach house. I agreed because I wanted to meet Charlie. It was only Tracy, Charlie, and me. My so-called mother's family was at home in Milwaukie. She still hadn't told them about me. But I had a good time getting to know Uncle Charlie. He and I took walks on the beach and discussed a variety of things, including you, Aunt Lu. He never said anything bad about you the whole time. He mostly talked about how you were a sweet shy little girl who got into a bad relationship with an abusive drug fiend. That's all. He didn't say stuff like you're a serial killer where you belonged. Nothing like that."

I smile at my niece and nod. "I believe you," I say. "Charlie's always been a good guy, a solid honest man. He came to my rescue a few times. But the rest of my childhood family caused me a great deal of confusion in my early life. I just didn't know what was real, what was a slap in the face, or what I valued."

"During one of our beach walks," Jewel continues, after taking the last bite of her buckwheat pancakes, "I told Uncle Charlie about Tracy's reaction to me."

"What'd he say?"

"He suggested Tracy was embarrassed to tell her husband about her illegitimate pregnancy and I simply let it go. I like Uncle Charlie and I call him now and then. Or he calls me."

"I really don't understand Tracy's problem," I say. "When she came to see me during the trial, she even had a picture of you. I thought she was, well, all right. Although she did mention her new marriage and baby daughter, Tiffany Rose, and did seem rather religious. And that surprised me because she left home in part because of our father's strict religious views. I thought she had rebelled against religion. But I didn't ask about her religion. I was on my way to death row and had other problems to consider."

"I don't care to get to know Tracy," Jewel says. "During that weekend at her beach house in Lincoln City, she struck me as standoffish and that bothered me more than her keeping my birth her little secret. I went on with my life. My adoptive parents love me enough to make up for my biological mother's indifference."

"I know Charlie and Tracy are close," I say. "I wonder why he couldn't convince her to come to the funeral with him, his kids, and you."

"I'll tell you why. Because I really upset Tracy when I again showed up at her house in Milwaukie, defiantly this time. I wanted her to meet Bev. I wanted to confront her for being standoffish, selfish, and so fucking indifferent toward me, her first daughter."

"How did that visit go?" I ask while remembering when I had coffee at the kitchen table with my Aunt Lu. She was always craving a cigarette but for my benefit she restrained from smoking until she took a cup of coffee to her bedroom where I allowed her indulgence. I deeply

miss my aunt and if she were here now, I'd tell her to go ahead and smoke because it was something she enjoyed doing.

"The visit went okay, at first," Jewel continues, bringing my thoughts back to her story about my sister. "Tracy greeted me, even gave me a hug. She seemed kind of apologetic and invited Bev and I inside her fancy home. We sat in the living room; she served us coffee and mint cookies. It had been nearly ten years since our last meeting at the beach house. Then she asked who my friend was. She assumed Bev was a casual friend, a buddy. *She's my girlfriend, Tracy*, I said. And both Bev and I could visibly see the change in Tracy's complexion. *Girlfriend?* she asked. *Yes, Tracy, she's the love of my life*.

"*I see* Tracy said. We all grew uncomfortable and to change the subject, I asked my biological mom *did you ever tell you husband and daughter about me?*

"Yes, she said, *I finally did.*

"*How did that go?* I asked.

"*He was understanding*, she said and quickly added *but John is a very religious man. I don't think he'll understand this little relationship of yours, Jewel Anne.*"

"That's all it took. I politely said, *Okay. No hard feelings, Tracy. I was only trying to share my life with you but I guess that isn't meant to be.*

"Then she said, *Keep sending me cards. No hard feelings*. And we left. I really don't care to see Tracy ever again. And I don't think she particularly liked the complexion of my fiancé. Not that I even like broaching on issues of bigotry and racism. Biology has no meaning to me. Otherwise, why do we fall in love with someone not biologically related to us? Why do our friends seem more like family than our next of kin?"

"Good point," I say and tell the girls how much I felt unloved by my childhood family. But I don't want to pull down an otherwise upbeat mood, so I quickly add, "The past is past and there's no point dwelling on it. Now I'm just happy you two have come into my life." I take their hands and say, "We're related by blood and by a strong bond of fellowship. Or maybe it's sisterhood. We understand and appreciate one another and celebrate our uniqueness."

I begin praying out loud to my Aunt Lu, Jewel Anne's great aunt. It's not something I've ever done before with the girls but now it feels appropriate. As I ask my aunt to look on our little union. I feel her presence. She's blessing me to have my niece and her partner in my life. I feel like I have a real family now, two bright and beautiful girls of my own. I love them like the daughters I never had and never will now that I'm considerably past menopause. Although, I've heard that technology these days has allowed women as old as sixty to have a baby. It's uncanny.

When the girls take their two-week tour of Arizona, I feel lost without them. As soon as they return and pull their rental pop-up camper van into my driveway, I ask them to move in with me for the next six months. It's a notion I've been contemplating the entire time they were away because I found myself feeling lonely now that Lucinda's no longer around.

As we are unloading their camping gear and various souvenir rocks they've collected during their trip, I tell them, "I was so isolated while living in prison and during my year with Lucinda. I could really use your help with all this new technology and gadgetry. The world has changed enormously since I went in and I haven't a clue about what to do. I need to learn how to function in a new world. And this new radical president scares me. His rhetoric is worse than any prison boasting I've ever heard."

“Don’t worry about anything, Aunt Lu” Jewel says as we’re placing their gear and rocks in their bedroom which I’ve clean for them, hoping they’d agree to my suggestion. “We’ll stay here and teach you everything you need to know about what’s going on in the world.”

They give me purple and white crystals from a shop in Quartzite and say they’ll bring me spiritual powers and awareness. I hold the crystals to the light and feel an energizing warmth. But it’s probably because I’m so thrilled to have them back with me. I bring up another idea I’ve also been considering while alone in Lucinda’s old empty house. “We can use some of the money Lucinda left me to get you girls started in your internet business.”

Both Jewel Anne and Bev love the idea. They’re sitting on the bed resting for a moment while I sit in a rocking chair across from them. “I’m tired of the rain and chill of the Puget Sound,” Jewel exclaims. “Besides,” she puts her arm around Bev and draws her near. “We’ve both fallen in love with Arizona.”

“We’re tired of the legal field anyway,” Bev adds and rests her head on Jewel’s shoulder.

“And we’re eager to get started with our own business,” Jewel says.

I couldn’t be happier that the girls have agreed to both of my propositions.

The girls rest for a few days then fly back to Bremerton to quit their jobs and move from their apartment. Bev sells her ‘97 Aerostar van which she drove to Seattle from Pittsburg. After being away for a month, they drive Jewel’s 2012 Titanium Taurus back to Phoenix.

The girls are now living with me for six months and helping me adapt to a world I could never learn to know on my own. I’m living in culture shock and I haven’t even left the state of Arizona. Everything has changed. I can’t believe the people who’ve passed away—Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Prince, and Tammy Wynette. And there are so many new faces in the movies, in music, on TV, and in politics. I’m astonished the networks cancelled America’s

Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries. And what happened to Hillstreet Blues, Matlock, Family Ties, and the Cosby Show? In fact, I can hardly fathom that Bill Cosby drugged and raped numerous women. He was supposed to be America's Dad! Will they sentence him to prison? Everything is so bombastic and different.

TV and radio are antiquated technology in today's world. The girls are teaching me how to use GPS, skype video, email, the computer, the internet, and how to order what I need online so I won't have to go shopping in public except for a few groceries. And they've set me up with a smartphone.

"When I went to prison back in 1991, I didn't even have a Nokia," I tell them. "Why do I need such a devise?"

"Aunt Lu!" Jewel Anne exclaims, as she does whenever I complain about technology. She makes me feel as frumpy as my own Aunt Lu.

My main phrase has become, "One thing at a time!" Or I sometimes say, "Slow down. I need a moment to digest all this."

Soon after my girls settle in with me, they make plans for a wedding in Las Vegas over Memorial Day Weekend 2018. It turns out that gay marriage is another massive change in society since they locked me away.

"In 2015, SCOTUS held that all the states must recognize same-sex marriages," Jewel tells me at the kitchen table. She and I are drinking coffee. Usually, it's the three of us together chatting away but Beverly is in her bedroom working on her laptop. The girls have already designed several websites and social media sites that they maintain for different LGBTQ groups, businesses, and charities locally, nationally, and internationally. They're calling their company

Arastar Internet after Bev's '97 Aerostar van, although as a legal matter, they've slightly changed the brand name.

"The US Supreme Court ruling caused quite a stir among the evangelical right," Jewel continues. "I'm sure my biological mother and her husband are outraged."

"Well, the truth is my older sister has always been a bit uppity," I admit to my niece. "When we were growing up in Butte, we shared the upstairs bedroom and I got to know her pretty well. She thought quite a lot of her beautiful, popular self and she sometimes made snide remarks to me. Sometimes I didn't realize her meaning until after I had time to think about what she'd said and how she said it. When a little girl, I had so many things to deal with because of my horrible brother Scottie. Sure, Tracy came to see me during my trial but then she didn't show up as a witness for my defense like she promised she would. That was one of the biggest let downs in my difficult life." I say and then feel grim and change the subject to something more upbeat but my niece seems interested in my stories about her biological mom.

"Do you remember some of the remarks she made?" Jewel asks.

I set down my coffee mug and think back to those early years when I sometimes felt like an intruder in my own bedroom. "Tracy dated a lot of boys in high school," I say. "I'd watch her primping herself at the vanity and one time I remarked that I hope to be dating too, when I went to high school. Tracy stopped brushing her golden hair, looked at me, and said something like *No, I doubt you'll be dating until much later in your life*. Like I was such a creep that no guy in high school could possibly be interested in dating me. It was a typical Tracy comment. She was full of herself but I didn't realize this when I was little. I really looked up to her until she ran off then returned home pregnant with you. I went along with my parents and called her a jezebel."

My niece grins and I affectionately squeeze her hand. “Thank God she had you, Jewel Anne. You’re my family now. You’re the daughter I never had.”

“I feel the same way about you, Aunt Lu. You’re like the biological mother I never had and I love you like I love my adoptive mom.” She stands to pour more coffee but first reaches over to kiss my forehead. My love for her fills me with shivers. I wonder if my Aunt Lu felt this same way about me. It seems like she did or she wouldn’t have devoted her life to setting me on the path I now tread.

As I’m adding two sugar cubes to my coffee, something I started doing after my release from prison where sugar was a rare commodity, Bev enters the kitchen and sits beside Jewel. They fill the room with their presence whenever they appear together. They are extremely beautiful and bright. They’d have to be intelligent to get into law school and develop an internet business which is something I could never imagine myself doing. I tell them my thoughts and they both smile.

I share practically everything with them, like I did with Lucinda during our last year together. And the girls seem to share everything with me, except for the details of Arastar Internet which I wouldn’t understand anyway.

Sometimes I feel like my Aunt Lucinda, elderly, and incapable of taking on new technology. I tell them that I’m just getting by, trying to adapt to as little of all this new technology as possible. “If it’s not something I need to use or will help me survive,” I say. “Don’t try to explain it or get me to use it.” And if the girls get too technical in the conversation, I simply change the subject. Like now when Bev tries to tell me about a glitch on one of her websites.

“Tell me about your wedding plans,” I specifically say to Beverly.

"We expect you to be at our wedding," she says. "No other family member will be there. We're inviting only our rainbow friends from Bremerton."

"What about your adoptive parents? Bev's family?" I ask.

"My parents are quite old," Jewel Anne says. "And Bev's family is supportive, her mom is anyway, but she lives in Pittsburg and doesn't have the resources to attend."

"But my family wishes us well and welcomes me and Jewel to Pittsburg with open arms," Bev says. "I have ten siblings. Some are half brothers and sisters. And my grandmother is still alive. She's nearly one hundred."

I give the girls my blessing but explain that I just can't leave Lucinda's house and venture to Vegas. They understand. They've become my support system and are helping me adjust to life after "life".

Memorial Day Weekend arrives and passes, and the girls return to my house happily married. They then set me up with my own Dell laptop and insist that I finish my death row memoirs which I had begun writing on note pads while I was living with Lucinda. The book which I title *Memoirs of Death Row* is about my time on the Lovely. I don't want to bring up why they accused me of murder and I certainly don't want to discuss my difficult childhood which in many ways was worse than the death sentence. That's why I don't write much about my trial or the mitigation hearing when an "expert witnesses" discussed what Scottie had done to me. It had felt like the court was exposing my genitals to the world. My case was well publicized, after all. And the fact of the matter is, the information didn't stop the judge from imposing a death sentence. So, it had been needless testimony that had made me live through the abuse once again.

My memoir simply recounts my death row experiences and writing it is quite healing. It forces me to recall the good and bad days and the vast amount of time I had to reflect on how and why I ended up on the Row. I discuss the daily routine of getting up early, saying prayers to as many gods as I could name, working outside in the prison garden, and always being alone except for the guards who watched over me. I discuss the terrible meals which could end up giving me all kinds of health problems in my later years. I mention what I missed most about my life before imprisonment, like a glass of wine, fast food, hearing the traffic, the birds, feeling the sunshine and wind on my face, smelling anything other than prison smells which are dank, stale, institutional, and rift with disinfectant and human body odors. I describe the books they allowed me to read, novels by Jackie Collins, Grisham's legal stories, and a few harlequin romances, just to pass the time of day, after day, after day.

I talk a great deal about my pen pals and their inspiring letters and the many visits from my Aunt Lu and her undaunting efforts to save me from death. I in fact dedicate the book to her, my angel in heaven. I discuss the appeals, the vanquished hope, my fellow death row "Lovely" ladies and the messages we occasionally passed to one another. Simple notes about which books to read, which legal angles to pursue, which attorney or legal aid firm to use or avoid. And stupid notes concerning which guard we'd like to bang. Sometimes, I wrote poetry that I'd pass to a guard or an inmate. None of my poems were very good, I'm quite sure, but they helped me focus on my plight and made me feel positive about myself, as if I were singing to heaven and asking for some kind of redemption. In one poem I recall writing *They've condemned me to die. Have I poisoned myself by my own actions? Or is it all one big lie?"*

Most of all, my memoir describes how my entire experience on the Lovely was a matter of cleansing my mind from all I've suffered through in life. I learned to demystify the clouds that

obscured my reality. In psychological terms it's called being delusional. In other words, clarity of mind came to me when I started understanding falsehoods about the world and about myself. And this almost made the dire experience of death row worthwhile.

After a few months of living with me, Jewel and Bev finally pry me out of the house and we drive to the animal shelter to rescue a cat. I told them about the first cat I ever owned, one I rescued from the pound where Lucinda got me a job. "It was a black tuxedo cat I named Silvester," I said. But I didn't go into how my boyfriend at the time, Brian "Pothead" Pottoff, forced me to get rid of Sylvester and how Lucinda wouldn't take it when I needed her to. The memories are too ugly and the girls are so upbeat about getting me going, I just don't want to dampen their enthusiasm.

At the humane society, I end up saving five cats that I name after mountains in the Rockies--Beartooth, Wilson, Grizzly, Baldy, and Graham. I don't know why I picked these names, especially since I don't ever want to go back to Montana or really, any of the Rocky Mountain states. I'm happy being a desert dweller in Mesa.

The cats quickly adapt to their new home. All five of them sleep on my bed each night and the girls build an outside kennel connected to my bedroom window so they can go outside to use the litter box. They cover the kennel with plywood to keep it shaded from direct sunshine and dry when it rains. The girls and I share in the housework, but I keep the litter boxes clean. It's only fair and it's something I'm used to doing because I previously owned a cat and part of my job at the animal shelter was to clean the kennels and the cat litter boxes.

When I finish *Memoirs of Death Row*, I use part of the money I inherited from Lucinda to self-publish. The girls set up a website on Arastar Internet and put me on social media to publicize the book. It goes viral, as they say, and I make enough money from book sales to

purchase a condo for the girls in Sedona. They've decided to permanently move to Arizona and Sedona is where they'd most like to live in the world. Of course, I'd love to have them live with me forever, but that isn't fair to them. They need their own place, their own breathing room, and perhaps I need mine. After all, I became quite used to living in isolation for nearly thirty years or perhaps for my entire life. Besides, the girls will still be in Arizona, as they tell me, and we can video chat daily. "I remember when having an answering machine was new technology," I tell them and they reply jokingly, "My Aunt Lu, how times have changed."

We spend about a week at the Sedona Hacienda Bed and Breakfast above Oak Creek. The girls wanted to camp but I suggested that camping would be too impractical for me. A realtor quickly finds us a 500-thousand-dollar condo near the town center. We're all sold on its view of the Chapel of the Holy Cross which is a Frank Lloyd Wright design embedded into the red rock cliffs and hills.

Sedona is cool in September and I almost hate to return to Mesa where it's still in the hundreds, but I want to get back to my five cats that a pet-sitting service is watching. In my aunt's old pink Buick, the girls drive me back to Mesa then fly off to Bremerton to gather all their belongings stored at Jewel's parents. They plan to buy a new SUV in Seattle and drive back to Sedona where they're eager to set up their internet business in the condo and continue managing websites and promoting my book.

The Lucinda Bowers Foundation

Over the next several months, Jewel Anne and Beverly drive down to Mesa a few times and one time I drive to Sedona in my new red 2015 Cadillac CTS that the girls help me purchase from Carvana. I bring along my cats in portable kennels because I'll never hire another in home pet-sitting service to take care of my cats. When I came back from Sedona, I found a porno DVD

on my stereo. I'm sure that the pet-sitters left it and that creeped me out. Without even asking my niece and her wife, I knew it didn't belong to them because it's straight man and woman porn and I know it hadn't secretly belonged to my Aunt Lu.

During most of my stay at the condo, Jewel Anne and Beverly are busy working in their office while I'm in the front room, on a recliner, with my new Dell laptop on my lap, searching through the profiles of women on death row. Baldy and Graham are sleeping at my feet and my other three cats are lying on the floor in a stream of sunshine. Outside the picture window I have a clear view of the red rock cliffs and the cathedral under a clear blue sky. The terrain is popping with wildflowers and birds and the April weather is chilly. I love it here and am happy I could help my girls buy such a place. It's a much better arrangement for them than living with frumpy old me in Mesa where I'm perfectly content to reside alone with my cats.

This visit to Sedona is my first attempt to drive alone beyond of Mesa. It seemed a bit daring at first, but I think I'm getting the hang of stepping outside of my shell. "You must push yourself," the girls advised when they coaxed me into buying the Cadi and taking this trip. In fact, the past few days I've been walking by myself into downtown Sedona, which is a big adventure for me. I'm not even thinking that all the tourists are staring at me and knowing who I am. Instead, I feel like I'm blending into life, like the cathedral blends into the pillaring red rocks.

At the Hobbit Giftshop in town, I buy each of my girls a jade charm of a fat jolly Buddha to wear with the many charms on the gold chain necklaces that they gave each other on their wedding. It seems to match the yin yang symbol, rainbow flag, and Egyptian eye of Horus that the girls already have on their necklaces. I buy a Buddha for myself, although I tend not to wear jewelry all the time like the girls do. The only piece of jewelry I've ever really owned was a

charm bracelet that Charlie gave me for my sixteenth birthday nearly forty years ago. It included a cross, a charm that said, “sweet sixteen,” and a map of Montana with my birthstone marking Helena. Soon after I met Brian “Pothead” Potthoff, he gave me a painter’s easel charm for my bracelet because he claimed to be an artist. That was a lie. He was only trying to entice me into his lair and then I lost his tainted charm during my crime. Forensics retrieved it and the prosecution used it as evidence during my trial. Long ago, I tossed the stupid bracelet out the car window on the way to the airport in Butte. I was catching a flight to Phoenix where they arrested me at Sky Harbor Airport. Phew, what a life I’ve had.

I suppose I decided on the jade Buddha charms because they’re far removed from the charms on Charlie’s gift. But mostly, I believe the fat jolly Buddha represents being happy in life and my girls have certainly brought me more happiness than I ever thought possible. As it turns out, they say the charms are the best gift I could’ve given them. At least that’s what they tell me. But I believe them.

During my stay in Sedona, the girls and I decide to establish a charitable foundation for women on death row. The idea just falls into place one morning while we’re eating waffles at the Red Rock Café. I tell them I’m thinking about giving some of the proceeds of my book to an animal or children’s charity.

“What about a foundation to help women on death row,” Bev suggests because she knows I’m planning to correspond with some of these women to offer my moral support.

“Yes,” I say as I quickly latch on to the idea. “The charity could offer them different legal avenues and help them develop better views of themselves. Help them feel worthy of having meaningful lives even in the pit of hell. Perhaps help them find a way to face all the abuse and trauma they’ve experienced that probably contributed to their committing crimes.”

"Of course, Aunt Lu. You're talking about your own life," the girls say almost in unison.

"Yes, I admit. I'm thinking about my own case. And we'll call our charity *The Lucinda Bowers Foundation* in honor of my aunt. I know she'd be proud of my book's success and the foundation. She wanted my life to amount to something after all the turmoil I went through and caused, and this is the best way for me to fulfill her wishes. For me to give back to the world after the world has given me a second chance at life. I feel like devoting the rest of my life to giving back to the good of humanity. I must pay it forward, so to speak, and the most obvious recipients in need of what I can offer are women on death row."

As soon as the cats and I are back in Mesa, I start writing letters to a few select women on death row throughout the US and I tell them about myself and my charitable cause. At the same time, my nieces start filling out the paperwork for a 501(c) nonprofit.

I'm not writing to inmates who are psychopathic serial killers. But let's be honest, such killers are mostly men best left to journalists like Chris Cuomo and his series Inside Evil where he interviews these kinds of lunatics. My focus is on women like me who have ended up on death row because of a host of negative experiences, unfair treatments, and influences. It's not difficult to determine who these unfortunate women are. I just read their case histories and their mitigating factors, then I write to them and when they write back, I can almost instantly tell who they are deep inside.

I spent twenty-two years on the Lovely developing this skill by writing letters to intelligent people and contemplating my true self beyond all the labels the world placed on me. I believe that other women in similar situations to mine can also overcome the conditioning imposed on them by all these various factors. This is the premise of my foundation and I'm hoping I can meet a few inmates who might benefit from my life's experiences.

To help me pursue these goals for my charity, I've asked Jewel and Bev to set me up with an online college course in social psychology. Within minutes they enroll me in an associate degree program through the University of Phoenix. Getting a college degree is another wish my aunt had for me so I'm especially eager to finish this course. I'm also highly grateful for this new online avenue to pursue an education because I was a better fit on death row than in the social structure of Butte High.

I'm still reluctant to meet new people and mingle in big crowds because when people find out who I am, the lady serial killer freed from death row, I feel their disdain and prejudice toward me. Even if it isn't overt. I can sense its presence choking the air and that makes me uncomfortable. I can never be just a regular normal person in this energetic new world of technical changes. But like the girls tell me and like Aunt Lu used to say, take it one day at a time, step by step, baby steps, and all that.

To push me further from the confines of my house, the girls convince me to join them on their honeymoon cruise that I offer to buy them as a wedding gift. "I don't want to intrude," I say, feeling rather shocked by the suggestion because that would be a giant leap for me, well beyond baby steps.

"It's no intrusion," the girls tell me. "We want you to join us."

"Then I'd have to fly somewhere and I'm afraid of flying," I argue

"Why?" they of course ask. "It's safer than driving a car." My girls are both so brave and daring that sometimes they have difficulty understanding my hesitations.

"I'm not sure why," I say. "It just seems so unnatural and if something were to go wrong with the engines, let's say, I'd be helplessly trapped mid-air in a confined chamber with a bunch of strangers. So, no, it's not like being in a car!"

“We’ll be with you the whole way,” Jewel assures me.

“But it’s your honeymoon. You don’t want an old aunt tag along,” I say and remember “tag along” was one of the degrading terms my horrible brother used to call me. To clear away this ugly thought, I wink at the girls letting them know I’m just being light-hearted.

“You’re never a tag along with us, Aunt Lu,” Jewel says. “Besides, we’ll have our own cabins on the ship. We can all relax, dine, dance, and continue working on our business websites, promote your book, your charity, and you can do your coursework while enjoying a luxury cruise.”

“What about my cats? I’ll never hire another in-house pet sitter after I found that porno DVD.”

“We’ll put them in a luxury cat hotel. I know they have them in Phoenix. The pet hotel staff will love and pamper your cats for the three weeks we’re gone.”

In the end I agree to go and then we surf through several websites featuring cruises ranging from the Rhine River to the glaciers of Alaska. We settle on a South American cruise that circles Cape Horn to really “get away and touch the end of the world” the girls tell me.

On September 3, 2018, I take a valium, even though I’m generally against meds, but I don’t think I could otherwise bear the long flight. The tranquilizer, however, does nothing to ease my anxiety. In fact, it makes me feel sick to my stomach for most of the thirteen-hours to Buenos Aires where we hop aboard Holland America, sail in rough seas past the Falkland Islands, cruise on to Tierra del Fuego, and end up in Santiago Chile.

At one port of call, I have an opportunity to fly to the Antarctic with the girls, but I just can’t bring myself to venture off in a little rotor plane. My brave and adventuresome girls have

no problem taking the side trip and they return with digital pictures of Emperor penguins on shimmering sheets of compact snow.

On this exotic cruise, I'm finding that the end of the world is as striking and unfamiliar to me as the world was after being in prison for twenty-five-years. The brisk and chilling climate, and the love I have for my nieces, makes me feel like an Emperor Penguin on top of her world turned upside down.

During the three-week cruise, I spend most of the time relaxing in my private state room while the girls rest in theirs. It's their honeymoon, after all. I work on the computer and read novels on the deck in view of the icebergs floating in the choppy ocean where the Atlantic meets the Pacific. Every evening at five, we meet in the dining room and enjoy wonderful cruise meals at a designated table with our assigned shipmates--a British man with crooked teeth who has recently lost his wife and an interesting couple from Sydney who take yearly cruises to different parts of the world which they enjoy telling us all about.

At first, I warn the girls not to reveal that I'm an ex-con from death row. There's too much stigma attached to it and it takes too much effort to explain myself. *Oh really? And just what are you doing here now?* I'm afraid everyone will ask. I want to remain incognito on this cruise and the girls and I come up with a story for my background.

During our first conversation with our table mates, I explain that I'm Jewel's aunt and am currently working on my sociology degree because I want to change my career, at fifty, from an assistant veterinarian to a social worker. Unfortunately, the British man, Mr. Humphries, recognizes me from the internet and has looked up my website and social media page. He knows who I am. So, before I can even start on my little ruse, the game is over and I spend the rest of the cruise, when meeting my dinner companions and not discussing the Sydney couples' cruises,

talking about my life on death row. I naturally fall into it and don't feel like our table mates are judging me. They're just curious because, well, I do have an interesting story to tell. Fortunately, no one asks me *Well, do you feel any remorse over what you did?* We keep the conversation to what's featured on the website promoting my book *Memoirs of Death Row*.

I also talk about what I'm doing in addition to working on my associate degree. "We're establishing a nonprofit foundation for women on death row," I say.

"What's that involve?" Mr. Humphries asks.

"Right now, I'm writing to women inmates throughout the US."

"How interesting," the Sydney man says.

The girls and I tell them a little about our objectives and our shipmates appear thoroughly impressed with me and my book. I feel they're sincere, perhaps because they're not Americans, and I'm inspired to outline a second book. The idea comes to me when the girls showed me the Emperor Penguins marching along the white forbidden tundra and surviving in the world's harshest conditions.

"I'm outlining another book," I announce to my dinner companions. "It'll be a follow up book about my life after my release." I haven't even discussed this idea with Jewel and Bev because they've been too preoccupied with each other, for one thing. They're thrilled and as interested in this second book as our dinner mates. The encouragement everyone gives me is elevating. I feel like I was never on the Row and instead am a Nobel Laureate or a Ph.D. candidate from Harvard.

"Have you come up with a title for your second book?" Mr. Humphries asks.

"Yes," I say. "I've already decided to call it *Surviving Life*."

Chapter 4: Surviving Life

October to December 2018

I act a certain way,
Tis sensitivity,
And those who watch my drama,
Are unaware of me.

I fool them all because,
I'm wont to play their game,
A medley of performances,
Where not a line is real,
Nor the same.

After we returned home from South America, I continued working on my sociology degree and within a few months I finish my second book. What I have to say pours from my mind like it's been building up for a lifetime and ready to spill forth. The girls help me self-publish again and put my second book online. Soon, just like *Memoirs of Death Row*, *Surviving Life* goes viral and TV talk shows begin inviting me to discuss both books on their programs.

Jewel and Bev encourage me to accept the invitations but after the long flight to and from South America, I insist on not flying anywhere, anymore, ever again. I put my foot down. "And I don't want to be separated from my cats," I tell Jewel over the phone. "I missed them during our cruise. They're as much a part of my family as you two are. But unlike you two, my cats totally depend on my love, care, and attention. They develop nervous habits whenever I go away because they miss me so much."

"Yes, we know, Aunt Lu. You're a Cat Lady," Jewel teases. I can hear Beverly snickering in the background. "Then why don't you buy a large RV bus with the proceeds from your second book," Jewel suggests. "That way, we can drive to New York, get you on the Dr. Roz Show, promote your books along the way, and work on our businesses in the RV. Best of all, your cats can come along and live with us in the RV while we're traveling."

The idea quickly takes hold and within a few days, the girls drive down from Sedona and we go to Beaudry RVs in Apache Junction. I purchase a Red Tiffin Alegro which offers us ample room for our road trips, especially when compared to the tiny Shasta trailer-house my parents had when I was a little girl. Back then, during our family hunting trips to Eastern Oregon, I slept crammed against the wall on a bunk bed while Tracy slept on the edge. I practically suffocated during those cold nights at the McGrew Ranch. In our new RV home, I'll have an entire luxury bedroom suite to myself with a king bed for me and my five Rocky Mountain cats. The girls will sleep on the living room sofa which converts into another king size bed.

The following month, my nieces come back down and we head out on a four-week road trip to New York City where I'll be appearing on the Dr. Roz TV show. Bev and Jewel do the driving and we tow my Cadillac behind on a car dolly from U-haul. Along I-70, we stop for book signings at bookstores in Las Vegas and Denver where I end up seeing the Rocky Mountains after all.

We skip Montana even though Jewel suggests we stop in Butte to visit Charlie. I tell her it's out of our way and we don't have the time. I have no desire to go to Montana ever again, even to visit my oldest brother, Charlie. I guess I'm just reluctant to revisit anything that has to do with my childhood and that includes Charlie. Yeah, yeah, he's an upstanding man, but I've never gotten over the fact that he kicked me out of his house. I don't want to share this with Jewel, however. She really likes and respects her uncle and I don't like dredging up my past. It makes me feel like I'm dwelling on things and complaining. Besides, my focus is on my present and this is my first road trip where I'm out to promote the ideas I'm trying to spread through my books, foundation, and all my efforts to make something positive out of my second chance at life.

Beyond Colorado, we stop for book signings in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Indianapolis but I refuse to go to Cincinnati because of my ordeal with my first and only boyfriend Brian "Pothead" Potthoff who was nothing but a loser, a con-man and a crackhead. He tricked me into believing an old homeless woman was his mother. "I ended up believing that the homeless woman had caused Brian to leave me," I explain to Jewel Anne and Beverly Lee over coffee at our RV kitchen table. We've just pulled into an I-70 rest stop outside of Dayton where I'm scheduled for an appearance at Little Professor's Bookstore. "In some kind of delusional desperation, I removed the obstacle between Brian and me. But she was just an innocent old woman. Harmless. Brian and his trickery are a big part of why I committed the crimes."

"You really did kill, Aunt Lu?" Jewel asks.

My crimes aren't something I talk about and the girls never bring them up but I feel the time is right to discuss the matter that I'm sure my girls and everyone else who knows me, or encounters me, wonders about. Certainly, all the people who buy my books have that question in mind when I scribble my autograph. In the books, I really don't discuss the crimes, per se. I kept the focus on how it was to live on the Row and how it is to be thrust into a changed society after twenty-five years of incarceration.

"Yes," I say, "I'm a killer who killed under a delusional mind. If that makes any sense. And it took me years to clear my head of all the psychological clutter. Brian's the reason we're avoiding Cincinnati. I mistakenly believed he was in Cincinnati because the homeless woman, whose name was Vicki, had an actual son living in Cincinnati. It was a terrible time in my life. I was confused about Brian's pretend mother until this reporter explained that the homeless woman wasn't Brian's mother. I was in a very vulnerable state of mind. I don't think I knew up from down at the time. But I survived. Unfortunately, Vicki didn't."

“I heard your crimes were mercy killings,” Bev says.

“That’s what the press was saying at the time of my trial mostly because of my job at the pound where I helped humanely put down sick and unwanted animals. At the time of my trial, certain public sentiment held me out as “the Angel of Mercy” because the victims were elderly, homeless, and sickly. And I did help an old man who was alone on the streets and dying. I pushed him over the hump as compassionately as I could. At least that’s how I felt at the time. The other old man, well, he was trying to hump me instead, not that I have any right to joke about my victims. Like I said, I was in a very muddled state of mind. Something that was not me with a clear head, compelled me to do what I did. After years of contemplation, I sometimes think I was trying to assert some kind of power over my life because during most of my childhood I felt powerless and pathetic. Brian made me feel the same way. Maybe, in a sick sort of way, committing murder is the ultimate power grab. But it’s all so terrible and hard to explain which is why I don’t talk about it and why I didn’t write about it in my books.”

“I’m sorry, Aunt Lu. We both love you unconditionally and don’t want to put you on the spot,” Jewel says. “The topic just rather came up. Because of Cincinnati.”

“No, no, girls. Don’t feel bad for me. I know you’re curious about my crimes. I’m sure you’ve read about them. And I’m so glad we can be open and honest with one another. It’s not something I grew up with, not something I experienced while incarcerated, and your great Aunt Lu loved me unconditionally, but we were rather far off from each other philosophically, perhaps religiously, and we never really talked about deep issues. And yes, my darling girls, I live with a feeling of remorse for what I did no matter how confused or cloudy my mental state had been at the time of my crimes. I don’t make excuses for my actions just because my childhood sucked and I had an abusive relationship with a twisted crackhead. Who am I to judge now, or back

then, whether Vicki was better off dead? I don't know what was in her heart. Maybe she was as happy with her life as any of us are. And she never asked me to end her suffering. She only asked for a bottle of wine. Elixir, as she called alcohol. Anyway, her real son in Cincinnati didn't give a shit about her. He wasn't even at the trial and the only thing he did, as far as I know, was tell the prosecutor and my defense attorney that I should get death for what I did."

"Wow, Aunt Lu," the girls say.

"Yes, life is full of little surprises. That's something my own Aunt Lu used to tell me during her visits with me in prison. She was always so hopeful and determined in her pursuit to set me free or vacate my sentence from death to life. God rest her soul. I only wish she could've met you two. I know this may sound a bit morbid, maybe even twisted, but sometimes I imagine or even dream that my angel Aunt Lu has met Vicki in heaven and that they have somehow become friends."

After we end our coffee break and hit the freeway, I'm feeling confident that we aren't likely to discuss my crimes again. I've said what I needed to say, out of respect for my girls, and so have they. I've satisfied their curiosity and we have so many more pressing and interesting things to work on and discuss than my past crimes and lifelong regrets.

We make a few stops in Columbus and then arrive in Pittsburg to meet Beverly's family. Everyone, even her 98-year-old grandmother, welcomes us and no one seems aghast by me, the death row survivor. Bev's family also treats her and Jewel Anne with enormous love and without any questions or remarks about their same sex, interracial marriage. Their warmth and hospitality make me feel kind of jealous that I didn't come from such a close-knit family.

Over our four-day visit, we enjoy backyard barbeques, evening drinks, and talks around the kitchen table about church and politics. Nobody is in favor of the current president and his

rather bigoted viewpoints. What happened in Charlottesville is one topic and so is Trevon Martin and the police mistreatment of black men in general, such as Eric Garner in NYC whom police killed in a strangle hold for selling loose cigarettes on the street.

I'm embarrassed to think about how racist my childhood family was, in comparison to Bev's. Especially my father Moe and my brother Scottie who quite often made terrible references to people of different ethnicity and faith. And one of the names my brother called me was a racial slur. Of course, I never discuss my stupid childhood family or my crimes and everyone is so busy having fun that I rarely even mention the content of my books. To do so seems too formal and business like, kind of a downer to the overall jovial feelings.

From Pittsburg we drive to the outskirts of Long Island and register the Tiffin Alegro at an RV park. I leave plenty of water and food for my cats while we drive the Cadi into New York City and stay at the Four Seasons Hotel where the studio puts us up for three nights. I later learn that our room overlooking Central Park cost a thousand dollars a night. I've never experienced this kind of royal treatment nor have I ever seen such a jungle of skyscrapers, heavy traffic, and crowds of rushing people wearing fashionable clothes. I guess I'll always be a bumpkin from Butte, Montana who lived in a cloister for twenty-five years.

The ABC studio for the Dr. Roz Show is on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Dr. Tabatha Roz has been on the air for nearly ten years but only during the last two has her show gone nationwide probably because of her sharp wit and engaging sense of humor. She's a beautiful woman originally from Pakistan and has a British accent that seems to amplify itself whenever she asks questions.

The studio is taping my interview for a series of programs entitled "Surviving Life after Death Row." In addition to me, Dr. Roz is interviewing two African American men that

Alabama and Mississippi have recently freed from death row after DNA proved their innocence. Both have spent over twenty years in confinement. “I have them beat,” I tell Dr. Roz when we’re introduced. Both men are now in their mid-fifties and are scrambling to make a new life. One man talks about how he’s getting to know a daughter who was born during his trial.

As for me, I focus on my second book *Surviving Life* after Dr. Roz has me recap my first book about my death row experiences. The producers of the show graciously allowed my girls to post the transcript of that interview on my website.

Transcript of the Interview with Dr. Roz

Dr. Roz: Tell our viewers about your experience on death row.

Lucy Davis: It was like being in a bad, unfulfilling, and abusive relationship for twenty-two years with the threat of death hanging over me like the sword of Damocles. The experience forced me to understand that I can’t wave a wand and magically make all my troubles go away. There’s no alternate reality to reality, although sometimes it takes a lifetime to understand what’s true about the self and the world. This is what I suffered through while existing on death row. I spent twenty-two years admitting to myself that I’d become delusional because of what plagued my mind. The trauma of my childhood never disappeared even though I believed I had outgrown it. Trauma permanently embeds itself in the memory unless you become a braindead vegetable. And once I accepted this and the reality of the crimes I committed, I could move on, at least psychologically, even toward my own death.

Dr. Roz: Were there prison psychiatrists available to you? Did they give you medications to help you cope with your mental issues?

Lucy Davis: Yes. During my first year or two on the Row, they pumped me with drugs they claimed would ease my anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, and psychotic episodes. I was

on four mental health drugs at a time. My awakening started when I begin asking myself *Why am I taking all these dangerous drugs? What are they supposed to be doing anyway? Making me think correctly? And if so, for whom?* I was alone and isolated from everyone else, you see, and the drugs only stifled my mind and prevented me from achieving any kind of self-realization. Mental understanding should be the goal of anyone who wants to live a wholesome life. Even those of us living on death row. Don't you agree, Dr. Roz.

Dr. Roz: So well put. Please go on.

Lucy Davis: After I quit taking the meds, I refused to see any mental health specialist. Nurse, doctor, or otherwise. No one was helping me. None of them cared about me personally. They were just doing their jobs. I realized that I was the only one who could help me. Except for my aunt who was always supportive of me. She ended up hiring a private psychiatrist from Phoenix to properly evaluate me. I call him Dr. Gandhi although that wasn't his real name. He was rather like you, Dr. Roz. He asked me very appropriate questions.

Dr. Roz: Do you remember any of those questions?

Lucy Davis: Yes, first he asked me *What's the best thing that's ever happened to you?* And I said *That the gods gave me life.* He asked me to give him three words to describe myself and I said *Hopeful, Enterprising, and Kind*. He also asked how I was coping on Death Row and I said *To survive, I must be calm at all times*. Dr. Roz, while I suffered twenty-two years on the Row, I learned to manage a terribly agitated mind by disciplining my reactions and impulses, my dreaming of possibilities, my racing to conclusions. I stopped becoming overwhelmingly upset over matters that were out of my control. Really, I had no choice. I was in total lockdown. These are the things I discuss in my books.

Dr. Roz: *To survive I must be calm*. That's very good advice.

Lucy Davis: Abuse and neglect stress the mind. The brain. The entire body and all its delicate systems. You can't battle the ignorance of other people and if you try, it takes a deadly toll on the mind, body, and spirit. You can only conquer your own delusions which is just another word for ignorance.

Dr. Roz: You're right, Ms. Davis. Stress is as bad as smoking, taking drugs, and eating an unhealthful diet. Did you have a moment of catharsis during your twenty-two years on death row?

Lucy Davis: Yes, in fact I did and it occurred during my hour-long session with Dr. Gandhi when he asked me *Do you believe something is wrong with you?* I had paused for a moment and said *No. I believe I'm gifted and very intelligent*. The doctor smiled and quietly nodded in agreement. It was a pivotal moment for me because I grew up believing I was worthless and stupid. Good for nothing, as my father would tease. My brother had constantly called me degrading names and my parents offered no kind of support or encouragement. I was a trapped little girl with no way out of that trap.

Dr. Roz: Like so many unfortunate children who don't have the proper guidance or attention, whose caregivers or other people in their environments degrade and abuse them physically and mentally. Ms. Davis, can you now tell our viewers the premise of your second book *Surviving Life*?

Lucy Davis: Sure. It goes into more detail about facing my own mental health issues. I talk about how life is a progression of learning to survive in the environments thrust upon us from the day we become conscious of the self and the world to the day we are braindead, one way or another. Personally, I divide my life into phases, rather like those of the Moon. The first was a troubled childhood, the second entails my life after high school until I met my first

boyfriend. This period was a kind of hopeful phase. I planned to become a pediatric nurse and make something out of my life. Then I count my time with this boyfriend and the time after he left me as a phase when my mind became clouded with misconceptions and I made impulsive choices that led to my arrest, trial, and conviction. I lump together my years of incarceration as a phase of coming to terms with myself. Recognizing who I truly am. What I'm truly all about. Ironically, death row is when I learned to become free, that is, free of all the notions the world imposed upon me. And the last phase is my life now, after prison, when I'm trying to give back to the world in a healthy and helpful way. I guess my life has five phases, wouldn't you agree, Dr. Roz?

Dr. Roz: Seems like a clear, well-organized review of a difficult life.

Lucy Davis: Twenty-five years of living alone is a long time to reflect on a lot of things. People in your environment can shape your mind with positive, healthful inputs or with negative, ignorant ones that cause misconceptions about the world, about others, and worst of all, about the self. When a person falls victim to his or her delusions and becomes messed-up, people then further categorize that person in disparaging ways. It takes a lot of self-examination for a deluded person to dig herself out from everything the world has piled onto her psyche. I'm really talking about myself, of course. People condemned me as a serial murderer and doctors labeled me as mentally ill, and other disparaging terms that only made me fall deeper into the rabbit hole of misconceptions about myself. I believed what they told me I was and couldn't see myself in a more positive way. Just like during my difficult childhood when my abusive brother called me stupid. I believed what he said about me. After my session with Dr. Gandhi, when I discovered that my mind was not impaired, I rejected the labels and refused to see myself in a negative way even given my dire situation and despite the terrible crimes I had committed in the past. People

calling me mentally ill or bipolar or schitzo is about as negative as you can get. Might as well call me stupid! I firmly believe we can improve our minds and overcome delusions, even as we grow older. Can you understand all this, Dr. Roz? I know it's a lot to explain which is why I wrote the second book.

Dr. Roz: People still call you a bipolar serial killer. I've seen such comments on your social media sites.

Lucy Davis: I know. It's a stigma I can't get away from. Once condemned, always condemned, at least by a lot of people.

Dr. Roz: How do you cope with such hatred?

Lucy Davis: First of all, my nieces erase everything on my social sites that isn't constructive and so I don't always see the hateful posts. But some posts get through to me. It seems that certain people are reluctant to give a condemned person a second chance. They can't see beyond the labels and are stuck in social traditions and habits. They hate my governor for giving me an unexpected pardon. To them, she went too far. And they want to put me back in my place without any mercy. But I focus on the positive things about myself no matter what people are saying.

Dr. Roz: On the other hand, meds do work for some people, when it comes to mental health issues.

Lucy Davis: Maybe for incurable psychopaths. Not for me and probably not for a lot of people forced to accept a label for the way they've adapted to the circumstances of a difficult life. But people aren't identical. Individuals have individual minds, hearts, and bodies. Mental health meds probably don't work for a lot of women on death row, for example. And mental health theories are opinions, not scientific empirical facts. They are subjective, in other words.

Dr. Roz: It sounds like, in your opinion, psychology is just a trend?

Lucy Davis: Of course, this is my opinion, but I see psychology as a clever set of premises that society and its professionals impose on people with frail inner cores. Psychologists categorize people according to how they think. Why is this an illness? Dr. Roz, I hate to be so blunt but I believe that psychiatrists use meds and labels to support big pharmaceuticals who support the medical profession.

Dr. Roz: I've read your trial transcripts and the publicity surrounding your case. Your defense spent a good deal of time bringing up your childhood trauma. Do you blame your neglectful parents and abusive brother for the crimes you committed?

Lucy Davis: What I believe is that my early childhood traumas created a frailty in my inner core that I didn't recognize until Arizona forced me to spend twenty-five years in contemplation. Children don't articulate the trauma they endure. Either it's embarrassing or seen as normal or possibly as the child's own fault. To survive, a child conceals the trauma deep inside. But as I said before, it's embedded in the memory, possibly hidden, and not overcome until the person understands she was not the culprit when a child. Her environment was. Let me explain it this way. I suffered much trauma as a child and my mind developed survival strategies. My parents probably seemed normal to the outside world, but they took misappropriate actions to correct me. They often punished me for tattling on my wicked brother which only served to confuse me and reinforce negative feelings of guilt about myself, as if I caused all the harm that came my way. I kept this childhood trauma deep inside me and bravely went as far as I could as a young adult until I became obsessed with my first and only boyfriend. I thought he was a standup guy but he turned out to be as abusive as my brother and the trauma of my childhood resurfaced. They call it PTSD. This boyfriend twisted my mind with psychological

manipulations and tricks. I became very delusional when living with him and when he left me, I felt a deep hollowness inside and sought a method to take control of my out-of-control life. I couldn't manage the enormous stress I was feeling and my frail inner core took hold. I'm speaking of the core that I developed when a little girl. I believe my tormented psyche played out a way to find relief. I really have no other explanation and I'm not offering an excuse. But my aunt believed in me through the years and she helped me to believe that I wasn't a horrible person even though the jury and judge condemned me. Even though I condemned myself. I learned to see myself as a person with many different parts and not just a victim of my past.

Dr. Roz: What is your life like now?

Lucy Davis: My life is simple. I happily live day to day with my five cats and two beautiful nieces Jewel Anne and her wife Beverly. They're in your studio audience.

(applause)

Dr. Roz: But you committed a series of murders and people who commit mass murders aren't usually set free. Your pardon was quite a feat.

Lucy Davis: It took me a lifetime to understand myself. Now I'm faced with the problem of my age. I'm off all medications, I respect myself and my memory is good enough to put together two books and give interviews such as this. My life is a double-edged sword, however. Sometimes I wish for a normal life with kids, a job, a solid husband, friends. Maybe we're supposed to learn from the difficulties thrust upon us. It's what hones the mind to survive. Hones the rational wit. We must learn to not live in a stupor. Learn to be happy, not upset. Each day I thank my higher power that I've won the journey of life despite the monumental odds stacked against me from the beginning. Despite the destruction I caused to my unfortunate victims and to myself.

Dr. Roz: What about the victims? People place so much more attention on the murderer.

Lucy Davis: Yes, Dr. Roz. I feel great remorse for what I did and I offer no excuse. That's what my foundation is all about. I want to help women like me come to terms with what they've done and why they did it. There are usually lots of reasons behind the criminal deed. Many women on death row are from abusive childhoods and then they hook up with controlling and depraved men who lead them astray. Some of these women fell into the wrong crowd and had no money for a good defense. The world tends to forget about the women on death row. They linger without hope and self-forgiveness. I believe many of them are a lot more than just killers. Take for example Lisa Montgomery who is the only woman on Federal death row at the Federal Medical Centre in Fort Worth, Texas. She was a severely traumatized little girl and suffered with mental difficulties that most likely drove her to strangle a woman who was eight months pregnant, then cut the baby from the victim's womb. The baby survived the attack. The mother didn't. **It's a terrible crime, no doubt, but we have to ask ourselves what drove Montgomery to commit such an act. Was it because she's purely evil, as a lot of people like to think, or does it have to do with her tormented inner core?**

Dr. Roz: When you meet with these women, what do you tell them?

Lucy Davis: So far, I've only written letters to death row inmates and haven't yet met with any of them. But in my letters, I like to tell them to believe in themselves, that there is not something wrong with them although they may have committed very wrong acts. I tell them to reject degrading labels that cause them to tumble into the rabbit hole of degrading themselves. I tell them to say to themselves *There has never been anything wrong with me. I made a drastic mistake that I regret and yes, I feel remorse. But I matter. I'm not what some dirtbag guy tells me*

I am. And it doesn't matter if the State kills me as long as I value myself. I have a lot of empathy for these women on death row.

(applause)

Dr. Roz: Well, my best wishes to you and your nieces in all your charitable efforts to reach other women in the worst situations possible. This concludes my interview with Ms. Lucy Davis, ex-death row inmate and author of *Memoirs of Death Row* and *Surviving Life*. A link to her foundation and books is available on her website.

As soon as we finish my interview with Dr. Roz, we leave New York and drive the southern route home to make stops at bookstores in Washington DC, Charlotte, Atlanta, Dallas, and El Paso. Before we get too far, we stop at a PetSmart and buy harnesses and leashes so that we can start walking my cats at the rest stops. I feel bad about keeping them cooped up for weeks in the RV. Usually, I walk Baldy who is white, Wilson who is calico, and Graham who is an orange tiger stripped. Jewel walks Beartooth who is a black tuxedo cat like my first cat Sylvester and Bev always walks Grizzly my one grey Persian cat.

My cats quickly catch on to us walking them and seem to enjoy the outside air. Yes, I have lots of work cleaning the litter boxes and I use scented litter and air fresheners. I love my cats and am now officially more of an old cat lady than an ex-con from death row. At least that's how my social media followers are beginning to perceive me because of the many posts of me and my cats.

Chapter 5: A Visit to the Oregon Coast

January 2019

You say she's very nice.
(But have you seen her twice?)

She's a desultory witch!
(When she makes her switch).

But you are right–
Of time, at most, she wears a smile,
(From which behind her charms compile).

***

I met a woman unaware
of a spider in her hair.
It dangled down an inch above
a speckled brooch she wore for love.

I greeted her with due effort,
and caught her smiling in retort.
Then not there being one word said,
her hair became the spider's web.

Shortly following our mega road trip to New York and back, the girls and I decide to go on another book signing trip to the Pacific Northwest, specifically to Vegas, Reno, Portland, Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, and Bremerton where we plan to stay with Jewel Anne's adoptive parents, Richard and Nancy Cox. And then, on the way back to Phoenix, I've arranged for my first in-person visitation with a woman on death row. Angela McAnulty is the only woman sentenced to death in Oregon since voters reinstated capital punishment in 1984.

On this trip, we decide to drive in my Cadillac and not take the RV because while I visit the women's prison outside of Portland, the girls plan to fly to Pittsburg to see Bev's grandmother who fell and is now in a wheelchair. And I certainly don't want them leaving me stranded with the RV bus.

Before leaving Mesa, I reluctantly place my cats in the best pet hotel in Phoenix. I know I'll miss them and will probably call about them every other day to make sure they're all right.

In Portland, we stay at the Holiday Inn and go to a book signing at Powell's new and used bookstore in the downtown area. The store is so large that we need a map and diagram to get around. I buy a book on basket weaving techniques of the Tlingit NW coastal Native Americans. I picture myself making each cat a basket bed as I sit on my recliner before the TV. I feel in need of a hobby because while in prison, I really did nothing but read and write to pen pals. It seems a waste of nearly twenty-five years of my life. But no matter, every day is a new beginning especially when awarded a second chance to try and make everything right.

Podcast Episode One:

Women on Death Row, an Introduction

Lucy Davis here, ex-death row con and survivor of life. Today I'm making my first podcast about women on death row. While we're staying in Portland, Oregon, my nieces Jewel Anne and Beverly Lee have helped me set up this broadcast with a USB mic and software. It's yet another avenue of technology completely new to me but very appropriate to what I'm trying to accomplish. And that's to bring awareness to the realities of death row and mental health. Much of the proceeds from my books and all the money we receive for the Lucinda Bowers Foundation goes into helping women on death row with their legal appeals. So many of these women have landed on the Row because of court appointed attorneys who were inept and ineffective. Outright law school losers. Some are negligent and don't belong in the legal profession. The ABA needs to disbar them. It's not to say that these death row inmates are innocent little lambs, but it's questionable whether they deserve society to slaughter them like lambs at the altar.

Let me begin by giving my listeners some background on the death penalty in America. In Furman vs. Georgia, 1972, SCOTUS held that capital punishment was unconstitutional and

struck down death penalty laws nationwide. Four years later the Supreme Court reversed its ruling in Gregg vs. Georgia and upheld that a death sentence was constitutional. In 1979, John Spenkelink became the first inmate executed after this ruling under Florida's new statutes. The states have executed more inmates during the current presidency than under any other president since Grover Cleveland.

Throughout the US, thousands of men are on death row while only fifty-one women are currently serving a death sentence. California has the highest number of condemned women with about twenty. Texas has six, Alabama has five, Arizona and Florida have three each, North Carolina has two, and Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Oregon, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Georgia each have one woman on death row.

The types of crimes these women have committed vary. Some are serial killers, no doubt, others are husband killers or murderers of their own children. Some killed while robbing for drug money or they hired hitmen for financial gain. One woman killed her son's ex-girlfriend, another killed a cop, and one robbed and killed an elderly woman. In one case, a boyfriend and girlfriend stole their victims' car and then shot them pointblank. A few of the women killed by using poison, a method women murderers use more often than men, and one woman set her victim's body on fire.

What motivates these women to commit such terrible acts? Are they trapped in bad relationships? Do they come from childhoods filled with abuse, trauma, and neglect? Or are they simply psychopaths? Through my own research, it seems that most women on death row did have terrible childhoods which caused them PTSD symptoms that cluttered their minds with misconceptions about themselves and the world. They aren't all purely evil people with depraved motivations like Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, or Charles Manson. They are products of

horrible backgrounds. Family and society failed them. Some were little girls when their own mothers pimped them out. Often ruthless men beat, raped, and tortured them. Years of such abuse weakened their mental capacity and inner cores. “Everything got out of hand, I got carried away,” one woman admitted during her trial. “I didn’t think about what I was doing until long after the fact.”

Since SCOTUS lifted the moratorium on capital punishment, states have executed sixteen women. The first occurred in 1984 when North Carolina executed Velma Barfield by lethal injection. Her appeals contested that she suffered from childhood abuse and that after she had a hysterectomy, she became unhinged. A psychiatrist claimed she suffered from multiple personalities, a condition that psychiatrists now called dissociative disorder, but her appeals failed and she eventually stopped her fight for any reprieve. People considered Velma a serial killer who poisoned her several husbands and elderly victims under her care. While on death row, she became a devout Christian and ministered to other inmates. She even had the support of Billy Graham. Before she met her Maker, Velma made an apology to the families she caused pain because of her crime.

Folks, I’m not one to believe in psychological labels and disorders, such as multiple personalities. I talk about this in my second book. I simply resist making unscientific conclusions about a person’s mental state. Psychological terms are labels, not scientific facts like gold is gold and silver is silver. However, I do believe past trauma sometimes overwhelms a person’s ability to think clearly. At the same time, I’m convinced that some people are born with selfish psychopathic motives. But I also believe in redemption, if a person really wants it, and forgiveness, especially self-forgiveness.

That's it for my first podcast about women on death row. I'm an ex-death row con myself and the world has given me a second chance to redress the world. This, in my opinion, is the best thing we can do with our lives. Again, this is Lucy Davis. Follow me on Facebook and Twitter #survivinglife.

A Visit with my Tracy Mahoney, Lucy's Older Sister

After spending another night at the Holiday Inn, the girls and I drive to Seattle, spend a few days at bookstores and at the Space Needle Park and waterfront piers, then we drive to Anacortes and take the ferry to the San Juan Islands. Jewel wants me to see the artist communities of San Juan and experience the beauty of the Puget Sound.

After a few days on the islands, we take the car ferry from Seattle to Bremerton where I meet Jewel Anne's parents who are both in their late seventies. They treat us like honored guests and never ask me about my crimes or death sentence but they're both curious about what we're doing with the foundation. They seem very proud of their daughter and her family. Before we leave, I give them autographed copies of my two books and they seem delighted by the gesture.

From Bremerton, we drive through the Olympic National Forest which is cold, damp, and filled with mosses and ferns that I've never seen before, not in Montana, not in Arizona, and certainly not on death row. Then we drive down the coast to Long Beach and Astoria and back to Portland where the girls catch their flight to Pittsburg. They ask if I would like them to fly back to Portland and drive down to Phoenix with me, but I assure them I can make the drive by myself. "Take as long as you need with your grandmother," I say. "Fly back to Sky Harbor. You'll hear from me if I need help on my second podcast."

My original plan was to drive from Portland south to Coffee Creek prison and meet with Angela McAnulty but while I'm staying at the Portland Holiday Inn near the Veteran's

Coliseum, I decide to phone my older sister Tracy Mahoney and arrange for a visit. I haven't seen her or heard from her since my trial thirty years ago. These days, the only thing I know about her is what Jewel or Charlie have told me. Before I left on this road trip, I had called Charlie and got Tracy's phone number and address in Milwaukie. Because of how Jewel Anne feels about her biological mother, I didn't want to tell my niece about my intentions to see Tracy. Which is why I waited until after the girls left for Pittsburg.

I pick up the phone beside my hotel bed feeling leery about how Tracy might react to me after so many years and after she declined to testifying at my hearing and then dropped out of sight. Or was it me who dropped out?

"Hi, Tracy. It's me. Your sister Lucy," I say as soon as she answers the phone. I'm sure it's her. I recognize her voice even after all these years. It hasn't changed a bit.

"Oh? Hi, Luce," she says nonchalantly. "What do you want?"

I try not to let her rather rude question rattle me but I can't help but wonder why she didn't say something like *how are you doing*? Or even, *long time no see?* I push on. By this time in my life, after nearly two years of freedom and with two well publicized books and social media sites, I'm used to my fair share of "hate mail" or "rude" emails and posts. In fact, even while on death row I received some ugly letters that I barely read before tossing them away. I needed only to see the first word or two to know the writer's point of view. It's the same kind of feeling I immediately get from Tracy's first few words.

"Well," I say. "How're you doing? I'm in town and was hoping we could touch base. You're my sister, after all. Can't we let bygones be bygones?" I really can't think of anything else to say as I feel her bias toward me seeping through the phone.

“Yes, you’re right, little sister. You caught me off guard. I knew you were in town with Jewel Anne and her friend. I saw in the Oregonian that you had a book signing at Powell’s.”

“Your daughter and her wife,” I correct.

“Yes, of course. Best of luck to you on your book tour.”

“The reason I’m calling is to arrange for a visit while I’m in town. I’d love to see where you live.”

After a rather lengthy pause, my sister says, “Listen, Lucy. I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to come around our house. My husband John isn’t sure about you because of where you’ve been the past two decades. And to be frank, I told him you have severe mental problems. John’s totally for the death penalty if you know what I mean. He’s strong in his faith and believes in an eye for an eye. . .”

“Tracy, please! I’m very near Milwaukie now and am going to Coffee Creek in a day or two. I could drop by today, if you like, or you could visit me at the Holiday Inn.”

“Coffee Creek? Where’s that?” she asks.

“The women’s prison in Oregon. I’m going to meet with the only lady on Oregon’s death row.”

“Look, little sister. I tell you what. We have a beach house in Lincoln City. If you have the time, after your little visit to death row, I could meet you there. It’s a beautiful house on the beach. I’m sure you’ll appreciate it because of your isolation for the past, how many years?”

“Twenty-four,” I say then suggest I drive to Lincoln City after my visit to Coffee Creek.

She gives me the address and tells me she must rush off to a meeting at her church. “We’ll see you next week and we’ll catch up on what’s been happening in our lives.” She hangs up before I can even say “ta ta.” It’s as if I’m contagious. At least, that’s how she makes me feel.

I'm dreading how our visit might turn out but I would still like to see my big sister after all these years and find out for myself if she's really such a prim and proper good good person and an intolerable intolerant bigoted bitch.

A few days later I leave Coffee Creek Prison and drive thirty-seven miles to Salem where I book into a suite at a Double Tree Inn just to make my second podcast.

Podcast Episode Two:

Women on Death Row, Coffee Creek, Oregon

Lucy Davis here with my second in a series of podcasts about women on death row. This podcast is about women on death row in Oregon. Jeannace June Freeman was the first woman sentenced to death in Oregon back in the 1960's. I've known about this tragic case since I was a little girl because whenever I misbehaved my father threatened to toss me off a bridge *Like that lesbian did to her kids* he would say. The famous crime happened in Oregon the year I was born.

Jeannance and her girlfriend Gertrud were a same-sex couple decades before the LGBTQ community came into its own and SCOTUS allowed for same sex marriages. The newspapers at the time of Jeannance's case described her as a scrawny woman who dressed like a boy. Back in those days, people assumed lesbian couples involved one woman taking on the role of the man. It was a typical narrowminded stereotype. Jeannance's girlfriend, Gertrud Jackson, had a small boy and girl with her African American husband, which was another oddity back in those days. In fact, I believe biracial marriages were illegal in parts of the country. It seems that Jeannance found Gertrud's children inconvenient and decided to get rid of them. The women mutilated the children hoping to fool investigators into thinking that a sex offender had abducted and raped them and tossed them off the bridge over the Crooked River Gorge. The court, however, didn't buy their story and convicted both women of first-degree murder and sentenced Jeannance to

death. After voters abolished the death penalty in 1964, Governor Mark Hatfield commuted her sentence to life in prison. She died in 2003. I don't know what happened to Gertrud.

Today I paid a visit to the Coffee Creek Prisoner Intake Center where Oregon imprisons its only female death row inmate. In 2011, the court sentenced Angela McAnulty to death for the aggravated starvation and beating of her 15-year-old daughter.

Angela is only a few years younger than me. When I met her today, she sat in a closet like cubicle behind a plexiglass window. Through a phone system, we mostly talked about her appeal which raises issues of insufficient and ineffective counsel during her trial. I told Angela that I would be making this podcast and she asked me to discuss her case. We then talked about the trauma of living on death row and trying to find self-forgiveness. We didn't talk about her crime or whether she has remorse. If she brought that up on her own, then I would have let her talk about it without my imposing any questions. I want to treat the women I meet on the Row with as much respect as I can. I doubt that's something they're used to getting. Besides, Angela killed her daughter and I really don't like talking about cases involving the death and abuse of a little girl.

Many women are on death row because they murdered their own children which is difficult to fathom even though I've never been a mother. Still, I wonder what could possibly motivate a mother to kill her child. Drugs, derangement, or severe mental impairment such as in the case of Andrea Yates who drowned her five children in the bathtub, or just plain evil intent to get rid of the children for a lover such as in the 1994 case of Susan Smith and the 1960's case of Jeannace Freeman. I don't want to make judgements when meeting with the women on death row. I want them to tell me about their appeals for a reversal of their death sentence or let them describe their feelings about their life on the Row and impending execution.

As part of my charity work, I want to help them achieve a healthier mindset, if I can and if they can. I'm always faced with the question of how to separate the person from her heinous crime. It feels like a total disconnect to be impartial about a woman who causes the death of her child. Do I separate myself from my own crimes? You may wonder. I make no excuses for myself or for anyone else, but I have separated myself from my past, from my crimes, and from my childhood traumas. Me and my mind have moved on.

This is Lucy Davis finishing her second podcast about women on death row. Please follow me on Facebook and Twitter #surviving life and consider downloading my books from my website. And remember, to survive life always be calm, leave the past behind, and let your spirit and mind live in the moment at hand.

The Beach House in Lincoln City

When I finish the podcast, I drive to Lincoln City to visit with my one and only big sister. During the hour-long drive, I keep asking myself why do I insist on visiting Tracy? Isn't this going backwards? She and I were never close like I am with my nieces. Like I was with my Aunt Lu. I don't remember ever hugging Tracy or her hugging me except that one time during my trial. And I really don't like her or what she stands for. These feelings have yo-yo'd back and forth in my head throughout my life. First, I admired Tracy as a beautiful and popular older sister who had lots of friends and boyfriends. I wanted to be like her and go out on many dates. Then, I thought of her as a jezebel, a disgrace to my family, and then I decided that was a sham. Fifteen years later, she showed up at my trial all supportive and loving only to let me down and turn against me again, or so it seemed. I think she's without depth because she was born with baby blue eyes and golden hair and she got whatever she wanted. So, unlike me.

Oh, poor me. No, I can't hop down the rabbit hole of self-pity if I want to accomplish anything through my foundation. I must remain objective and yet, not indifferent about myself and others. And that includes Tracy. Perhaps I want to visit her to give her a chance to show me she does have some depth and empathy. I don't like how she's treated my niece, her own flesh and blood daughter because of who Jewel Anne has chosen to marry. I guess I'm just hoping to learn for myself what's really going on with my sister.

In Lincoln City, I have my first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean, of any ocean for that matter. Grey cumulonimbus clouds are hovering over the far-off horizon which looks like the edge of the world. As I pull into the driveway of Tracy's light green house that overlooks the long gray beach, I'm thinking that a storm is brewing and will soon be coming ashore. A white railing surrounds the large winding porch furnished with wooden tables, chairs, and potted begonias. Dark green shutters cover the windows.

I put down my heavy suitcase and ring the doorbell. Almost instantly, Tracy appears dressed in jeans, a turquoise sweater, diamond earrings, and a gold chain with a cross pendant. She looks great for sixty but has obviously dyed her shoulder-length hair platinum blond, although it could be gray, I'm thinking.

I can't help but give her a loose hug. Lately, I've become used to hugging people because of the influence of my nieces and all the new friends I've been making during our road trips and book signings. Tracy barely reciprocates, as expected. We aren't from a warm and loving family.

"Come in sister," she says.

Dragging along my suitcase, I look around the posh living room with two recliners, a sectional sofa, and a large plasma TV. Tracy shows me her bedroom off the hallway and points out an equally posh guest bedroom across the hall which has its door wide open and the bed

made up. I assume the guestroom is meant for me and I start to enter it when Tracy touches my arm and says, “My daughter Tiffany Rose and her husband Tim are going to be here this weekend. The guestroom is for them.”

“Where am I supposed to sleep?” I ask, feeling annoyed by Tracy’s comment. She acts like I’ve committed some kind of social gaff. “I assumed the guestroom was meant for me.”

“Sorry if you misunderstood. Your sleeping downstairs, sister. Come, let me show you.”

I follow my sister down a flight of stairs to the basement, lugging my suitcase along. At the bottom of the two flights of steps are three rooms and a bathroom. The main room has a sofa and TV. Tracy leads me into a bedroom which has two bunk beds and not much else. “Have your pick, Sis,” she says, and I plop my suitcase on the one table in the room, feeling like a spare dude. “Make yourself at home. I’m making coffee upstairs. Come join me after you freshen up.”

A few minutes later, I’m sitting with Tracy at the kitchen table which has a splendid view of the Pacific where I notice that the dark cumulonimbus clouds are still hovering offshore. I’m wondering if this is normal in Lincoln City. But I don’t feel like asking Tracy and engaging in small talk. I’m still perturbed that she gave me a bunk bed downstairs instead of treating me like a welcomed guest. A bunk bed feels a bit like jail. I smile at Tracy nevertheless as she pours my coffee into a large mug that says Portland, then she sits with me, sips her coffee in the same kind of mug, and says, “I miss Jewel Anne. How’s she doing?”

“Well, you know Jewel Anne and Beverly Lee have an internet business and live in Sedona. They have a great life. And so do I because of them. Without their help, I never would’ve gotten such a terrific response for my books and my foundation.”

“Foundation?” Tracy asks.

I'm not surprised she doesn't know much about what I'm doing. My guess is that she doesn't scour my sites for news. I tell her about the Lucinda Bowers Foundation and my efforts to help ladies find mental clarity and peace even while on death row, but I can tell Tracy isn't very interested or impressed. What I'm doing is not something within her social circle of friends. We've never been in sync. Even as children growing up in a poor man's house in Butte, we were two people worlds apart just as we are now. I guess it's true that some things never change.

"What are you doing these days?" I ask. "At Lucinda's funeral, Charlie mentioned that you're a manager at Pacific NW Bell."

"Was. Now I'm devoted to John and his ministry."

"I didn't know your husband was a minister. If that doesn't beat all. What kind of church?"

"Christian, of course. I'm his administrative assistant. But I devote most of my time to my grandsons. I love Tiffany's boys and can't wait to see them this weekend. Then you'll be able to meet everyone. Except John, of course. He couldn't get away."

"I see," I say, to be polite. But I feel like she's snubbing me because, in her eyes and certainly in the eyes of this John minister husband, I'm nothing but an ex-death row con and a mentally deranged murderer. Does John even know about me, I wonder, remembering how Tracy was reluctant to tell her husband about Jewel Anne. Although uncomfortable and feeling even more annoyed, I press on and even get up and refill both of our PDX coffees mugs.

We don't have much more to say until we have dinner that evening at a local seafood restaurant, The Dungeness Crab Bowl. Because I don't like the looks of the creepy crawly crustacean, I order salmon. Tracy has a Crab Louie with steak and says grace before we begin eating which is something I never saw her do when we were growing up. Daddy always said

grace. But her words are quite pleasant and even inspiring. She praises the Lord for my visit and my freedom from lockup. Well, in a way it seems sincere.

Over dinner we talk about the scenic places of Oregon and we touch on our childhood trips to Eastern Oregon during the annual family deer hunting trips. But I don't want to reminisce about a childhood that had been difficult for me and for her too or why else had she run away from home at seventeen? We're trying to be cordial, at least I am, and the meal passes by without any painful reminiscences.

Tracy drives us back to her beach house in her new sore-thumb blue Infinity, and then we go for a walk on the beach to watch the sun setting under the ominous clouds that still haven't come ashore. I'm guessing they never will. They're just out there on the horizon, at the edge of the world, permanently looming in the cold misty air.

During our walk seagulls are cawing overhead and terns are running along the flat gray surf and making cackling sounds that remind me of human smirking. Maybe they're laughing at me, the spare dude, I'm thinking. Then I begin wondering how far my sister intends for us to walk before we turn around and return to her beach house. She hasn't said anything like *We'll be walking to those boulders by the dunes up ahead then be heading back.* She hasn't said anything, in fact.

"Something in the air smells good," I say to break the silence between us.

"It's probably the shore pine," Tracy suggests and points at the grassy bluffs edging the beach where contorted dark green pine trees are cling to the sand.

"Wow, they look like giant bonsai trees," I say to be funny. "Not at all like our Arizona plants."

“I’m sure they don’t.” She doesn’t laugh. “These pines are quite old,” she continues. “They bend, twist, and become deformed because of the harsh coastal winds and rains.”

“How interesting,” I say as we keep walking. I talk a bit more about my charity work just to have something to say and Tracy tells me about her churchwork and her grandsons, Todd and Robbie. No “real” bonding occurs between us. I feel detached from her, like she’s indifferent about what I’m doing with my new life and only cares about her miraculous family and her big accomplishments, like she’s climbed Mt. St. Helens or something grand. But I do what I can to keep the conversation going until it feels like we’re both wrung dry from things to say to each other.

I listen to the birds, wind, ocean, and the distant voices of other peoples on the long gray beach. The sand is damp and I wonder if it’s constantly wet. The billowing clouds are still lingering over the distant edge of the world. I wish they’d blow ashore and create the conditions that deform the shore pines. I’d love to witness that. I’d love to bend and stretch and allow the clashing winds and rains to permanently misshape me into a bonsai tree.

“Why didn’t you testify at my hearing, like you said you would?” I finally ask my sister who seems lost in her own thoughts. It’s a question I’ve had on my mind since my hearing all those years ago. I never had any inclination to write my sister from prison to ask her this, but now I suddenly feel like confronting her.

She stops walking, looks at me and says, “Like I told your lawyer, I was too distraught and had obligations at work. But most of all, I had a six-month old baby, Tiffany Rose, who needed me more. I had to get back home. Didn’t your lawyer make that clear to you?”

I can tell I've agitated my sister and I say, to appease her, "Okay. You're right. Look, Tracy. I don't care whether you like me or not because of what's happened in my life. Maybe I've never met your expectations. But why don't you accept my niece Jewel Anne and her wife?"

Tracy practically gasps. I've caught her off guard and brought up a topic she doesn't want to discuss. "Of course, I feel bad about all that," she finally admits. "I don't want to go so far as to say I regret every running away from home and having an illegitimate child. But I have my own family now. My husband, daughter, son-in-law, and grandsons. What I did was sinful and I was reluctant to reveal this to John but in the end I did. Then when I learned what Jewel Anne decided to do with her life. . . Well, is not natural. It goes against the Lord's commandments. That's what John and I both believe."

"That's bullshit. Why didn't you want me to meet your husband? Go to your home in Milwaukie?"

"If you want to know the truth, little sister, I'm afraid of you because of your mental problems. And I don't want to be associated with a kook and a murderer. What am I supposed to say to my husband's congregation? Meet my little sister, the serial killer that Arizona pardoned."

"What happened to you? How'd you become so religious? I thought you ran off to get away from Daddy's strict religious views. Tracy, I've admired you, then detested you, then admired you again when you came to my trial. You flip flop. Why? Do you have your own mental health issues? Did Scottie stick his finger up your cunt?"

"Sister!" Tracy exclaims, aghast by what I've said. I hear an especially loud cackle from a seagull or maybe from one of the terns. "What's your problem?" she continues. "I think we've said enough. Let's head back to the house and cool off or warm up over a cup of coffee with a little Kalua."

"I would think that you're too evangelical to have a drink," I can't help but say, feeling angered by my sister's very presence which seems to be a constant insult to me, somehow. But I'm the one who initiated this little family reunion.

"Just a nip," Tracy says. "When I have guests. And for times like now."

We head back to the house but instead of having a nightcap with my sister, I retreat to my bunkbed, hook up to Wifi, and began reading my social sites. I'm satisfied not to find any hate mail. I've had enough disagreement for one day.

For some reason, I decide to look at Tracy's Facebook page, assuming she has one, since she's such a religious grandma. Sure enough, I quickly pull it up and think about making a post, maybe sending her a friend request just for the hell of it. Maybe I want to keep trying to make some kind of amends with her. Have some kind of a relationship with my sister.

Naturally, Tracy has covered her site with pictures of her grandsons at different events and many pictures are of the two boys holding up gifts from grandma. There're lots of photos of Tiff and Tim and Tracy's hubby and church members. But then, as I scroll down the page, I spot a picture that's from my own Facebook page. This shocks me for a variety of reasons. It's from a 1971 photo of all the Davis kids standing before an aluminum Christmas tree with blue ornaments. I had found it when cleaning out Lucinda's bedroom. Evidently, my aunt had taken it during one of her Christmas visits to Butte.

I posted the picture on my site because it's the only one I have of me as a child. Of course, I cropped Scottie from the picture, tore him up, threw him in the toilet, then flushed him away after a healthy BM. Now that I'm staring at the picture on Tracy's page, I realize she *has been* trolling my sites despite her denials of knowing about what I'm doing with my life. But what really gets to me is that she lifted this picture without making any comment on my page or

even giving me a "like." I find this rude in itself, but what I'm finding fucking unforgiveable is that she cropped me from the photo like I had done to Scottie. Beneath it she posts *Me at twelve with my brothers Charlie and Philip*. Obviously, when Tracy saw the picture of her beautiful childhood self, she lifted it to show herself off on her page. But without her creepy sister.

At first, I want to run upstairs and confront her but I kept my peace and simply get up early the next morning while Tracy is sound asleep in her room, and I take off without saying a word or leaving a note.

On the two-hour drive back to Portland, I call my nieces in Pittsburg and tell them about my unfortunate visit with Tracy and that I'm going to be at the Holiday Inn to rest for the night before the long drive back home to Mesa.

"I told you, Aunt Lu," Jewel says over the phone. "I'm ashamed to even call her a mother! Don't waste any sleep over it."

Before I hang up, I tell Jewel Anne that I won't and that I'm closing the book on my childhood family forever, except for Jewel Anne, of course, and maybe Charlie.

Chapter 6: Road Trip to Texas and Alabama

February – June, 2019

An abomination is abuse
There is no truce.
At least,
None everlasting.
Only temporary fleeting moments,
That crackle in a stew
Of trouble.

We are momentary people,
He and I
And sometimes I would rather be dead
Then live with him in constant flicker.

A few weeks after my visit to Oregon, the girls and I decided to take another road trip to Texas, Alabama, and Florida on a book signing tour with stops at the state prisons where a few of the women on death row have arranged for my visit. We set up our office in the RV and continue working on the Lucinda Bowers Foundation, my social media sites, and the girls' Arastar business websites.

When we arrive in San Antonio, we parked the RV at the Alamo KOA campsite in Salado Creek and the girls and I drive the Cadi into the city for a book signing at the Alamo Mall. Afterword, my girls have arranged for me to speak on a news and talk radio show. This gives me the opportunity to interact with my followers and address their questions and concerns about death penalty issues. I enjoy appearing as a guest on talk-radio. It's much more intimate and dynamic than posting or blogging online or giving a podcast.

The girls drop me off at WKFT radio station and then head out shopping. In a sound studio, I meet with talk radio host Chad Meyers. I remember how enthralled I used to be with talk radio before my downfall that led me to prison. I had been a big fan of the *Jeffers Hour* on Arizona KFYI and frequently phoned in to voice my concerns about a variety of topics. The night before my scheduled and debunked execution, in fact, I had snuck a phone call onto the *Jeffers Hour* by convincing the guard that I was calling my Aunt Lu. My ruse had worked and I made a big splash on Jeffer's radio show. That was nearly five years before, an eon of time away from me now.

As the host Chad Meyers adjusts his headphone and mic, I imagine he's Jeff Jeffers himself and I'm finally meeting him face to face. But my gaze is outside the studio's large glass window into the lobby. It reminds me of when I was on the gurney before the glass panel

shielding me from my witnesses, or more precisely, shielding them from the horror of me. It's an uncomfortable feeling I doubt I'll ever fully shed.

"This is Chad Meyers your host for News Talk Buzz on WKFT FM radio San Antonio. Today we're speaking with Ms. Lucy Davis, author of two books about her time on death row in Arizona's Perryville Women's Prison and about her surviving life after her release from prison. On January 19, 2017, Ms. Davis received a commutation from the Arizona governor. You're a lucky woman, Ms. Davis," he looks directly at me as I sit calmly in a swivel chair, a large microphone sits on the long desk beside me. "Tell us about your books and the foundation you started in an effort to help other women currently serving death sentences."

I give a brief recap of my books, talk about the foundation and my upcoming visits with death penalty inmates at Gatesville Correctional Facility, not far from Waco Texas. When I'm finished, Mr. Meyers leans back in his swivel chair, takes a drink of bottled water, then says into his mic, "Okay folks. Let's take our first caller, Ms. Consuela Sanchez. What would you like to ask Ms. Davis?"

"I'm from San Antonio, Ms. Davis," the voice of a young woman with a slight Mexican accent comes through my headphones. "I've posted on your Facebook page about my bad relationship. My boyfriend controls me and I can't post my real name. I go by Consuela Sanchez. Can you help me get away from him?"

"I do remember your posts, Consuela, and they did concern me," I say into the mic. "But there was nothing I can do except post the numbers to battered women's shelters in your area and hope someone else can help you. A professional who knows what to do for women trapped in abusive situations. Are you in a safe place now?" I ask. "You must be away from your abuser if you're able to call me on the radio."

“Yes, Senora,” the woman says. “I’m in a crowded area and using a stranger’s smartphone and listing to a portable radio. Ms. Davis. My boyfriend wants me to commit crimes for him. I’m a prisoner in my own home. He tricked me into thinking he loved me, that I love him, but I’m afraid he’ll kill me or I’ll kill for him or kill him.”

“Listen, Consuela, call 911 and get away from him. The police will take you to a safe place. Don’t worry about your things. Your life’s more important,” I say as the host quickly googles his laptop for women’s groups that can help the caller. “Where are you now, or can you say?”

“At the Alamo,” the woman says.

“The Alamo?” I ask remembering that we passed the landmark on the way to the Alamo Mall.

“Yes, right on the plaza. In a crowd of tourists.”

“Stay where you are and I’ll send for help. How can we identify you?”

“I’m a small woman with short curly brown hair. I’m wearing a gray Micky Mouse T-shirt. Who’s coming for me?”

“Just stay where you are,” I say as I call Jewel Anne on my smartphone. As it turns out, they are just arriving outside the radio station. I ask them to go look for this distressed woman at the Alamo and help her find a safe place to go.

“Look, Consuela, I’m sending two women for you right now. Hang tight. They should be there in less than twenty minutes. One’s African American and the other has golden hair and blue eyes. They’re both wearing yellow t-shirts that says #survivinglife. Do you have this radio with you to help them identify you in the crowd?”

“I’m waiting by the Davy Crockett monument.” The woman hangs up and I continue with my interview but now I’m anxious to finish up so I can find out what’s happening with this Consuela Sanchez.

In a little over an hour, Jewel returns to the radio station to pick me up. She explains that she’s left Consuela at the RV with Beverly. “We were too rushed to find a good women’s shelter and didn’t want to leave her alone in the RV,” Jewel explains.

“I’m glad,” I tell her as we stop at a KFC for a meal to share with our guest before we take her to a shelter. “You can’t trust strangers, even a woman in distress. I learned that lesson early on in life, certainly with Scottie and Brian ‘Pothead’. Some people take advantage of those with good intentions.”

At the Alamo KOA campsite, I meet Consuela and discover she’s seven months pregnant. Something she hadn’t mentioned when describing herself over the phone. I’m glad she’s fluent in English because the girls and I don’t speak Spanish. She claims this boyfriend of hers taught her English but I find that hard to believe. She’s too articulate to have only recently picked up a second language. I don’t question her because she seems too distressed about her situation for me to grill her further on trivial matters. I’m somewhat sensitive to other people’s feelings maybe because my own had been so severely dashed when I was growing up and while I endured my relationship with my boyfriend. For twenty-two years I often lay on my prison cot thinking that Brian was ultimately the cause of my impending death.

After our meal, Consuela and I sit together at the kitchen table drinking hot chocolate while Bev and Jewel are at their recliners researching online for appropriate places that could help Consuela with her situation. The young, distressed, and very pregnant woman tells me about

her impoverished and difficult childhood in Juarez and how she crossed the border at age 15 and found work as a housekeeper for an older man.

"I became his girlfriend," she says. "I thought Wayne was a good man who would take care of me but he isn't. He's mean to me, he hits me, and he won't let me leave the house except to buy him cigarettes and food. When I heard your podcast, I knew you could help me. So, I tell Wayne I go to the store for beer but instead I go to the Alamo and call you."

"It's good that you reached out to me," I tell the young woman as I notice the bruises on her arms. I assume they're from this Wayne man grabbing her. "Please don't worry anymore, about anything. It's not healthy for the baby. We're going to take you to a safe place where you can find the appropriate help. Did Wayne kick you in the stomach? Do you think he's hurt the baby?"

"No. Senora Davis. The baby is good. But I'm not in this country legally and I'm afraid someone will report me to ICE. I don't have a green card and my boyfriend wouldn't marry me. And now, as you can see, I am going to have a baby."

"I'm sure we can find you a safe place to stay and then you can return to your family in Mexico." I sip my hot chocolate in my *I Heart Cats* mug and look over at Jewel and Bev hoping they've found the right shelter for Consuela. I feel for her plight but at the same time, I want her to be elsewhere. I'm just not the right person and our RV is not a battered woman's shelter.

"No. Senora. You don't understand. I cannot go back to Juarez. Too much trouble there. My brothers work for the Cartel and I fear for my life. That's the truth. That's why I had to get away. So please, Senora Lucy, can you take me to Miami? I have cousins there who can help me. I read on your site that you're traveling to Florida to visit the prisons."

I'm very hesitant to agree to the young woman's request. She's an illegal immigrant and pregnant, after all. "First, Consuela," I suddenly decide. "We need to take you to a hospital. A doctor needs to check you out. I'm worried about your health and that of the baby."

"Really. I'm good. Wayne didn't touch my baby but many times he's threatened to kill me with a gun. I can't go to a hospital because they'll send me back to Juarez. Don't you see? I must go to Miami. I have no other option. I know you're a good person and can take me along on your trip. I won't be any trouble and I won't slow you down along the way. I know you have many stops to make."

I suggest she watch TV while I discuss the matter with my girls in the privacy of my bedroom where my five cats are lounging on the king bed. They sleep a lot because there's not much else for them to do except when we take them for walks, and they don't really like strangers. Or maybe I don't want them to be around anyone but me and the girls.

After weighing the pros and cons, the girls and I end up agreeing to take Consuela to Miami because we do plan to go there for a few book signings after my visitation with death row inmates at the Lowell Correctional facility north of Ocala. We reason that one of us can always be with Consuela in the RV and that she can come along with us on shopping and sightseeing trips and to the bookstores and on our walks with the cats. We doubt this abusive older boyfriend, this Wayne, has an all-points bulletin out on her.

Podcast Episode Three:

Women on Death Row, Mountain View Unit in Gatesville, Texas

Greetings, Lucy Davis here. My nieces and I are now on a road trip traveling in our RV from Arizona to Florida with book signing stops in Tucson, Las Cruses, El Paso, San Antonio, Austin, and Waco, Texas. I plan to visited two women on death row at the Mountain View Unit

in Gatesville, Texas. The facility incarcerates about 4000 women; the state has condemned six of them to death.

On this third podcast I want to discuss the extraordinary life stories that led some women to the ultimate punishment. Not all of them come from neglectful and traumatic childhoods. Depraved men didn't lead all of them astray. Some had average and even good childhoods. What led them down the wrong path? Was it a moment of passion that caused an ill-fated, split-second decision that would ultimately take their lives?

Texas became the first state to implement lethal injection to carry out executions. In 1998, Texas used this method on Karla Faye Tucker, the second woman executed after the reinstatement of the death penalty during bicentennial year. Fourteen years had passed since North Carolina executed Velma Barfield, the first woman put to death after the SCOTUS decision.

People in Houston knew Karla Faye Tucker as the "Pickaxe Murderer". At age 23, she brutally plunged a pickaxe into her victim's chest and left the scene. Like many of the women on death row, including myself, Karla came from a traumatized childhood. By age twelve, she was using drugs and her mother was pimping her out. During her fifteen years on the Row, Karla changed her life and became a devout Christian rather like Velma Barfield had done. Much of the world, including Pope John Paul II, supported Karla Faye's appeal for clemency. However, George W. Bush who was governor of Texas at the time denied her any leniency.

Another famous case in Houston involves Andrea Yates, the woman who drowned her five children in the bathtub the year of the 9/11 tragedy. The court convicted Andrea of capital murder but then the appellate court overturned her sentence and found Andrea not guilty due to

insanity. Psychiatrists claimed she suffered from postpartum depression and psychosis as well as schizophrenia. They placed her in a Texas State Hospital where she now resides.

This begs the question *Why didn't Susan Smith get a death sentence?* She drowned her two toddlers by driving her car into a lake with the boys strapped into the back seat. What she did to her sons is as reprehensible and heinous as any crime deserving a death sentence. But the court sentenced Susan Smith to life in prison after her attorney claimed that she suffered from severe depression. Their defense theory was that Smith drove into the lake intending to kill herself and her two sons but she got out of the car at the last minute. The prosecution claimed she wanted to get rid of the children so she could start a new life with her lover. They argued for a death sentence but the jury ultimately voted against it. It seems unfair that some women get off for mental issues while others don't. There's no consistency in delving out a death sentence. And it's often given to those who can't afford a top defense team.

However, if this is case then I ask you *What about Scott Peterson?* He had Mark Geragos as his attorney and he still got a death sentence. And Geragos is a hotshot LA attorney whose clients included Michael Jackson, Chris Brown, President Clinton's brother, and Winona Ryder. And then there's OJ who had the dream team and it seems he got away with savage murders. The point being, the justice system is a hodgepodge in the way it delves out death sentences.

As of 2019, there are ten condemned women residing at the Mountain View Unit at Gatesville, better known as Prison City. I visited two inmates but am keeping their identities secret to respect their privacy according to their requests. Each visit lasted only one hour. As I spoke to them, I sat behind a long plexiglass panel and rested my arms on a green Formica counter. It's a change for me. Just a few years ago I was on the other side of the glass panel.

"How are you doing," was my first question to each of these women.

"It's hell in here," one woman answered. "Officers hate us for being different."

One of the death row inmates in Prison City Texas is Linda Carty, a British subject. The people of Britain are protesting her sentence because the UK abolished the death penalty in the 1960's. The last British woman the US executed was Ruth Ellis over fifty years ago. A jury found Carty guilty of masterminding the kidnapping and murder of a woman found suffocated in the trunk of Carty's car. The prosecution argued that Carty enlisted three men to snatch the murdered woman's newborn baby so that she could keep her boyfriend from leaving her. Carty had been faking a pregnancy and planned to claim that the stolen baby was hers. In her appeals, Carty states that she had a terrible defense attorney who is notoriously known as the "Undertaker" because he's lost 20 of his cases to death sentences. The only time he met with Carty was fifteen minutes before her trial. The three men who committed the actual murder testified against Carty in exchange for life sentences.

A Texas jury sentenced Darlie Routier to death for stabbing her five- and six-year-old sons. People call Routier the "Silly String Mom" because of a video-tape that shows her joyfully spraying silly string over her sons' gravesites shortly after their murders. The video rubbed the jurors the wrong way. In her defense, Routier argued that the jurors took the Silly String clip out of context, that it was a small snippet of the entire memorial service and that she was celebrating the birthday of one of her sons. On an appeal, Routier turned down a chance to get a life sentence because she wouldn't admit to her guilt.

My question about Routier is this--*What was this woman's motive?* She was a seemingly happy, middle-class mother and wife in a good home in a good neighborhood. She had two beautiful sons and a new baby. Why would she be so perfectly normal then suddenly snap and commit an atrocious crime and then snap back to normal again? People also call Routier the

Susan Smith of Texas. She has remarked that Karla Faye Tucker gave her a hug when she arrived on death row a few years before Karla met her fate.

Well friends, this is about all I have to say concerning the women at Gatesville prison. This is Lucy Davis signing off from my third podcast. Please follow me on Facebook and Twitter #survivinglife and consider donating to the Lucinda Bowers Foundation. Your donations help women on death row find legal resources and perhaps some peace of mind during the remaining days of their lives. We, as a society, are quick to harshly judge and condemn. Our foundation believes that life is sacred and redeemable. These women may have committed horrible acts, but they deserve a chance to realize a better mindset than what the world's made them out to be? Have we no compassion for those who are about to die? As an ex-con from death row, everyone asks me if I have remorse or make excuses for myself? Yes. I have remorse. No. I do not excuse myself. No one should unless they are braindead.

Alabama

From Prison City, the girls, my cats and I, and our new friend Consuela Sanchez, drive to bookstore signings in Dallas, Shreveport, Jackson, and Birmingham. Whenever Consuela stays in the RV, claiming she's exhausted because of her pregnancy, Bev or Jewel stay with her for two reasons. One, she's a distressed pregnant woman, and two, I don't fully trust her although she's been very friendly and talkative and interested in my books and our charitable work. I keep trying to take her to a doctor but she's too hesitant because of her illegal status. She insists that her cousins in Miami will see that she has medical attention for the remainder of her pregnancy. What can I say? What can I do? Except go along with what she wants. She seems perfectly healthy and fit. We make sure she takes vitamins and eats well, although she really wants

nothing but tocos, cheese burritos, and green ensaladas. We usually eat out or bring takeout food back to the RV. None of us likes to cook and I don't think any of us can.

In Montgomery, Alabama we parked the RV at a KOA campsite, then Jewel drives me to the Hank Williams' Museum which I've been wanting to see. During the last year we had together, after my pardon from prison and before my beloved aunt passed away, Aunt Lu and I often listened to her old Hank Williams albums including *I Saw the Light, Honky Tonkin', Ramblin' Man,* and *Just Me and My Guitar.*

From Montgomery, Jewel drives me north to the Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka. The prison is known as the "Angel of Alabama Prisons" because it houses Alabama's female death row inmates in its maximum-security facility.

Podcast Episode Four:

Women on Death Row, Tutwiler, Alabama

Lucy Davis here in Alabama where five women and 183 men are currently on death row. The State houses its death row women at Tutwiler while they house the men at the Donaldson Prison or the Holman Prison where the executions of all Alabama inmates take place. Per capita, Alabama condemns more people than any other state, including California and Texas.

Since 1927, Alabama has executed four women among the scores of men. 1930, the same year Arizona hung Eva Dugan, a black woman named Silena Gilmore became the first woman to die in Alabama's electric chair, although Alabama probably hung plenty of black women prior to this time but left no records. Gilmore's execution went horribly wrong when her body began to sizzle and smoke and she didn't die right away. During her trial, Silena claimed intoxication caused her to shoot a waiter who had asked her to leave his establishment. Her final words were, "Crime does not pay." In 1953, Earle Dennison became the first white woman to die in

Alabama's electric chair after the court convicted her of poisoning her two nieces for insurance money.

In 1957, Alabama executed the serial killer Rhonda Bell Martin who had confessed to poisoning her mother, two husbands, and three of her children. According to her defense, Martin suffered from a form of Munchausen Syndrome, a mental affliction that causes people to fake an illness to gain sympathy. They claimed that Martin suffered from Munchausen Syndrome by proxy because she had inflicted illnesses onto her victims to gain sympathy as their caregiver. In my opinion, as with most mental disorders, this is merely a theory. A conjecture. Who knows what really motivates such callous serial murders? Only the murderer herself truly knows her mind, heart, and motive.

In 2002, after forty-five years of not executing any woman, Alabama electrocuted Lynda Lyon Block on what the inmates call “Yellow Mama.” The court convicted Block of killing Opelika police officer Roger Motley. What’s unusual about Block is that she was a well-educated white woman with no background of neglect and abuse or any other form of mitigating circumstances. She and her husband were evangelical Christians who were anti-government and didn’t believe in having a driver’s license or paying taxes but fervently believed in their second amendment rights. On the day of the crime, Lynda and her husband were driving around with a carload of firearms. At a Wal-Mart parking lot, Lynda was using a pay phone when officer Motley approached her husband sitting in their parked car. When Motley asked to see a driver’s license, the husband pulled out a gun and a shootout ensued. Lynda shot and killed the officer. She maintained that she never meant to hurt anybody and that she was only defending her husband. But the jury deliberated her fate in less than an hour. After Block's execution, Alabama

switched to lethal injection when carrying out death sentences. Alabama has not executed a woman since Lynda Lyon Block.

The Alabama women currently facing execution are all convicted of killing children which seems to be a common crime for women sentenced to death. The jury convicted Patricia Blackmon of killing her two-year-old adopted daughter Dominiqua Bryant whom authorities found with a fractured skull and a shoe imprint on her chest that indicated Blackmon had stomped on her. Jurors convicted Tierra Gobble in 2004 of killing her four-month-old son Phoenix Jordan "Cody" Parrish. The child died from head trauma and had five broken ribs, broken wrists, and numerous bruises. In 2008, the jury convicted Christie Michelle Scott of setting her house on fire to kill her six-year-old son Mason Scott. Her motive was to collect life insurance money. An Alabama jury convicted Heather Leavell-Keaton of torturing and poisoning her two step-children then throwing their bodies into the woods. No one found the children or reported them missing for six months.

As of 2019, more than two years have passed since Alabama executed any death row inmate, male or female, and it isn't clear when they will re-start executions or who will go first.

This ends my fourth podcast about Alabama women on death row. Please find me on Facebook and Twitter #survivinglife. I'm Lucy Davis, ex- death row inmate living with a second chance and trying to make a better difference in the world.

Chapter 7: Gay Pride Memorial Day Weekend, Pensacola, Florida

2019

Don't even bother me,
If it's just for blame.
Don't provoke me,
Don't nudge me,

DON’T DRIVE ME INSANE.
Don’t ask my opinion,
If it’s only yours,
You care to hear.
Just leave me alone
Go on! Scram,
Get out of here!

(I know I still love you,
despite all of this,
when you enter my room now,
with a soft subtle kiss).

On the way to the Florida panhandle, we stop in Mobile for dinner at Halal Cuisine of India on Airport Blvd off I-65. Consuela agrees to try Indian food after I tell her I’m getting tired of burritos and tocos. Then Beverly drives us on I-10 straight to the Pensacola. Tomorrow is Memorial Day weekend and the one-year anniversary of Jewel Anne and Beverly Lee’s marriage.

When we were discussing this road trip back in Arizona, the girls had wanted to stop in Pensacola for the annual Gay Pride Memorial Day Weekend, the largest pride weekend in the country, and I wanted to treat them to a special anniversary weekend. It was the least I could do. They’ve done so much for me.

Originally, we planned to attend the festival then head to the women’s prison and other parts of Florida for sight-seeing and more book signings. We had no idea we’d end up with a pregnant passenger anxious to reach her cousins’ house. But we aren’t going to pass up this weekend and rush Consuela off to Miami. I’ve been telling Consuela all along to bide her time and allow us to make our scheduled stops.

I had searched online for a quaint B&B in Pensacola where the girls could have a romantic anniversary combined with the gay pride festivities on Florida’s world-class beaches.

Unfortunately, people had already booked most accommodations but I was fortunate to find a cancellation at a B&B called the Yacht House because it's across the street from the Pensacola Yacht Club off Chico Bayou. I liked the pictures and description on its website and reserved a room for my girls and an RV spot for me to stay at with my cats. The owner, Bob Mendelson, sounded friendly over the phone. Obviously, he wanted a full house for the holiday weekend. He told me he had just returned from sailing to Cuba and back alone and that he's a good standing member of the Pensacola Yacht Club.

We arrive at the B&B in the late afternoon and park the RV at a site near the three back cabins of the B&B property which takes up nearly a city block. While Consuela and I stay in the Tiffin Alegro, Bev and Jewel Anne check into the Shanghai Suite upstairs in the main house. They're eager to relax in the hot tub and enjoy the privacy of their suite. As a surprise, I asked Bob to provide their room with a bouquet of roses, chilled Champaign, and chocolates on their king bed pillow with a copy of Emily Dickenson's poem Wild Nights. Naturally, I don't plan to see my girls until early morning when we drive the Cadi to Pensacola Beach where the city is holding the main events of the Gay Pride weekend.

Pensacola Beach

To reach Pensacola Beach from our B&B, we must cross a bridge to Santa Rosa Island off the Gulf Shore National Seashore. Hundreds of cars are heading to the same event, causing a terrible traffic jam on the bridge. I doubt any of these people are going to Ft Pickens at the other end of the island. At breakfast this morning at the kitchen counter in the main house, Bob told me about the old Civil War fort that had guarded Pensacola Bay when Florida joined the Confederacy.

Shortly after the war, Bob explained, the US kept Geronimo imprisoned at Fort Pickens for leading Chiricahua Apache raids in New Mexico and Arizona territories. I told my host that I felt a kind of connection to Geronimo and the old fort. I'm from Arizona, am now in Pensacola, and the girls and I camped in the Chiricahua mountains on the first night of our road trip.

Of course, I didn't mention to Bob and the other guests eating breakfast at the bar that the government had also held me prisoner. Bob or his other guests don't know me from Adam and I like to keep it that way. It's nice not being known for a change, not being evaluated, and not being asked stupid questions from strangers like *did you really murder someone? You don't look like a killer!* Perhaps Geronimo's ghost is leading me on this road trip. Like the old Apache, I'm an outcast challenging the establishment, the staid status quo just by being an ex-con from death row.

We make it to the beach, fight our way into a parking space then find a spot on the long white beach where 150,000 fit, young, and tan revelers in bikinis and lycra thongs are lounging under umbrellas on rainbow colored beach towels or are playing volley ball or parasailing and kayaking in the blue-green Gulf waters. Music booms over loud speakers and the salty scent of the sea is so unlike the arid Arizona desert. Pensacola Beach is the second beach I've ever been to and it's a stark contrast to the gray damp beach in front of my sister's house in Lincoln City. Instead of cumulonimbus clouds hovering over the horizon, a few cirrus clouds are sweeping across a bright blue sky. By the time we set up our umbrellas and cooler of drinks, the overhead sun is blazing on us.

The girls begin taking pictures and instantly post them to my Facebook page. Today's technology never ceases to amaze me. While Jewel and Bev meet with the other revelers, Consuela and I relax under umbrellas on lounge chairs. My pregnant traveling guest is well-

covered in a large Sunshine State t-shirt. She's drinking ice-tea. I'm wearing shorts and a tank top. I have no need to wear a swimsuit because I don't want to go swimming in the overly crowded surf and I don't want to show off my fifty-plus figure although I really have nothing to be ashamed of, as far as my weight's concerned. I'm sipping a wine cooler, eating grapes, and reading Hollywood Wives. It's an old novel I read a few times while in prison, but I found it in the living room of the B&B and am enjoying it again.

Consuela asks for a wine cooler but I tell her, "You have to take care of yourself! You're about to have a baby."

Sometimes I feel like her parent, given her helpless situation under my care, and I try to carefully watch over her. For the most part, she's been pleasant company although she no longer seems like a distressed and abused woman. She has been rather happy and eager to talk about the places we are visiting or ask me about my background which I'm reluctant to discuss openly with anyone except Bev and Jewel. And even with them, I don't go on and on about my crimes, about the time I spent in prison, and I certainly don't dwell on how remorseful I am. I just don't see any benefit to me or anyone else to disparage myself in any kind of way and venture deep into a slippery slope rabbit hole, if you know what I mean. In many ways I'm glad Consuela is upbeat and personable but I don't completely trust her or anyone else for that matter, except for my nieces and myself. It's a survival mechanism I've developed because of my life's experiences.

The big event of the weekend occurs on Sunday afternoon when the Blue Angel's demonstrate acrobatic maneuvers over Pensacola Beach in their blue McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornets. The Blue Angels are based at Pensacola National Museum of Naval Aviation which is the country's largest Navel Museum. I doubt we'll have time to see it because I'm feeling a bit

pressed with having Consuela along. As soon as the festivities end, I want to head directly to Miami to get this girl to her destination and hopefully to a doctor. I've been constantly worried about her pregnancy and her refusal to seek medical attention until she reaches her cousins in Miami.

About an hour before the scheduled fly over, the girls break away from their fun and games on the beach and we sit together drinking our wine coolers, except for Consuela. Bev and Jewel are sitting together on a beach towel wearing patriotic swimsuits with the American flag. They maintain their figures because they love to exercise at a gym, back in Sedona. During our road trips, they often go for early morning jogs when the opportunity presents itself. My only exercise is walking my cats.

"You haven't said much about this man you left, Consuela. Why?" Beverly finally asks the questions that's been on all of our minds, except Consuela's evidently. She really hasn't talked about her situation in San Antonio or why she wanted to so desperately flee since she called in on Chad Meyer's talk radio program. I find it curious and so do my girls but we've never felt like stressing out the mother to be and stirring up troubles she doesn't want to talk about. I understand. I really don't like talking about my past and explaining myself. But today, on Pensacola Beach, it feels unusually hot and we have an hour to kill before the main event.

"How did he treat you?" Jewel asks. "Something horrible must have happened for you to leave when you're so near to having his baby. You can tell us what happened. We're all friends."

I look over at Consuela, who isn't replying to Bev's question and from the frown on her face, I'm guessing she doesn't want to talk about her abusive relationship. Perhaps it's just the bright Florida sunshine that brings the appearance of a snarl. To help move the conversation along, and nudge our guest to open up because it's not good to keep trauma buried deep inside, I

start talking about my experiences with Brian "Pothead" Potthoff nearly thirty years before. Somehow, I'm okay talking about that relationship in the company of other abused women. But my sexual abuse during childhood is a different matter. I never again want to feel so exposed about what I experienced as a little girl at the hands of my brother. After the sentencing phase of my trial, I swore to myself to never bring it up.

"My boyfriend Brian was a horrible man," I say. "He tricked me from my savings and made me feel like I was always doing something wrong. He never hit me. But he walloped me with blame, shame, and angry, hateful, and degrading words, which is almost as bad as being beat up physically. I don't know. I'm just saying I understand what it's like being with an abusive man. It takes a brave woman, like yourself, to break away. Especially given your condition."

Consuela smiles at me and says, "I'll be fine once I get to Miami. And God bless you ladies for taking such good care of me and my bambino. You are true angels. It doesn't matter what you've done in your past," she adds as an obvious reference to me. But I offer no response. I just smile and nod, hoping she'll continue to unveil her own story.

"*Entonses*," she finally says, almost as a polite concession to us, her angels. "As I told you back in San Antonio, I escaped from Juarez into the US where I met my boyfriend, a man named Richard Cummings. . ."

"I thought his name was Wayne," Jewel says as she reaches into the cooler for spritzers for herself and Bev. She nods to me to see if I'd like one but I shake my head no and wink. I've had enough spritzers and want to be somewhat alert for the big air-aerobatics show.

"His name is Richard Wayne Cummings. I call him Wayne. He's an older white guy who offered me work as his housekeeper but quickly came on to me. I already told you this, anyway.

And can I please have a cool spritzer. It won't hurt the bambino, I promise." She looks imploringly at me and I take out a Strawberry spritzer for myself and toss her a water. She gets the point. I'm a rather strict host and matron.

"Sorry girl," I say. "I don't want to cause the bambino any harm and alcohol is poison to an unborn child."

"Okay," Consuela says and opens the water to drink. "But I don't really want to discuss Mr. Cummings anymore. *Por favor*."

The girls begin talking about the good time they're having and about all the positive aspects of their marriage and love. "We support each other's happiness," Jewel says.

"We understand each other's disappointments," Bev adds.

"Face it, Aunt Lu," Jewel says. "We're lucky we found each other." She looks at me and holds up her spritzer in a toast. "And we're lucky we have you! Here's to our little family. And here's to Consuela and her soon to be family." Everyone holds up her drink and laughs, perhaps from the alcohol or from the pure joy of our companionship in the beautiful beach party setting.

"You really need to find someone to love, Aunt Lu," Jewel says.

I'm a bit surprised. It's something she's never even hinted at before. I thought it was perfectly clear that I'm happy being an old maid cat lady. I assumed we all saw me the same way.

"No," I say in response. "I'm fine as I am. A boyfriend is not for me."

"It could be another woman," Bev says in jest and in all seriousness. "Doesn't have to be a man you know."

"No. That's not for me either."

Consuela finishes her bottle of water, tosses it aside, adjusts her posture to get comfortable then looks at me and asks, “You haven’t said much about your crimes, Senora Lucy. Is it true what they say? You killed for reasons of mercy.”

This completely floors me; it’s so unexpected and not what I feel like discussing. I had been feeling light and happy and Consuela’s question is like a jolt back into a depressing world. Why would she suddenly ask this? I’m wondering and can’t help but assume she’s being somewhat vindictive. That she’s annoyed with me for nit-picking at her pregnancy. At how she should eat, rest, and so on. And she obviously didn’t like the girls asking about this Richard Wayne Cummings.

Oh well, I tell myself. I’m not going to stop looking after her welfare while she’s under my care. But before I have a chance to compose my typical response of *Only God knows the heart of the criminal, or the mercy of the crime* the Blue Angels appear in the sky from down the beach towards Ft. Pickens. I’m off the hook for now but I suspect that my guest will bring up the matter again, maybe in a more tactful way. One that’s less direct.

In the bright blue-sky sizzling with tropical heat, the Angels fly overhead. It’s a dazzling star-spangled banner affair, I tell myself. The printout I have from the website describes the highest maneuver and roll as occurring at 15,000 feet in the sky and the lowest dive at 50 feet. At their fastest, the Angels reach about 700 mph and their Hornet planes leave a trail of biodegradable oil vapor. The aeronautic maneuvers include the Diamond Dirty Loop, the Vertical Pitch, the Fleur-de-Lis, the Opposing Knife-Edge Pass, the Sneak Pass, and for the grand finale, the Delta Breakout.

I become so emotional at the sight that I begin singing, for the hell of it and because I’m feeling light headed from the spritzers, the song I used to sing to my Aunt Lu to make her smile.

“Bluebirds, bluebirds, dear and olden bluebirds. Camping and learning and being good. Faithful to God and our sisterhood. Unlike what other girls may do, for we are the Angel Bluebirds.”

Everyone laughs including Consuela. It seems I have brightened her mood or loosened her up and she begins talking about her relationship with Richard Wayne Cummings. How he controlled her. Made her do sexual things she didn’t want to do. “He would insult me and my family. Call me ugly names. Then I finally shot the *hijo de perra* as he sat on the toilet. I left him for dead when I got away. . .”

“What?” I give her a double take. She’s now sitting up with her legs stretched out in front of her and her hands resting on her large belly. She looks relaxed in her breathing. “Did I hear you correctly? You killed him?”

“On the toilet?” Jewel asks. She’s obviously as astonished as I am.

Consuela lies back on the lawn chair and rolls over as if to take a late afternoon nap before we head back to the Yacht House. “No,” she admits to us. “I was just kidding.” And she says no more and seems to nod off.

Even before the show is quite over during the Delta Breakout, I suggest we pack up and head to the Cadi before traffic becomes unruly and clogged with everyone trying to reach the gay club night life and restaurants at the same time. And I’m anxious to get back to the Yacht House so I can have a private chat with my nieces, out of earshot from Consuela. I feel an urgency to make decisions about our guest after her admission that she murdered this so-called older boyfriend. I now have my doubts that anything Consuela has told us is true. I just don’t know.

We park before the main house of our B&B and I tell Consuela to sit by the moonlit koi pond in the side yard and wait for me to come get her and take her to the RV on the other side of the block.

"I need to help my niece with a personal matter," I say, not knowing what else to say. "Please, relax and enjoy the serenity of the pond. It'll do you good after all the sunshine and partying at the beach. Then I'll fix us some frozen burritos for dinner."

"What about Jewel and Bev? Will they join us?" Consuela asks, making a complete pest of herself. I have this sneaky suspicion that something's up with her.

"No," I say. "They have plans tonight. Enjoy the moonlight on the pond. Feed the koi. I'll be back shortly."

"Is something seriously wrong with Jewel?" Consuela then asks, making me impatient. I tell her my niece is fine and I give her my smartphone and suggest she call her cousins in Miami. She then asks if she can go sit in the RV and make the call there. "It's more private," she says. "Another guest might come around and listen to my conversation."

Although I've never told Consuela directly that I don't want to leave her alone in the RV, I assumed by now she understood this. "No!" I finally snap. Then I calm myself, take her hand, walk her to the koi pond and say, "I'll be right back."

I rush into the house and upstairs to the Shanghai Suite. The girls are already preparing for an evening out on the town. I sit on a padded rocker in the suite's sitting room. The girls are on a love seat across from me. A painted Chinese dragon is on the wooden floor between us and the room is heavily fragrant from the roses.

"What do you suggest we do?" Jewel asks. "Turn her in, based on what? An offhand comment that she claims she said in gest."

"No, let's drive directly to Miami first thing tomorrow morning and dump her off. I hate to cut your anniversary weekend short, but I'm afraid we've gotten ourselves into a real pickle! I believe we're harboring a pregnant illegal immigrant who may have committed a crime."

The girls agree and Bev says, “In other words, Aunt Lu, we can’t party too hard tonight?”

The girls laugh and I nervously chuckle and say, “And don’t take anymore pictures of Consuela. In fact, take down all the ones of her posted on my Facebook site. I never felt comfortable having pictures of her, anyway. And now we may be dealing with a fugitive. Who knows? I don’t trust her and I’m worried she may have done something terrible. An abused woman in distress can snap. Believe me, I’ve reviewed plenty of such cases, talked to plenty of such women and I was one myself.”

“Do we have to skip our trip to Disney World?” Jewel asks as she puts on a pair of gold hoops that Bev gave her for their paper anniversary. Jewel gave Bev similar hoops only in rose gold.

Before I can answer my niece and assure her that we’ll go sightseeing after my visit at the prison, we hear a pounding on the door.

“Senora Lucy,” Consuela yells. “I need to talk to you. *Immediatemente*.”

Bev opens the door to a frantic Consuela holding up my smartphone. “The cats escape the RV,” she exclaims.

“What? How?” I leap from my seat and approach her at the door. “I thought you were talking to your cousins at the pond.”

“I was, but my cousins wanted to call my sister in El Paso. I had her number in my bag, locked in the RV.”

“Of course,” I say. “We always keep it locked.” I’m feeling frantic about my cats and furious with Consuela at the same time. “Why didn’t you ask me to let you in?”

“I was in a hurry. I was still on the phone with Raul, my cousin. I checked all the windows and found the window to your back room slightly open. I pull it completely open,

hoping to get in and get the number without disturbing you. I thought you were in the hot tub with your nieces. You said it was a private matter, remember."

"You what? How could you possibly climb in the window when you're seven months pregnant?" I practically holler, although I refrain from doing so. I don't want to alarm Bob or his guests because we are standing at the open door to the Shanghai Suite.

"No, Senora. You're right. I cannot climb in. But all your cats jump out. One by one."

"That's preposterous, Consuela! What are you up to?" I scream in fury and frantically rip down the steps to the main room where Bob and a gay couple are looking at me with concern. Without a word, I fly out the front doors and my nieces and Consuela follow close behind. The girls run ahead of me to the RV lot and I drive there in the Cadi with Consuela.

"Go get flashlights," I order my nieces as I search the lot around the cabins while calling for my cats. The Cadi's high beams light up the area I'm searching.

"Here kitty kitty," I call. "Baldy, Graham, Grizzley, Wilson, Beartooth. Here kitty kitty."

Consuela finds Wilson and I quickly take hold of him. Then my girls find Beartooth and Grizzley hiding in a hyacinth garden. We lock them in the RV and search for my other two cats. All the while I'm really cursing silently at Consuela. Something isn't right with her story and I'm furious. My cats are my love life and to hell with my finding someone else, I'm thinking as I shine the flashlight under the crawl space of a cabin.

"Spread out," I command while everyone's calling for Graham and Baldy.

After an hour of fruitlessly searching around the B&B compound, Jewel suggests we walk towards Sander's Beach up Cyprus Street, the road between the B&B and the Yacht Club. On the way there, Bev finds Graham in a residential yard. I grab him and return to the RV to lock him inside.

At a magnolia tree by one of the cabins, I see Consuela is still looking for my cats. I had locked the RV to keep my cats safely inside and keep Consuela out.

"Did you find Baldy?" I ask her with Graham in my arms.

"No, no, Senora Lucy. I cannot find him. Please," she holds her large belly. "I'm very tired. Can I rest inside with the cats we found? You can trust me. I only go to sleep."

Feeling empathy for her plight, despite my anger, I let her inside and decide to wait for Jewel and Bev to return, hopefully with my Baldy safe and sound. Unfortunately, the girls return in about an hour without my cat. "It's a hopeless situation in the dark, Aunt Lu," Jewel tells me.

"We even searched around the Yacht Club," Bev adds. "We'll get up at dawn and begin looking again. But we're thinking Baldy will come around and scratch on the door during the night. He knows the RV is his home."

"Yeah," Jewel says. "Cats have a good sense of smell."

"And homing instincts," Bev adds.

Their words don't comfort me as I retreat to my bedroom and try to go to sleep with four of my cats. My nieces forgo their last night of partying and that makes me feel even worse despite their assurances that they're fine with relaxing in the hot tub.

I can't fall asleep all night because I'm sick with worry about my missing cat. Several times I go to the kitchen for a glass of water or just to get up and check outside the door for Baldy. "Kitty kitty," I call.

Each time I do this, I notice that Consuela is snoring on the pull-out bed. It seems she doesn't have a care in the world.

Miami

At about five AM, Consuela is still sleeping on her side and looks like she hasn't moved all night. I stand outside the RV door and phone my nieces. "Baldy hasn't returned. I've been waiting for him all night."

"I'm so sorry, Aunt Lu," a sleepy Jewel Anne replies. "We'll get up and start looking for him."

"No," I say, and then lower my voice to be sure Consuela doesn't hear my anger. "Let's get this girl to Miami. We'll come back and look for my cat. Hopefully Bob will find him. But I'm worried that Baldy's gone for good or run over!" When I say this, I raise my voice. Now I want Consuela to wake up and hear me.

I go back inside the RV and find Consuela sitting on her bed. "Sorry about your cats, Senora," she says, stretching. But she doesn't seem sorry to me. She seems nonchalant and uncaring. Although it could be because she just woke up.

We check out of the Yacht House a day early and I enlist Bob to continue looking for my white cat Baldy. I even offer him or anyone who finds my cat a five-hundred-dollar reward. "We'll return in about a week," I tell him but I don't explain why we must hurry off without looking further for Baldy. I don't want Bob or anyone else to know how nervous I am about having the young pregnant woman with us. It's nobody's business. And as much as I dread leaving behind my lost cat, I'm more anxious to get Consuela off our hands. I might not know her true story but I do know, from all my years as an inmate, that something's not right about her. Something smells of dead fish, as we sometimes say on the Row.

We then rush off to Miami via I-10 to I-75 to I-95. The trip is nearly 700 miles but we take turns driving the massive RV until we reach Miami that evening, after nearly ten hours.

We park at a KOA on the city's outskirts and Consuela calls her cousins who suggest we come right away, despite the fact that it's late in the evening.

"Can't we go in the morning?" I protest. "And get some sleep."

Consuela insists that her cousins are anxious to take care of her and the baby

Bev drives the Cadillac through the sprawling neighborhoods in a city that seems even more bustling and crowded with traffic than New York. In the front passenger seat, Jewel is navigating with her phone to an address in Olympia Heights, outside southern Coconut Grove. I'm in the back with Consuela who is looking very pregnant. She remarks how happy she is that we have helped her reach her cousins.

"We're not there yet," I remark because who knows what could happen before we arrive at their house? I'm so uptight that I'm worried we'll get in an accident and the police will arrive and arrest us for transporting or harboring an illegal alien. Consuela only smiles at me. I think she realizes she's not on my good side. That I'm perturbed with her for losing my cat. She'd be pretty stupid if she didn't pick up on this.

As Bev carefully drives through Olympia Heights in what looks like a run-down neighborhood, Consuela seems to know right where we're going even though she claims she's never been to Miami before. "You come from Juarez," I say to her as we pass several Cuban restaurants and shops. "Latinos in Miami are mostly Cuban. Are your cousins from Cuba?"

"They're my mother's cousins from Columbia," she says as she uses my phone to call her cousins and give them an update on our whereabouts.

In the middle of the night, we arrived at a pink slump block single story house surrounded by palm trees and bushes. It sits well protected behind a wrought iron gate and slump block fence.

“Just honk your horn,” Consuela suggests as she again calls her cousins on my phone.

Four middle aged Latino men file from the house and one of them opens the gate. Bev drives in and parks before a garage. Consuela gets out and I help her with the two bags of things she’s accumulated since we left San Antonio which include mostly clothes and toiletries that we bought for her and the baby.

One of the men gives Consuela a hug and the others stare at me questioningly. Jewel and Bev remain in the idling Cadi, ready to leave and get back to the RV. We’re all exhausted after a harrowing day of driving and worrying about the situation. Besides, we’ve no intention of visiting with these male cousins at two AM. They look like men up to no good and involved in some kind of nefarious operation. At least that’s the impression they give me by their menacing stares and their clothes and gold jewelry. If I were clearly thinking, I would never leave a distressed women with such men. But Consuela seems perfectly happy and comfortable with her cousins.

“Now I go see a doctor,” Consuela assures me as two of the men carry her bags into the house. I blow her a kiss good bye. She feigns catching it, then laughs, and I watch her walk to the house with the other two men.

“Well,” I say to the girls as I jump back into the car. “I’m glad that’s over. Let’s get the hell out of here and head to Orlando. I’m up for a little Florida sight-seeing before any book signing or visits with death row inmates!”

After a day’s rest at the RV site outside of Miami, we drive the Tiffin Alegro to Ocala National Forest, near Orlando. For a week, we camp at a site among the scrub pine and spend a

few days at Disney World and the Epcot Center. Then it's back to business and I drive the Cadi to the nearby women's death row facility at the Lowell Correctional Institution.

Podcast Episode Five:

Women on Death Row, Lowell Correctional facility, Florida

Lucy Davis here on my epic trip in Florida which began in Pensacola over the Gay Pride Memorial Day Weekend. It was in Pensacola in 1978 that an unsuspecting police officer finally nabbed the notorious psychopath and serial killer Ted Bundy. Nearly ten years later, Florida executed Bundy in the electric chair at Florida State Prison located between Jacksonville and Lake City.

Since SCOTUS reversed the moratorium on the death penalty, Florida has executed nearly one hundred condemned inmates at the Florida State Prison. Two of these inmates were women. The first was Judy Buenoano, the notorious serial killer known as the Black Widow because she poisoned her husband, son, boyfriend and fiancé, and perhaps a few other victims. She murdered for the insurance money which our justice system considers an aggravating factor as bad as hiring a hit man to do the job. Buenoano spent thirteen years on death row and was Florida's first woman executed since 1848 when the state hung a slave woman named Celia for killing her master. I can only imagine that Celia had every justification for committing her crime. Buenoano was the third woman executed nationwide since 1976, after Velma Barfield in North Carolina in 1984 and Karla Faye Tucker in Texas in 1998. Like Barfield and Tucker, Buenoano became a born-again Christian while serving her death sentence. She had no final words and kept her eyes shut during her electrocution on "Old Sparky" probably to avoid seeing the witnesses.

The other woman Florida executed was Aileen Wuornos, the most famous female serial killer in the US. Hollywood made a movie about her titled *Monster* and starring Charlize Theron.

Florida executed Wuornos on October 9, 2002, for shooting seven men at pointblank. Wuornos was the tenth women executed in the US since 1976. After SCOTUS had denied her appeal, she petitioned the Florida Supreme Court but later abandoned all appeals and admitted to her crimes. She claimed she'd kill again because, as she put it, "hate crawls through my system." When ask if she had any final words, Wuornos said, "Yes, I would just like to say I'm sailing with the rock, and I'll be back, like Independence Day, with Jesus. June 6, like the movie. Big mother ship and all, I'll be back, I'll be back." People still wonder about the meaning of her last words.

Florida had sentenced fifteen women to death but the courts reduced the sentences of twelve to life. Three are currently awaiting their execution. Tiffany Cole, 26, received a death sentence in 2008. The court convicted her of masterminding the double murder of an elderly Jacksonville couple whom she knew. Cole and her gang buried the victims alive. In 2011, the court sentenced Margaret A. Allen, 44, to death for torturing and killing her housekeeper because she believed the housekeeper stole money from her purse. Prosecutors claimed that Allen tortured her victim for hours before strangling her with a belt. The court also convicted Allen's roommate and nephew for helping to bury the body in a shallow grave. The third Florida woman on death row is Tina Brown, 43. In 2013, the court condemned her for beating her victim with a stun gun and a crow bar and then setting her on fire. The victim lived for two weeks before she succumbed to her injuries.

The condemned women in Florida call their death row corridor "life row" because, as one inmate told me, "We're alive, not dead."

This concludes my podcast about death row women in Florida. Please check me out on Facebook and Twitter #survivinglife. Be good. Stay safe. And don't follow a path or a person that takes you to death row! It's no place to be alive.

After my visit to the prison in Ocala, we rush back to the Yacht House in Pensacola. I'm anxious about my lost cat. Unfortunately, Bob tells me that nobody found a white cat even though he posted printouts around the neighborhood with a picture of Baldy from my Facebook page and with my offer of a reward. I'm crushed, of course, but I had already figured that finding my cat was a lost cause. Still, I had kept a ray of hope until Bob gave me the disappointing news.

We then hit the road for Phoenix. I'm exhausted and depressed about losing one of my Rocky Mountain cats, because of Consuela, so we skip all the planned book signings and drive straight to El Paso where we stop at a KOA for the night. The next morning the girls drive me in the Cadillac to the local animal shelter. They put a smile back on my face when we adopt two Siamese kittens I name Mai Tai and Ginseng. Then we head to Mesa so I can let all the cats get back into their normal routine.

The girls carefully park the RV beside my carport and then drive their SUV back to Sedona. Everyone is happy to be taking a break before we set out on our next road trip which will be to California. My Siamese kittens immediately explore their new home and my remaining Rocky Mountain cats quickly accept them because they're kittens. In fact, my older cats come to life and friskily play with the newest members of our family. It warms my heart to watch them.

Chapter 8: Road Trip to California

July--August 2019

My lover lives inside the wall,
The one that's pale green.
My lover is as little as
An orange tangerine.

My lover likes to play with me

On days I never find.
My lover's love's impossible
But I love him in my mind.

I've been back in Mesa for about a month when Jewel phones me and suggests that we send a tape to the Dr. Jill TV show to see if she'll invite us on her program in LA. Psychologist Dr. Jill Barnet's daily show reaches a nationwide audience and I've been a fan of hers since my release from prison. My aunt got me hooked on the daytime series which airs just before All My Children. Unlike Dr. Roz in NYC who talks about a variety of topics, Dr. Jill's focus is on psychological issues among family members, in relationships or between friends or even co-workers. Her specialty is resolving issues of anger and resentment. What makes her program interesting are the emotional outbursts from her guests.

At first, I reject the idea because I'm generally opposed to psychologists and psychiatrists. For me, they impose degrading labels on patients who don't know any better than to internalizing those labels without understanding alternative and healthier ways to view themselves. It's all part of what I'm trying to say in my books and in my letters to women on death row. "Dr. Jill isn't Oprah's book club," I argue with Jewel as we video chat. "Why would she want to talk with me? With us?"

"Doesn't matter what we discuss," Jewel presses the issue. "Look, Aunt Lu. Both you and I have a beef with Tracy. You as her sister, me as the biological daughter she gave up. I believe our stories would make a good episode on Dr. Jill and we're going to bookstores in LA anyway. It's a win win situation and if Tracy comes around and appears with us on the show, it'll be a slam dunk!"

"True, but I somehow doubt my sister will agree to appear on Dr. Jill in order for us to confront her. I've already made up my mind that I want nothing to do with her, ever. And it was

obvious to me, when I stayed with her on the Oregon coast, that she never really wanted anything to do with me either. To Tracy, I'm just a bipolar ex-con murderer! Maybe she's afraid I'll kill her." My irony makes Jewel chuckle.

"Still," Jewel persists. "An appearance on Dr. Jill will give you scads of publicity for your books and for our foundation, if Dr. Jill agrees."

"I know, Jewel Anne. But what will you say to Tracy? Gee mommy dearest, why'd you give me away and why do you reject me now? Because I'm queer?"

"Just like you, Aunt Lu," Jewel jokes, making me laugh. Of course, Jewel is teasing me, just as I often tease her. We are that close. I can joke about her lifestyle, which I appreciate and respect to the moon, and she can joke about my past without fearing she will hurt my feelings or insult me. Because we never joke in any kind of mocking way because we love and trust each other implicitly.

"Seriously," Jewel continues. "I would like to see if Tracy will even agree to meeting us and if she does, I want to know if she can face the reality of who I am. A woman, her daughter, who is in love with another woman. If she can't accept my wife, well then, she can't accept my life. Let her say so on Dr. Jill. And if she is so ashamed of you, her little sister, even now, after all you've achieved since your release from death row and all the obstacles you've overcome along the way, let her have the opportunity to directly tell you that you're a mentally impaired murderer!"

"She already has," I say but agree to the project mostly because it's something Jewel wants to do.

The girls come down to Mesa and we make a tape of our saga concerning Tracy Mahoney. Within a week of sending off the tape, the producers of Dr. Jill invite us to appear on the show if Tracy agrees to appear, at least via Zoom. They promise to give me time to mention my books and my charitable work of helping women on death row find mental clarity. From my social media posts about my trip to Tracy's beach house, the producers know all about my rift with my sister and suggest that Dr. Jill Barnet will help me and Tracy find some common ground for reconciliation.

To my astonishment, the producers later phone with the news that Tracy has agreed to meet us on the show but Jewel and I don't make any arrangements to meet with her outside the studio. We are estranged, after all, and I really don't want to see her in person anyway and I highly doubt that Dr. Jill will cure my sister of her flaws. Or me if it's me who has them. But I could be wrong. If I believe there's hope for death row women, and if I found my own redemption in life, the least I can do is give my own sister the benefit of the doubt. Once again.

After the fourth of July, in the brutal heat of Phoenix, Bev, Jewel, and I drive the RV with my six cats to a campground outside San Francisco. At least we are free from Consuela on this road trip and I swear to the girls that we're never again going to take along a passenger we know nothing about. We all agree that if we encounter another distressed woman, a victim of domestic abuse, we'll do all we can to find her the proper channel for help but that will be it.

We drive the Cadi into San Francisco to see Fisherman's Warf, the Garibaldi factory, and the Golden Gate Bridge and park. For the next week, we eat at a variety of restaurants and I go to a few bookstores for signings. We then drive the RV to the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla where two of the eighteen women on death row have arranged for my

visit. California has the highest number of women on death row in the US, perhaps in the world, next to China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq.

After my visit with the inmates, I record another podcast while we travel south to LA for more book signings and our interview with psychologist Dr. Jill Barnet. I haven't explored California until now and am especially eager to see the beaches, Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Disneyland. I don't know. It seems that after nearly three years of freedom, and after two long road trips around this great country, I'm feeling free spirited. It's such a drastic personality shift from most of my life, especially during the long years of incarceration. I feel like an entirely different person with a redeemed, revitalized, and renewed sense of being alive. But don't get me wrong. I'm still the same Lucy Davis at my core and I can never fully eradicate what's happened to me over the past fifty years, nor can I ever excuse myself for my crimes or forget about the lives I took or the second chance that compassionate people such as my aunt Lu and the governor gave me.

Podcast Episode Six:

Women on Death Row, Chowchilla, California

Hi, Lucy Davis back again for podcast number six. This time I'm discussing California's condemned women incarcerated at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, which is halfway between Fresno and Modesto—home of Laci Peterson who was nine months pregnant with her son Conner when her infamous husband Scott murdered her because, evidently, he didn't want her or the baby around. Sort of reminds me of Susan Smith. Scott Peterson is currently serving a death sentence at San Quentin.

California executes both male and female inmates at San Quentin. The State transports the women from Chowchilla to the San Quentin execution chamber which is like what happened

to me nearly five years ago. For twenty-two years Arizona had been keeping me housed in Perryville Prison and when they set the execution date, guards transported me nearly one hundred miles to the death chamber at Florence State Prison.

Over the years California has used different methods of executing its condemned inmates. The State first hung the condemned, then they put inmates in gas chambers. In 1995 the court ruled that the gas chamber was “cruel and unusual punishment” and the prison began using lethal injection. Since then, until 2006, San Quentin has executed eleven inmates by lethal injection. None of them were women. Since 1893 California has executed only four women, the last being fifty-eight-year-old Elizabeth Ann “Ma” Duncan in 1962. The court convicted Duncan of masterminding the murder her pregnant daughter-in-law.

Over ten years have passed since the last execution and currently more than seven-hundred men and women are living on California's death row. Governor Gavin Newsom has granted a reprieve to all the death row inmates but this doesn’t change any of their sentences. These inmates are still on death row.

Many of the death row women in Chowchilla turn my blood cold. But they’re all human beings and something caused them to commit the ultimate crime. How does someone, a woman in particular, develop into a force of such harm? Had men, or other women, battered, bruised, and harmed them? Is that the cause? Or is it simply something in their DNA? Has some demon god placed them on earth to kill?

Personally, I’m more prone to believe in the nurture theory, that there is a source, a cause for the woman’s motivation or impulse to become the worst human being she could possibly be, except maybe for Hitler or other masterminds of genocide, or flagrant psychopathic serial killers

like Ted Bundy and the Night Stalker. Those types of people are beyond my capacity to understand or even discuss.

But they're all human beings, creatures of this Earth. And my focus is on the women now living on the Row and how they view themselves in their final days. They're not beyond anyone's empathy or compassion and if we think they are then we ourselves are flawed. One of my main objectives with my foundation is to help certain death row women realize a more positive view of themselves away from all the traumatization and negative conditionings since childhood and all the degrading labels society and psychologists pin on them. In a sense, my aim is to help these "bottom of the barrel," thrown-away women find a certain amount of self-worth before our society puts them down like rabid dogs. If there is no hope for these women to find a better view of themselves, then I maintain that there is no hope for humanity at all.

This is Lucy Davis concluding my podcast about women on death row in California. Follow me on Facebook and Twitter #surviving life. Be a survivor and not a follower led astray. Be compassionate and understand that there are many lessons to learn along the treacherous path of surviving life.

The Dr. Jill Show in LA

We park our RV at Anaheim Harbor RV Park and spend a few days visiting Disneyland, Hollywood, and Venice Beach. I also attend book signings at the Bodhi Tree in LA and a Barnes and Noble in Calabasas. On Wednesday morning we put on our best clothes and drive to Paramount Studios to record our interview with Dr. Jill which the network has scheduled to air next month. As usual, the girls post the event on my social media sites and on my web page.

At the studio, security guards escort us to a waiting lounge where we meet Dr. Jill Barnet, a middle-aged woman of average height. She wears a flowing blue dress that matches her eyes,

and a yellow shawl that matches a stylish haircut that accentuates her oval face. Dr. Jill encourages me and Jewel to speak our minds. “I provide my guests with a safe place to talk,” she assures us as she shakes our hands.

Jewel wants Bev by her side during the taping, but Bev decides to sit with the studio audience because she wants the confrontation to stay between Jewel and her biological mother. Jewel agrees but plans to introduce Bev to the world during the taping.

When the episode begins, Jewel and I sit on stage in front of the studio audience, on high stools with Dr. Jill sitting across from us. Our host shows the video of me talking about my sister, then of Jewel talking about her biological mother’s rejection of her lifestyle and choice of a spouse.

Lastly, she shows the audience a tape from my sister in which Tracy claims that both me and Jewel Anne misunderstand the situation. “I’ve never rejected either one of them,” Tracy claims on the tape. “Lucy’s my younger sister and Jewel’s the daughter I was force to give up when I had no clue about who I really was. Dr. Jill, I’ve agreed to appear on your program to clear up this ugly matter and let both my sister and daughter hear my point of view and not see me through their own shaded glasses.”

Dr. Jill asks me and Jewel about our foundation and she asks me about my books and my life on death row. She then introduces Tracy who walks onto the stage before the studio audience dressed in a maroon pants suit and pink silk blouse. Tracy greets Dr. Jill with a gracious smile and handshake but doesn’t even acknowledge me and Jewel. Dr. Jill points this out and Tracy admits, “I didn’t mean to do that. I’m just so excited to meet you in person. I’m such a big fan, I guess I wasn’t thinking of anything else.” She then turns to us, nods, and says “Hi, girls.”

I smile back and say, “Hey.” Jewel does the same. Try to contain your enthusiasm, I’m thinking to myself.

Dr. Jill says to all of us, “Yours is an important story to tell. Be honest and forthcoming.” She then asks us about our trips to LA. Jewel and I briefly say this is our first time here and we describe our three days of sight-seeing. Tracy mentions that this is also her first visit to LA.

“I came down with my daughter Tiffany Rose and my two grandsons Robbie and Todd,” she says with obvious love and pride. I look to the audience but Tracy doesn’t point anyone out. She then adds, “They’re at the Disney Hotel where we’re staying. I told them they could watch grandma on the show when it airs next month. The boys are having too much fun at Disneyland to break away and watch me on your show.” Tracy looks to Dr. Jill, as if she’s made a hilarious joke.

The host asks me why I’ve had such differences with my sister and I tell her it really began when we were children. “She said demeaning things to me probably because she was so popular and I wasn’t.” I give Dr. Jill a few examples and tell her the story of how I told Tracy I hoped to be dating like her when I went to high school. “You know what my sister said to me, Dr. Jill? She said that I probably won’t meet anyone to date until I’m middle-aged. Her words made me feel almost hopeless.”

“Oh, come on, sister,” Tracy says. “We were little kids. And you’re still holding grudges? People need to grow up, don’t they Dr. Jill?” The host says nothing. “And what about during your murder trial,” she seems to emphasize the word murder. “Didn’t I show up to give you a hug and moral support? Oh, how soon we forget.”

"No, I haven't forgotten. And I've always wondered why you didn't show up at my mitigation hearing. You said you'd testify that you saw Scottie touch me. But you didn't! You went away and dashed all my hopes that I had a big sister who really cared about my welfare."

"Look Lucy. That too, is years ago. And as I explained then and as I'm going to explain now, I had a six-month-old baby to get back to. I do have a life of my own."

"You see, Dr. Jill. My sister is indifferent toward me. She always has been. How do I overcome that? I felt so abandoned by my family when I was on death row." I look at Tracy and say, "It hurt me that you didn't testify at my hearing. You chose not to be there for me when I needed you most. No one supported me but Aunt Lu."

"Don't feel sorry for yourself and blame me," Tracy argues, practically leaning off her tall chair. "I never killed anyone or had a breakdown. Do you want closure? Want an apology? For what? And by the way, Lucy. If I remember correctly, which I do, you went along with our parents and called me a jezebel during the worst part of my life."

"Oh, so now we have it," Jewel breaks in. "I'm the worst thing that's ever happened to you, aren't I mommy dearest?"

"Let's not bring you into this now. This is about me and Lucy." Tracy looks directly at me. "Calling me a cunt (bleep) at the beach! That was demeaning. I'm not your mother. I'm not your parent. I can't stop what I'm doing to be with you and hold your hand. Talk to me with respect. You're fifty-five. Why complain now? Why am I even on this show? I came here in good faith."

"That's a good question," I say, feeling anger percolate through my veins. I don't want to lose it with Tracy but she's pushing my every button. I take a deep breath, sit back on the awkward chair, and ask, "What motivated you to come on the show? Your husband? Tiffany

Rose? Or was it merely so you could meet Dr. Jill and take your grandsons on an all-expense paid vacation to Disneyland?"

"No, I want to make amends. To set things right with you and with Jewel. And yes, my husband encouraged me to stand up for myself and my beliefs on this show. And that's what I'm doing."

Dr. Jill asks me if I feel a need to reconcile with Tracy because she's my sister. Her probing reminds me of Dr. Beth on KZAM when I had called in years and years ago, before I ever committed crimes that led me to the Row. Dr. Beth had suggested that perhaps I needed to look at my own reaction to a family crisis, to my sister's point of view. "Maybe you need to step into her shoes," Dr. Jill suggests, just like Dr. Beth had done.

"No way," I say defensively. "I could never step into the shoes of a bigot! And what about your taking my picture off my Facebook site without any kind of acknowledgement to me? The one with us kids at Christmas. You didn't even have the courtesy to give me a 'like'." I turn to Dr. Jill and add, "Not only did she lift the picture from my page, she cropped me out of it so the picture on her site had only Tracy and her two brothers. Are you that ashamed of me?" I look at my older sister sitting at the edge of her seat.

"You cropped out Scottie," she says then I can tell she regrets her stupid comeback. It's over the board thoughtless on her part, and she knows it.

"Oh, come on," I say. "You know why I did that. Did I molest you, big sister?"

"Ladies, ladies. Please," the host intervenes. "I'm the least judgmental person I've ever met and no one's here to judge you. Guests on my show can say whatever it is they must say as long as they don't harm each other." To change the topic, Dr. Jill turns to me and asks the same question Jewel and Bev are always pestering me with. Maybe she wants to turn down the heat.

I'm not sure. "Are you looking for someone to love?" she asks. "Or do you already have a love interest?"

"No, ma'am." I tell her. "I'm happy with the life I now live, as a cat lady, and I'm not looking for someone to love. In fact, I'm through with love."

"That's a rather stern position to take, Ms. Davis," Dr. Jill says. "Especially from someone given a second chance at life. And I might add, you've done remarkably well with that new life. It goes to show that nobody really knows what will happen in the future. Especially when it comes to love." Dr. Jill smiles at me and I feel quite energized and positive, as if she's just given me a boon. It's a strange feeling, one I've rarely experienced, although I did when my aunt revealed to me that the governor was granting my pardon. She may have given me freedom but I've always felt that my aunt was the one with the magic powers to make my pardon happen.

I smile back at Dr. Jill but have nothing to say in front of the audience and camera crew. My thoughts are simply too complex at the moment and I'm sure that if I ramble them off, most people won't understand what I'm talking about. Why? Because very few people get to have such a powerful turnaround in life and I suspect that very few people have their wishes come true. And besides, I'm not comfortable with my sister sitting across from me and staring at me as if she's expecting me to explain myself--how a deranged serial killer was set free and to once again tell the world that I have no excuse for my crimes and that I feel remorse. To my relief, the host turns her attention away from me and asks Jewel Anne about her relationship with Tracy.

Jewel first introduces Bev as her wife. Bev stands in the front row of the studio audience and looks stunning in her white pants suit with a forest green silk blouse. Everyone applauds. Then Jewel says, "I didn't meet my biological mother until I was twenty-five and our meeting didn't go well at all. It was before I came out as gay and Tracy already had an attitude. She was

hesitant to have me come to her house. As it turned out, her husband didn't even know about me. I was Tracy's dirty little secret and she was trying to protect the integrity of her family. Did you even tell your husband about me?" Jewel looks directly at Tracy. "He must know by now that you had an illegitimate child or you wouldn't have come on this show."

"No," Tracy declares, "John knows about you. I told him about you after our daughter moved out. Sometimes," she turns to Dr. Jill. "We want to leave our past behind. That's why I left home when I was seventeen. Sure, I agree with my sister, our childhood family wasn't all that great. Jewel Anne, hear me out. I was too young to have a baby and we found you beautiful parents. You told me so yourself when we first met, fifteen years ago."

"You were ashamed of me and didn't want me involved with your real family. And when you learned I wasn't straight, that was the last straw for you. Wasn't it, Tracy?"

"That's not true. I accept you. Maybe my husband has reservations because he's very religious and the Bible says a man and woman are meant for marriage, not people of the same sex."

"That's why we're estranged," Jewel addresses Tracy. "That's why when I brought my partner-in-life around to meet you, you acted repulsed, indignant. I decided then and there that I didn't need you in my life and I'm sure you're happy with that decision."

"Why would I show up here if I didn't want some kind of reconciliation with my sister and with you?" Tracy asks.

Dr. Jill smiles, kind of quirkily, and says, "I want to help you three ladies, truly I do. But each of you needs to take care of herself mentally and emotionally. Look, there are some tough decisions to make. Do you want to salvage your relationships? That's the 65-thousand-dollar question."

“I want to try,” Tracy admits. “See if we can find common ground. A way to make some kind of peace among us. Maybe nothing earthshattering. But something that allows us to send cards for birthdays and Christmas. I thought coming to this show was the right thing to do.”

Jewel and I both try to agree but I can tell neither of us means it. It’s just for show. Once we’re finished taping, my nieces and I will go our way and Tracy will go meet up with her daughter and grandsons for fun and adventure in Disneyland. It’s just as well. I appeared on the show for the publicity and I’ve accomplished that.

Dr. Jill interrupts my train of thought and asks the audience rhetorically, “Are these relationships fixable?” Then she addresses me, Jewel, and Tracy, specifically. “If it’s not reparable then I suggest you get a civil unwinding of these relationships. Have I been clear?”

We all agree, shake hands, and then Dr. Jill says, “I would say that in this mother daughter, sister sister drama, both sides need help. An individual’s perception becomes her reality. If she perceives she’s not loved and valued, that’s her reality. Take what I’m saying as true, or leave it. It’s up to you. I want to thank all my guests on our show today.” The host then stands from her stool and leaves the stage to shake hands with the studio audience on her way out of the auditorium.

Bev joins Jewel and I on the stage and we politely say good-bye to my sister with handshakes as limp as a dead fish. Or are dead fish stiff? Anyway, I’m eager to leave the studio and return to Mesa so my cats can run loose and enjoy their outside kennel and I can relax on my recliner with my Dell computer on my lap and the TV turned on to some mindless sit com. Maybe a rerun of *All in the Family* or *Mary Tyler Moore*. Jewel and Bev are also ready to head back to the cool weather and beauty of Sedona where they plan to set up my next book tour, livestream, or TV appearance.

“Perhaps we’ll persuade Oprah to select your books for her book club,” Bev suggests as we’re walking to the parking lot outside the studio. I see Tracy in her rental SUV eagerly driving away to meet with her brood. She politely waves a “ta ta” at us and I wonder if this will be the last image I’ll ever have of her.

The Metropolitan Detention Center, Los Angeles

Early the next morning we’re on our way back to Mesa, via I-10. Bev is driving the RV and I’m sitting on a pulldown chair next to Jewel who’s sitting in the passenger chair helping me make new social posts with pictures of us on Dr. Jill. Before we even reach Pomona, however, two black, unmarked Crown Victorians appear from nowhere and begin flashing blue lights at us.

“Were you speeding Beverly?” Jewel asks and sets aside her tablet.

“No. I have no idea what this is about,” Bev answers as she pulls the RV over at the next exit where there’s enough space for our big bus towing my Cadi.

The two Crown Vic’s stop in front of us and three men and one woman wearing black suits, even the woman, approach the RV door and ask us to step outside of the vehicle. I immediately notice the guns on their shoulder holsters which they seem prepared to use.

“What’s this all about?” I ask, afraid they’re abducting us because of my notoriety. That the wrong death penalty opponent, or anti-gay bigot, read our social posts and has come after us.

“Who are you?” both Bev and Jewel ask as we stand outside the RV in the bright morning sunshine. The suited woman asks us to place our hands on the RV. My biggest fear is that the current president has somehow overturned my pardon and clemency and that these are his secret service agents apprehending me to take me back to death row.

“We’re federal special agents,” the woman finally says and shows us her badge. “FBI, ATF, DEA, take your pick.”

“What? Are you kidding?” Bev exclaims, her hands against the RV.

Before I know what’s happening, the woman frisks me then cuffs my hands behind my back. Memories return of police cuffing me at Sky Harbor Airport, nearly thirty years before. But when they nabbed me back then, I knew I had done something very wrong. Now, I have no idea what this is about.

“No ma’am. This is not a joke,” one of the men says, a black man with a Marine cut. “You’re being remanded into custody for suspicion of federal crimes.”

“Crimes? What crimes? These cuffs are too tight,” I say as cars are whizzing past us on the freeway. I sense people staring at our little spectacle. But that’s the least of my worries.

“What do you think we’ve done?” Jewel asks the female officer who is frisking and cuffing her.

“Harboring an illegal alien. Transporting a fugitive across state lines. Transporting firearms, drugs. Take your pick.” The lady sounds sarcastic and that annoys me but I’m at her mercy.

“What are you talking about?” I ask while facing the RV.

None of the agents answers and Jewel asks, “Does this have to do with that pregnant girl, Consuela?

“Maybe ma’am,” the black federal agent remarks as the woman agent grasps my upper arm and leads me to one of the Crown Vic’s.

“What about our RV? My Cadi?” I ask, filled with concern. This is so unexpected and it’s upturning our lives as if an avalanche or a tsunami or an earthquake has just hit us. Maybe all

three at once. But this isn't a natural disaster. This is something someone has contrived. Somehow, I know someone is framing me. My mind runs through all the hate posts I've seen on my site and I even consider that Tracy came up with this scheme. I quickly reject this notion and try to reel back my imagination. This is no time to become manic. I have to keep a clear and steady mind if I'm going to get through this. To survive I must be calm, I remind myself.

"We're impounding your RV and car for the duration of this investigation," the lady says as she eases me into the car's back seat. The other agents are placing Jewel and Bev in the back seat of the other Crown Vic.

"What about my cats!" I scream. I can't believe what's happening to us and I feel sick with worry that these so-called Feds will release my cats onto the freeway and I'll lose all of them, like I lost Baldy.

"The animal welfare league will take care of your cats. Don't worry," the lady says with some semblance of compassion. She then gets behind the wheel and the black agent climbs in the passenger side. They are silent as she pulls onto the freeway behind the car with my nieces and the two other agents.

In the back seat, with my hands cuffed behind me, I have a bad feeling about what's going on. "Who are you, really?" I finally ask as the lady speeds along the 1-10 toward LA. As we pass the other cars, I feel like they all know I'm an ex-death row con recaptured.

"We're actually US Marshals," the lady agent finally admits, but says nothing more.

"Where are your taking me? What do you think I've done?" I ask.

"The MDC," the black agent says while looking at me in the rearview mirror.

"The MDC?" I ask.

“The Metropolitan Detention Center, in Los Angeles,” the lady Marshal explains. “It’s where we detain people like you who are under federal investigation for alleged crimes.”

“Crimes?” I ask. “I’ve been on the straight and narrow since Perryville.”

“Never mind,” the agent says as she weaves in and out of traffic closely tailing the lead Crown Vic. “You’ll find out soon enough. This is a matter for the U.S. Department of Justice.”

I say no more nor do the agents until after we arrive at the large concrete detention center where another Marshal places me alone in a cell that is larger than my home on the Lovely in Perryville prison. It has a desk, a shelf, and a cozy cot, along with the metal toilet sink combination. I ask the Marshal about my nieces and he tells me they’re together in a separate cell but I can’t have any contact with them until another special agent clears me.

After about an hour of sitting on the cot filled with concern about my nieces, my cats, my RV, and especially about my own fate, a prison guard escorts me to a small room where a pudgy elderly man in a blue dress shirt and navy-blue slacks, the special agent, begins hurling questions at me. “What’s your name? What was your business in Miami?” “What were you transporting? And Who?” Then he slides a picture across the metal table for me to see. “Do you recognize this woman?” he asks. I look down at the photo which looks like a mug shot of Consuela Sanchez, but I can’t be certain. She looks pale and pimply in the photo and nothing like the pregnant girl we hauled along from San Antonio to Miami.

“I demand an attorney,” I say to the special agent. “I know my rights. I spent 25 years incarcerated and I’ve been in this situation before! I haven’t forgotten a thing.”

The man tells me to sit tight for a guard to take me to a phone and he leaves me alone in the room where I’m now assuming this is all because Consuela is an illegal alien and a murderer wanted by the Feds and we aided in her escape and foolishly posted pictures of her on my social

medial page. We figured the public knew about her because of my radio interview with Mr. Chad Meyers.

What an idiot, I'm thinking as I sit waiting. I was worried about the girls posting those pictures and updating our progress to Miami. Even though I had them take down all the pictures with Consuela in them, I have a sneaky suspicion it was too late. All this advanced technology that's snuck up on me while I lived in a cage turns out to be nothing but trouble. Big trouble. A person can't have a normal private life anymore. Everything has to be public. Social. Under the radar of crime fighters, both local and federal. What a shame. What a sham. And everyone seems to have an opinion they've got to share on the internet. At least now I have the resources to hire a good attorney familiar with federal law. I'm no longer a poor, muddle-brained and clueless girl of twenty-five.

A guard arrives and takes me to an old-fashioned wall phone at the end of a long corridor before the cells. He uncuffs me so I can page through a phonebook hanging on a chain--no high tech here—and I find a Mr. Frank Schriever, esq. who specializes in federal law. I use the few coins in my pocket to place the call and explain my situation to Mr. Schriever. He agrees to meet me in the morning after he makes a few phone calls to determine what is going on with my situation.

I spend a restless night alone in my cell listening to the eerie clink and clank echoes of a prison, which I remember quite well. At ten AM, I meet with Mr. Frank Schriever in the same questioning room as the day before. The guard uncuffs me and Mr. Schriever offers me a cup of Starbucks coffee which I thankfully accept. We arrange for his retainer then I ask about the welfare of my six cats and the whereabouts of my RV and Cadi.

“Please don’t worry about that,” Mr. Schriever assures me. “Police impound is protecting your RV. As for your cats. . . I’ll check into that right now.” He makes a few calls on his Smartphone and is able to reassure me that the ASPCA California is housing them together. With everything that’s going on, I’m not so sure I believe him. He could be pandering to me, trying to bolster my courage about my situation. I’m deeply afraid my cats are roaming I-10 near Pomona and speeding trucks are running over them, one by one.

“Is this because of Consuela Sanchez?” I ask before he even begins the interview. “We thought we were helping a distressed pregnant woman escape from her abuser.”

“Her name is Felisa Espinoza,” he tells me. “And she was never pregnant.”

“What?” I ask with astonishment. “I could have sworn she was. Several times I tried to take her to a doctor but she insisted on going to Miami. She even had bruises on her arms where he grabbed her. At least that’s what I believed. I did feel uneasy about her and when she admitted to shooting her boyfriend while he sat on the toilet, we rushed her straight to her cousins in Olympia Heights. Four Latino men welcomed her and they all seemed suspicious to me. We got the hell out of there. It was so creepy. For one thing, it was the middle of the night when we dropped her off.”

“That wasn’t her boyfriend she shot. Those people in Miami aren’t her cousins. I’m afraid a drug mule has duped you. And now you’re in trouble for a series of federal violations. All because you kept posting your story on social media. With pictures of her.”

“But we took them down,” I protest and sip on my dark roast, savoring the aroma and taste, hoping the caffeine will keep me sharp and alert. I’m in deep trouble again, it seems, but this time for innocently trying to help out a young woman in desperate need.

“It doesn’t matter that you took down the pictures and posts. The Feds were casing your sites since you left San Antonio.”

“What? Consuela, or Felicia, had me convinced that she was a trapped and battered woman. Why are they investigating me? How long can they detain us? Where are my nieces Jewel Anne and Beverly Lee? Are they in trouble as well?”

“For now, the Feds are detaining only you,” Mr. Schriever tells me. “Your nieces are awaiting news about your situation at the Beverly Hotel.”

“I’m relieved that my girls are on the outside waiting for my release,” I say. “But why am I being held?”

“Because the RV is in your name,” Schriever explains. “And the pictures of Felicia were on your Facebook page and because of your criminal background, to be frank. The Feds are suggesting that you orchestrated the whole plot. They’re talking about charging you with harboring and transporting an alien across state lines.”

“What?” I’m astonished. My situation keeps getting worse and worse, like it had during my arrest and trial nearly thirty years ago.

“Yes, but that’s not the least of it,” Schriever continues. “They’re also saying that you obstructed justice by harboring a fugitive from a drug related murder. And that you helped in transporting drugs and firearms across state lines.”

“Mr. Schriever, let me assure you, I’ve never even taken any illegal drugs.”

“That doesn’t matter. You see, Felicia was carrying drugs and a firearm in her pregnancy disguise.”

“No way. This is too outlandish. Surely you can get me out of this mess. That’s why I hired you and am paying you an astronomical retainer.” I push my half drunken Starbucks aside.

I don't want any more caffeine. I'd rather fall asleep now and wake up when this whole disaster is over.

I hear doors clanging outside the questioning room and I'm wondering who else the Feds are interviewing. Their whole case seems flimsy and Schriever agrees but I still feel almost as helpless as I did during all those years on the Row, although now I do have shreds of hope and am completely innocent of any intentional wrongdoing. When on death row awaiting an execution date, my gut always told me *Well, girl, you did this to yourself, you are guilty of the crimes.*

"I am sorry, Ms. Davis. But a criminal complaint is currently pending against you and the Feds have thirty days from your arrest to indict you. That's just how it is. And in some cases, though rare, the Feds can extend the detention for another thirty days."

"My god. Is someone personally pissed off at me because the governor freed me from prison?"

"No," Schriever replies, putting his notepad back in his briefcase, preparing to end our meeting. "I suspect you'll soon have your arraignment. Meanwhile, I'm doing all I can to get the Feds to drop their witch-hunt investigation. I know you've done nothing intentionally. That much is obvious to me, based on all the circumstances I've uncovered during my own investigation."

Federal Marshals escort me back to my private cell where I listen to the voices of inmates and guards and smell the institutional odors of disinfectant and mold. After my pardon a few years back, I thought I'd never again see, hear or smell the inside of such a place because I knew I'd never commit another crime, not even a traffic violation, not even jay walking. But life is always presenting me with unexpected and unwanted twists and turns.

One spark of hope occurs that afternoon. Bev and Jewel Anne pay me a visit with positive news about my cats. They have retrieved all six of them. “They’re roaming freely in our hotel suite,” Jewel tells me.

“We’ll all go home as soon as my lawyer clears up this misunderstanding,” I say, trying to be optimistic. I tell the girls what Schriever said and they tell me they’re publicizing this injustice on social media, reaching out for public support.

“We were only trying to help a battered woman,” Jewel says. “We had no idea she was duping us. And so far, lots of people are posting their outrage over your detention, Aunt Lu. Your followers are contacting their senators and congressmen. Even the White House.”

I’m so thankful for my nieces and I feel the same love for them that I felt for my aunt Lu during all those years she stood by me while I languished in prison. It’s a unique kind of true love, maybe it’s even Biblical. It’s a supportive love that doesn’t disappear during the worst of times. I guess, you might say, it’s the opposite of indifference which is what entails the sentiments of my childhood family.

When the girls leave and I’m once again left alone in my cell, I try to read a novel while feeling utterly empty inside. Then another unexpected turn for the better occurs when a petite female prison guard stops by my cell and enthusiastically greets me. She carries with her a yellow legal pad, a pen, and an envelope that looks like a personal letter of some kind. Her nametag reads Mia Trong and she tells me she’s been following my Facebook page for the past year or two.

“I’ve read both of your books, Ms. Davis,” she says with a slight Vietnamese accent. “I’m a big fan of yours and admire your devotion to women sentenced to death. I know you have

a big heart. I've even contributed to the Lucinda Bowers Foundation. It's such a beautiful gesture for you to name it after your loving aunt."

I thank Mia Trong, sincerely. She's appeared to me like an angel whose very presence is uplifting. "How long have you been working here, in this federal hellhole?" I tease.

"Five years. My family comes from Saigon and we're very proud to be American citizens. When I learned they brought you here, I wanted to meet you in person. I know you didn't do anything wrong and that your detention is a big misunderstanding. You were only trying to help that lady who lied to you. That's all."

"Thank you," I tell Mia. "What's that?" I ask about the letter she holds. I'm prepared to autograph it, if that's what she wants.

"Ms. Davis," she says. "My dear cousin Marvis le Tron Jackson is on death row in San Quentin. I'm hoping you can write him a letter." She places the legal pad and pen on the desk. "I've already addressed this envelop to him."

"I see," I say. "Well, I can probably do something like that. But I've really only been corresponding with women on death row. Your cousin would be the first man I'd be writing to. What was his crime?" I ask. It's always the first question when assessing death row inmates. I mean, I have to determine whether they're sociopaths like Ted Bundy, or unfortunate souls with a troubled background like Aileen Wuornos or Karla Faye Tucker. Abused women led astray. A drug related crime. A felony murder. A murder for hire, for insurance money. Anyway, that is usually my criteria for figuring out who to write and what I might be dealing with. Some people, men or women, are simply evil. But I don't say all this to Mia Trong. If she's followed me, then she already knows my point of view.

“My cousin was wrongly sentenced to death,” Mia says. “There wasn’t anything we could do to stop the jury from making this judgment. Marvis caused the death of a police officer, and that’s what condemned him. He wrote me this letter last month. And when I learned that you were here, I wanted to share it with you. Please read it and write him a letter. He knows about you and your work. A letter from you would gladden his heart, Ms. Davis. You are truly an Angel of Mercy.”

“Oh please. Don’t go that far. I’m just an average person who’s had her fair share of blows and setbacks. I’m no better and no worse than anyone else.”

“Except for true psychopaths motivated to inflict harm on the world!” We both laugh. She’s repeating something I’ve posted on my website.

“Marvis was always a good boy. He worked hard in school and was hoping to go to law school. But life didn’t lead him that way.”

She hands me the letter and says, “Please keep this. I’ve made a copy of it for my scrap book. I must go now and attend to my station on the other wing of the detention center. Please write my cousin, Ms. Davis. Please cheer him up with a glimmer of hope.”

Mia Trong then leaves me alone in my cell. I listen to her echoing footsteps fade away. I sit at the desk and look at the letter in my hand. I pour myself a glass of water from the pitcher on the desk and begin reading the letter handwritten in a beautiful cursive script.

To my dear little cousin Miss Mia Trong:

Day and night I visualize a world that is parsecs beyond the darkness of the ignorant world we live in. The sun and moon shine so brightly there that I must squint my eyes to see the beauty of the landscape. In this world, the breeze stirs fragrant flower petals all around me while

bells chime dharma music and peacocks and swans trumpet the words of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life who offers this paradise even to someone like me, a condemned inmate who caused the deaths of three noble beings.

Amitabha resides in a great assembly hall made of gold and jewels. Seated beside him on lotus thrones are the bodhisattvas of strength and compassion. One is the moon; the other is the sun. One holds the lotus flower of wisdom; the other holds a water vessel containing the elixir of healing. Eighty thousand bodhisattvas, arhats, and ordinary people dwell in this paradise. They live without the distractions of our defiled world and develop pure minds that liberate them from suffering. Those who reside in Amitabha's paradise believe in the sacredness of life. Those who think otherwise are reborn into worlds that detract them from achieving the wisdom of a peaceful, wise, and happy existence.

You see, dear cousin, most people don't know the time of their deaths. But I do, or I will. In fact, I'll know the precise moment the world decides I will die. But when that time comes, I won't be afraid. At the last moment of my life, I'm prepared to chant the name of Amitabha Buddha and he will arrive at my gurney, along with Mahasthamaprata, Manjushri, Samantabhadra, Guan Yin, Maitreya and other great beings. Glorious light will fill the entire death chamber and no one will see this but me. Amitabha will carry me to his paradise where I will emerge from the pools of purity in a blue lotus flower.

I'll be born in this land as a mid-level being because for several years now, I've been practicing the dharma and sending warm hearted thoughts to all those who harm or despise me. I have repented for my crimes and bad karma. It will not take me long to enter the final dharma door to liberation or return to this world to offer my awakened heart to those suffering from

delusions about themselves and this world. I have no doubt about this. I have no doubt about Amitabha and his pure land paradise which I think of as the pure land mind.

When the warden asks if I have any final words, I will say the name of Amitabha ten times and recite this prayer,

Homage to Shakyamuni Buddha

Homage to all great Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

In the ten directions of Maha Vairocana

Homage to Amitabha Buddha

May all sentient beings receive the peace, happiness, and wisdom of a pure, clear mind and may there be an end to all of their suffering.

Eternal love from your cousin,

Marvis le Tron

The letter deeply moves me. In fact, it brings me to tears. I understand it completely because I've lived on death row and have learned to clear away the clouds of delusion to find clarity of mind. I learned to have faith in myself, believe in myself and not in what the world tells me to believe about myself. And furthermore, I believe in living life with the purpose of helping those who are suffering from delusions about themselves and the world. The world would have me go to hell but I would have it otherwise. The world may have condemned me but I do not condemn myself and I won't condemn others like they are unsavory trash or a virus that we must eradicate.

I spend the rest of the day alone at the desk in my cell writing Marvis a long letter. I briefly tell him about my time on death row but I mostly talk about my pen pal from India.

Professor Cholan Muthukumaraswami told me that if I pray to the many faces of the Buddha, I will find redemption and forgiveness. After ten years, Professor Muthukumaraswami had stopped writing me and I always assumed he had died because he was elderly, but his religious philosophy inspired me and made me feel hopeful about myself, even in the pit of hell.

Since my first year on death row, I write in my letter to Marvis, *I haven't prayed exclusively to Jesus, like my daddy taught me to, long ago. Instead, I've been praying to the world's many gods and buddhas. I've never embraced any one religion, per se, such as Buddhism, but I'm intrigued by the various religious philosophies especially when they make sense to me and teach us ignorant people to be decent toward one another. It's why your letter really moves me*.

My isolation on death row wasn't really anything new to me. When I was a child, I spent most of my time alone because I had a horrible brother who tormented me and ignorant parents who neglected my needs. This pure land paradise you describe, with the three magical Buddhas, reminds me of one of the best times in my difficult childhood. My family used to go deer hunting every year in Eastern Oregon. Not that I have ever professed killing deer. It was just the family I was born into. Anyway, we camped beside this cool stony brook that flowed past juniper, pine, and Aspen trees in a marsh with cattail reeds. I would pick a cattail pod that was about to burst and pretend that I held a magic wand while I walked down the stony brook. I felt like magic had transported me to this wonderful place, away from all my torments. This is the place I thought about when I read your letter. Could you please tell me more about this paradise you describe where the three Buddhas reign among people who don't harm one another? I believe it's the place I've wanted to be since I was a little girl. I would also be interested to learn about the conditions at San Quentin and your life on death row.

The next morning, when my nieces come to visit me, I hand them my letter addressed to Marvis le Tron and tell them to mail it right away. That very afternoon Mr. Schriever arrives at my cell to inform me that the Feds are releasing me because they have ended their investigation and found no proof of my having any illegal intent. Although he doesn't admit to anything, I believe that Mr. Schriever had something to do with my newly gained freedom.

The girls take me to the Beverly Hotel where I go nuts playing with my cats. A few days later, we retrieve the RV and Cadi from impound. Fortunately, the Feds didn't confiscate anything although they certainly shuffled everything around and made a few scratches and scuff marks. I can only imagine what went on. But I'm grateful to be free and heading home to Mesa with my girls and six cats and I'm thankful we're all intact.

Chapter 9: Love and COVID-19 at San Quentin

September 2019—March 2020

You cannot stop my song
Internal vows sing too long.
This music is my destiny,
Unburdened by humanity,
You cannot stop my song.

And do not look at me,
As though I lack your sanity.
Talk about an odd sort of
Looking guy–
I'd like to know what that is,
lodged upon your eye.

When I'm back home and the girls have returned to their condo in Sedona, I take the time to look up Marvis le Tron on cdcr.ca.gov, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation website, which lists about 700 condemned men on San Quentin's death row. I had assumed Marvis le Tron was Vietnamese, because of his cousin Mia Trong, but when I see his

profile and picture, I discover that he's African American, perhaps part Asian like Tiger Woods. His picture reminds me of Mike Tyson because he's husky, fit, and has a tattoo on his face that looks like Chinese characters instead of a Māori symbol. In my next letter to him, I plan to ask what it means. I'm also surprised by his age. Marvis is 20 years younger than me. He's 36 and was born the year I lived on my grandparent's farm in Missoula. He's been on death row at San Quentin for nearly ten years which means he went in at the same age as I did.

I carefully read about his crime and defense. When Marvis was 25, he was speeding in his uncle's Toyota Sienna van down Ventura Highway on the way to Encino Hospital where he was taking his uncle's pregnant girlfriend. A motorcycle cop saw him run a red light. To escape from the cop, Marvis turned left on I-405 but the motorcycle cop kept up with him and called for back-up in his pursuit of a fleeing suspect.

From the 405, Marvis baled onto Mulholland Drive toward Laurel Canyon. On a sharp curve, his van spun out of control, hit the motorcycle cop, and both the van and motorcycle flew over the highway shoulder into a steep ravine. The pregnant woman and her baby died at the scene. A helicopter ambulance rushed the cop to the hospital but he died on route. In the Sienna van, officers recovered illegal firearms and bags of marijuana and cocaine.

In his defense, Marvis claimed he was using his uncle's van to rush his uncle's girlfriend to the hospital because she had gone into labor. He feared a bad outcome if the officer pulled him over because, as he said on the stand, "Police tend to conclude that a black man is committing a crime in progress." His defense didn't sway the jury and they condemned Marvis le Tron for causing the death of three people during the commission of a felony—fleeing from an officer in pursuit. His worst crime was that he caused the death of Officer Roderick Rodriguez.

Even before Marvis replies to my first letter, I write him another letter. I have this strong feeling about him and want to get to know him and explain more about myself. My second letter ends with my saying that I'm a "cat lady" with six cats. I explain how I got them back after the Feds pulled over my RV on the I-10 freeway. I'm hoping my story will amuse Mr. Marvis le Tron Jackson. As I well know, inmates existing on death row gladly welcome anything that might brighten their day.

Letters between Lucy Davis and Marvis le Tron Jackson

September through November, 2019

Dear Ms. Davis, September 13, 2019

I'm thrilled you wrote me, twice. I thank my cousin Mia Trong for facilitating our correspondence. I know it's fate that she met you during your detention in LA. I have subsequently learned from her that the Feds released you soon after you wrote me your first letter. I believe your quick release was also a matter of fate. It's how I think. And by the way, Cat Lady, I have a cat of my own here in San Quentin. He really belongs to everyone on the block and wanders from cell to cell. But mostly he hangs out on my cot. I call him Sherman after the district of LA where I lived with my uncle Gary Baker who was my father's white buddy during the Vietnam war. They were both grunts long before I was even born.

First, let me tell you about Hotel San Quentin. The good news for me is that six months ago Governor Gavin Newsom signed the moratorium on California's death penalty. Which means all of us knuckleheads sentenced to die have a reprieve while Gavin remains in office.

There's a long history of executions in California. Several times they've halted death sentences then started them up again. Charles Manson and Sirhan Sirhan were two of the lucky inmates who got their death sentences reduced to life.

Since the Supreme court reinstated the death penalty, San Quentin has executed thirteen inmates. Sixty-four inmates have died from natural causes and twenty-five have committed suicide. Who can blame them for taking their lives into their own hands?

Did you know that San Quentin has the largest death row in the United States? Maybe the world. Even Florida and Texas combined have fewer condemned men than San Quentin. There are three death row sections. The North-Segregation block is for prisoners who don't cause any trouble. The crumbly, leaky East Block maze is where most condemned inmates live. The worst of the worst, the real psychopathic pieces of shit, live in the Adjustment Center behind solid doors that keep these losers from slinging their shit at the guards.

The prison grades us as "Condemned Grade A" or "Condemned Grade B." The A group can have face to face visitations but men in the B group can only see their visitors from behind a glass partition. The prison has graded me as a B prisoner because of a few disciplinary violations. I've had issues with Skinheads who've threatened me. I'm a man who stands up for himself. I don't take crap from anyone on the Row.

The prison has lodged a lot of famous people. Scott Peterson and the Night Stalker Richard Ramirez are both here on death row. Former inmates of the general population include Merle Haggard, Danny Trejo, and you probably know about Johnny Cash's visit here in 1969, fifteen years before I was even born.

Well, Ms. Davis, in my next letter I promise to tell you more about my religious philosophy which comes from my Vietnamese mother; may she rest in peace. My father was a black man. When he returned to the states in '71, he brought my mother with him, married her and had four sons. I'm the youngest. My daddy died shortly after my birth probably from some kind of agent orange chemical that caused his brain cancer. After he passed, his Army buddy, my

uncle Gary, stepped-in and helped my mother in her struggle to raise me and my brothers. When I was five, we moved into the guesthouse on his property in Sherman Oaks. Gary is thirty-one years older than me and he's prospered in life after his stint in the Nam mostly because of his connections to the Golden Triangle of Thailand, Laos, and Burma. For many years, he's been like a Godfather to people who sometimes call him the Drug Lord of Sherman Oaks.

Because of my uncle, I didn't grow up in Watts, a rough part of town. Gary saw to my education. I earned a pre-law degree at UCLA in criminal justice, if you can believe it. I've been using my legal knowledge to help a few inmates with their appeals, as well as my own.

On several occasions while I was growing up, Gary asked if I wanted to work for him, like my brothers had chosen to do, but my mother strongly protested my involvement in my uncle's business. She died when I was fifteen and I remained living in Gary's guesthouse but kept to a straight and narrow path and didn't join my brothers and work for my uncle.

I have three sons from three different mothers, Cameron and Jamal are from my girlfriends at UCLA, and Ki-Ki comes from a Thai woman I met during one of my many trips to Thailand with my uncle Gary. I admit to having been a bit of a player with the women, especially at UCLA. That's why I took a break after earning my bachelor's degree. I was testing the grounds to see if I really wanted to continue with my education and go to law school like my uncle encouraged me to do. Maybe he thought I'd eventually work for him as an attorney. I don't know.

I was working as a paralegal at an entertainment law firm in Beverly Hills when the world crashed down on me like a California mudslide. What happened was nothing but bad luck and a series of poor choices on my part. I swear to you, as I've sworn to everyone else, especially during my trial and appeals, I'm not a psychopathic serial killer like Jack the Ripper or Jeffrey

Dahmer or the BTK Killer. I didn't set out on that fateful day with premeditation to maim, torture, and kill innocent people.

You see, at the time this all went down, my uncle had a young girlfriend living in the house. Her name was Sally Steele and she was eight months pregnant with Gary's baby. On that fateful day, I was at my computer in the guesthouse behind my uncle's main house when Sally came pounding on my door screaming that she was having labor pains. My uncle was away in Thailand at the time.

I was prepared to rush her to Encino Medical Center, but my classic El Camino wouldn't start. This was the first in a long line of bad luck happenstances that occurred that day. I ran into Gary's house, grabbed the keys to one of his vans, and hurried off with Sally, heading east on Ventura. I was trying to speed along without drawing attention but that motorcycle cop caught sight of me running a red light. This was the second bad luck happenstance. I knew that the van probably contained hidden contraband and I figured my best bet was to evade the cop. The rest of the story you've read about. It was all terrible, terrible bad luck. As if all the gods of the universe stacked the deck against me in less than twenty minutes. And here I am in San Quentin, waiting for the moratorium to expire and my execution to take place instead of having a UCLA law degree and a topnotch job at a Beverly Hills entertainment law firm.

To keep sane, I spend most of my day reading Buddhist Sutras or autobiographies by successful people who have hope. It's self-preservation. I also write letters of remorse to the families of the police officer I killed and my uncle's girlfriend. I can never apologize enough for causing the deaths of three people. It's a void impossible to fill. Many inmates on death row sink into madness before their executions. I refuse to be one of them.

At first, I thought my uncle would never forgive me for what I had done. For one thing, I drew unwanted attention to him and he is a man who keeps his life hidden from public scrutiny. But he forgave me and even arranged for my defense, which included some of the best legal minds in LA. But I was a cop killer and that is my doom.

During trial, the defense presented evidence of my good character, my aim to earn a law degree, my work as a paralegal, my clean record of never having committed any crime. But then the prosecution brought up evidence of my many trips to Thailand with my uncle Gary Baker. They smeared him as a drug lord, although they had no concrete evidence. But they convinced the jury that I was a part of Gary's enterprise like my older brothers and worked as a drug mule on my trips to SE Asia and the Golden Triangle.

It was the wrong strategy for my defense. After they convicted me, my uncle no longer wanted anything to do with me. He's left me alone to work on my appeals, which I've been doing since I landed here. And in all honesty, I've gotten nowhere. The courts aren't sympathetic toward a cop killer and my defense team really made no mistakes during the trial, nothing to bring up on my appeals. They were truly the best legal minds in LA.

Well, Ms. Davis, I wish you the peace and the happiness of a pure land mind. I have read your books and applaud you for earning a second chance in life. You must have done something right!

Sincerely, Marvis le Tron Jackson

Dear Mr. Jackson, September 29, 2019

I'm thrilled to receive your most informative letter about Hotel San Quentin. Thank god the governor placed a moratorium on executions. I don't care what a person's done, well I really

do, but I'm against state mandated killings. I'm also pleased that you like my books and I won't waste your time by re-counting my twenty-two years on the Lovely. I'm sure my situation was very different from your existence in crowded San Quentin. For most of my time in Perryville, there were only two women on death row. I'm also glad you appreciate my efforts at helping death row women achieve some sort of mental clarity. At least a more positive view of themselves. I really encourage them to reject mental health medications and mental illness labels and learn how to focus on their true nature and not what others have declared them to be all their lives.

Soon after I moved out on my own, when I was 25, I fell madly in love with the first guy who came along. He turned out to be nothing but a slouch and a leech who used me to support his drug habit. He tricked me into believing he was helping his homeless mother. I can't understand why anyone would abuse, deceive, or manipulate another person. How can people victimize others? That's what both Brian and my horrible brother did to me. But while on death row, I overcame the wounds they inflicted and learned how to face myself, stand up for myself, and understand my life. Ironically, death row gave me perspective and a lot of freedom, at least in my mind.

I believe that childhood trauma leads to making poor choices later in life. And I made some terrible choices. Drastic choices. Don't get me wrong, I'm not making any excuses for the three murders the jury decided I committed. And I do feel remorse for all the wrongs I inflicted on my victims. I doubt that this feeling will ever go away. It's not something a person can ever make right. That is to say, I can never bring my victims back or undo what I did to them.

While existing on the Lovely, I learned to survive by imagining that I was in a different place. Is this what Buddhists do? Please tell me more about this place you aspire to be. The place

you wrote about in your letter to Mia Trong, the letter she showed me when the Feds detained me in LA. And please tell me the meaning of the tattoo on your face.

Love and peace, my dear brother, Lucy

To my dear sister, Lucy Davis, October 11, 2019

During my first years on the row, I felt like I was suddenly seventy-five and unable to do anything but sit on a recliner, although there are no recliners in prison. I kept dwelling on the things I used to do and no longer could. Like taking a girlfriend to a nightclub, buying her a drink and dancing. Like traveling to Thailand with my uncle and sightseeing around SE Asia. Like playing basketball with friends or going to a Clippers game, a Dodgers game, you name it. Like buying a pepperoni pizza at the student union whenever I felt like it, and like having sex, whenever. Each morning, I woke up from a dream that I was on the outside doing average, day to day things. The judge's gavel then slammed down and took away from me everything I used to do,.

All this reminiscing was driving me crazy until I woke up one morning and something told me to stop dwelling on my past, to start focusing on my present life and live moment by moment. My past was gone and my future is grim, if I have one. But something deep inside me, perhaps my own instinct to survive, told me to visualize the place I wanted to end up. That became my future and my present. Not the one California plans for me to have.

This is when I started visualizing the place my mother used to tell me about when she talked about the Buddhist traditions she brought to America, although I don't think she converted my father and she certainly didn't influence my uncle, at least not very much. But she tried to teach me and my older brothers a basic philosophy to live by. To be selfless, considerate, and do

good deeds. Earn merit, she called it. And quiet the mind so that when we pass from this life, we will be reborn into a better world. One without war and suffering. Without ignorance and selfish ways.

Once I stopped dwelling on my past, I never looked back. Literally. I focused my heart and mind on where I wanted to be born again. My mother used to describe being reborn in a lotus flower in a paradise filled with limitless life and light more brilliant than the sun and moon.

Visualization is a form of Buddhist meditation and so what you did on death row, Ms. Lucy, falls in line with my own beliefs. My mother called this place I visualize, the Western Pure Land. It's not a heavenly place of eternal life like the heaven of Jesus. It's a place where we hope to live until we awaken into full enlightenment. It's where the sun and moon set into the next world. You don't even have to believe in Amitabha Buddha, like people believe in Jesus, to enter his Pure Land paradise. But you must disown the ego, including any thoughts about being virtuous or even unselfish, and you must have an open mind and humble heart. All people have the potential for enlightenment even those of us condemned to death row. This Pure Land is really a mental place of being that I like to call the Pure Land Mind.

Each morning when I awake and each night before I fall asleep in my hellhole cell, I chant "Namo Amitabha Buddha," ten times. It means I take refuge in Amitabha's world. Chanting helps me clear my mind of rambling thoughts and clutter. When I chant, I visualize the three buddhas sitting together on their lotus thrones and I feel at peace as they welcome me to paradise. I enter the dharma door to overcome the restrictive mind that engages in angry thought, that easily becomes upset and that is anxious with worry.

There's something to be said about that old '70s jingle, "Don't worry. Be Happy!" If we release our mind and heart from all these worldly woes, we will enter the Pure Land Mind and

meet Amitabha who will teach us to swim so that if we choose to come back to this world, we can save others from drowning. This is what it means to become a Bodhisattva, a being who postpones becoming a Buddha until the hell that is this world is empty of all pain, suffering, and ignorance.

You might say that day will come when Hell Freezes Over!!! But at least we strive to perfect our minds and show compassion for others, not hatred and contempt. It's not something easy to do for a man in my situation. But I endure and keep focused on maintaining a Pure Land Mind.

The reason I'm telling you all this, Ms. Lucy Davis, is because the Bodhisattva offers the very same concepts that you are trying to show these death row women with your charitable efforts. You are trying to help those who are suffering in this life, who are languishing on death row, how to discover their true reality and find a purposeful life no matter how dire their circumstances, and nothing can be more dire than existing on death row. Both you and I know this to be true. And I love the person you are. I believe that my philosophy only enhances your own awakened mind.

Now what I really want to tell you may come off as sounding strange. But it's what has truly freed me. For me, the three Buddhas in the Pure Land Mind are the three people I killed. They are the sun, moon, and illuminating light into the next world. The middle one is Amitabha, the motorcycle cop Roderick Rodriguez. To his left and right are the Bodhisattvas Sally and her baby boy.

In your letter you asked about the tattoo on my face. It's the Chinese characters for Amitabha and his assistant Buddhas. My three Buddhas. My tattoo marks the three people I caused to die because of my careless actions.

My dear sister of dharma wisdom, the three Buddhas in the Western Pure Land are there for you, too. They are the three beings that you caused to leave this world. They will welcome you to the next world and teach you how to become a Buddha yourself. Already they have taught you how to swim and teach other suffering beings how to clear the mind from the muck imposed on us by this human world. In truth, we are all suffering on death row until we realize this truth. Please tell me if my words make sense to you.

I love you eternally and invite you to visit me at San Quentin. Then we can meet in person and further discuss what it means to be reborn into pure consciousness, the Pure Land Mind, and to visualize our three Buddhas.

From your loving brother, Marvis le Tron

I read his letter one hundred times, it seems, before I set it aside and deeply breathe, trying to still my palpitating heart. What he reveals in his personal philosophy speaks directly to my heart and mind. He puts spiritual meaning to my charity work, to what I'm trying to accomplish through all my efforts, for myself and for others. No. I don't proclaim to be this Bodhisattva, that's simply too grandiose for little old Lucy Davis, ex-death row con and current Cat Lady. But the concept is exactly what I've ended up doing with my second chance at life.

Despite all the ugly criticism and condemnation because of my crimes and because of my conviction and sentence, I've found that my purpose in life is to ease the confusion and suffering of others like me who now live in the world's most dire of circumstances. Yes. I learned how to swim. Yes. I want to help others learn the secret of surviving life. And all that I've been trying to say, through my books, my podcasts, TV appearances, and Facebook posts, Mr. Marvis le Tron, death row inmate at San Quentin, says it so much more eloquently.

With the letter in hand, I call my nieces in Sedona. “Put me on speaker phone,” I say as soon as Jewel answers. They’re both in their office working on Arastar business sites. “Girls,” I say, barely able to contain my excitement. “Guess what?”

“What, Aunt Lu?” they both say in unison. “Are you ready for another road trip?”

“You guessed right, girls. I want to go to San Quentin as soon as possible.”

“San Quentin,” Jewel asks. “Why?”

“Because I’ve fallen deeply in love. And this time, I know what love really is. It’s what you two have found. It’s a connection of mind and heart with another kindred spirit. It’s not a matter of physical pleasure, like I once thought it was.”

“Aunt Lu,” Jewel says. “Please slow down and explain yourself. Yes, Bev is my soulmate and the love of my life. Have you met someone?”

Previously, I had told them about my correspondence with Marvis le Tron because I tell them everything, and now I describe what he said in his recent letter and even quote parts. “I’m in love with him,” I emphasize. “And I want to meet him as soon as possible.”

“Aunt Lu,” Bev says. “Don’t go overboard. Take your time. Take a deep breath.”

For several minutes, the girls caution me. I know they’re concerned for my emotional wellbeing. Sometimes, they tend to treat me like I’m their tender, vulnerable child, and I love them for this. It feels like they truly care about my welfare. However, I’m their aunt and sometimes I must take a stand for myself so I tell them that it’s possible to quickly recognize true love.

“And besides,” I say. “Marvis isn’t a psychopathic piece of shit. They convicted him over a series of bad unfortunate happenstances. Nothing he did was maliciously premeditated. He didn’t set out to cause harm and mayhem. . . Like John Wayne Gacy or the Zodiac Killer.”

“Take it easy, Aunt,” my nieces echo each other.

“I am, girls. But the truth is, when someone’s on death row time is not a luxury. We’re not living in the age of Jane Eyre when people spent years courting each other. Look. Marvis has invited me to meet him and I want to do so as soon as possible. I’m hoping you girls can come down and cat sit for a week while I’m gone.”

“Would you rather we drive the RV there with you?” Bev asks.

“No, not this time. Not after the last ordeal. I want to drive the Cadi there myself, stay at a hotel, and meet my adorable prince charming.”

I tell them about the three Buddhas and the Chinese characters on his face. They both agree that his religious philosophy matches my own and when they look him up on the cdcr website, they concur that he resembles Mike Tyson.

As soon as I hang up the phone, I write another letter to Marvis le Tron with a picture of me, Bev, and Jewel at Pensacola Beach during the Blue Angels flight on Memorial Day Weekend. It’s one Consuela took, instead of a selfie with the four of us. In my letter, I ask that Marvis call me and arrange for my visitation to the notorious San Quentin.

I even get a bit personal in the letter and say that our meeting will be our first date. “You’re a man I feel like I already know, with my heart and mind,” I write. “You’re so unlike my first boyfriend of thirty years ago. I flipped out over him, like a cow in heat, and he turned out to be a milk dud. A total asshole creep. . .”

Lucy Visits San Quentin

November 18, 2019—April 2020

I'm sitting on a metal stool with a round black vinal cushioned seat, awaiting him. The stool attaches to the floor before the plexiglass panel. I'm reminded of my own time in prison sitting behind the plexiglass talking to my aunt or to newspaper reporters. On the other side.

Finally, through a metal door in the room behind the plexiglass, Marvis le Tron arrives with a male guard escorting him. His hands are cuffed in front and his ankles are also shackled in similar chainwork jewelry. Lovely. But the sight of him, a husky and muscular man of maybe five ten, nicely complexioned with a face as handsome as any I've ever seen, sends tingles through my body. I immediately notice the tattoo around his right eye.

He sees me and winks as he walks to the stool on the other side of the partition. He smiles and I see a gold tooth. My breath seems to stop, all my thoughts disappear, and I'm left only with the beating of my heart.

While standing, Marvis le Tron holds his cuffed hands to the glass partition and I know he wants me to reach out and touch them with mine, despite the barrier between us. I do so and can feel his spirit, his heartbeat, his mind, touching my own as if the partition vaporizes and I'm sensing the firmness of his grip.

There are holes at the bottom of the partition so we can speak without using a phone. It's such a contrast from when Tracy and I tried to touch each other through the glass all those years ago. I never felt such a powerful sensation with her. In comparison to what I'm now feeling. it had been a blasé moment.

I smile and say his name.

He says, "Ms. Lucy Davis. How are you feeling today?"

"I'm happy to meet you," I say as I take down my hands and sit on the stool.

“I feel your spirit,” he says as he takes his seat and places his hands on his lap. I hear his chains rattle; his smile never wanes and his beautiful large brown eyes never stop gazing at me. I can’t turn from him, look aside or down.

We first talk about his tattoo and the three people he sent to the Western Pure Land. “I took them from this world and now am waiting to meet them, my three Buddhas, in the place of wisdom and illumination.”

“And for me,” I say, eager to relate my own life’s story to his philosophy. “Will I meet my three buddhas, the people I took from this world?” It’s a question I’ve been wanting to ask Marvis since his letter described my victims as my buddhas. Such a notion is earth-shattering and it hits me as somehow true. Marvis le Tron has come into my life to bring my spirit and mind to full fruition. He can help me completely understand my life, my good and bad karmic deeds. How could I not fall in love with such a man?

“My sweet Miss Lucy,” he says. “No one possess the power to know what he will actually see in the Pure Land. We can only visualize that our three buddhas will guide us to the land of the moon, sun, and illuminated light. We weren’t born on Earth to know our fates. But we can make determinations about our past, unravel our karma, and eliminate its effect on our minds. In other words, we purify our minds by purging our past karmic acts.”

“Why are we born in a world that brings about such torture and trauma and ultimately death?” I ask. It’s not that I expect Marvis to have all the answers to my existence, like he’s JC or something. Although we’ve only just met, he makes me want to explore every dimension of my life and his. I want to understand his and my own philosophy of life, all at once. That’s how he makes me feel.

“Because we’re given the gift of feeling physical pleasure, we are born on Earth. But we must find our true selves beyond pleasures. And to do that, we must become compassionate and mindful. Our three buddhas will guide us to the ultimate extinction of suffering, trauma, and death.”

“You’re talking about Nirvana?” I ask.

“Nirvana will eventually come. But first, our three buddhas guide us to the Pure Land Mind where nothing can distract us on the path to completely purging our past karma. That’s when we’ll achieve Nirvana.”

“That’s why the Pure Land is a paradise and not a heaven of eternity,” I suggest.

“Eternity exists only in the moment at hand,” he says and pauses with a smile, allowing me to absorb the impact of such a profound statement. Then he adds, “The moment is all we really have.”

I nod in agreement.

“From what I know of your heart and mind, Miss Lucy Davis, I believe you were granted a second chance in life because you’re already a Bodhisattva, a being who postpones her Buddhahood to help others heal their minds from the afflictions of this world.”

I notice the guard looking over at Marvis. He’s listening, I’m sure, although he feigns that he’s nonchalantly minding his own business. Over the years of my incarceration, I learned to know the dispositions of prison guards. They are people with difficult jobs. Some of them are corrupt, some are kind and compassionate, although stern, but all of them want to know what the inmate is saying and what’s going on. That’s their jobs. The guard has nothing to fear, however. Marvis can do nothing to me and because he’s chained to a stool fastened to the floor, the guard is perfectly safe from this death row inmate with disciplinary problems. At least, Marvis wrote

that he had disciplinary problems. I just don't believe he does. He's too smart and poised and wonderful for anything to be wrong with him, at least in my mind.

We start talking about the politics of the country, of San Quentin, and then the guard indicates that our hour is up and he leads Marvis away.

It happens that quickly.

I return to my hotel, alone, not even with a cat, and work on my social sites and call my girls concerning my youthful feelings of being in love and having giddy goose bumps. And of course, I ask about my cats and Jewel assures me that they're fine and as frisky as ever. The next morning, I drive straight home.

Over the following months, until my next visit to San Quentin, Marvis calls me about once a week. It's a cumbersome collect call that I pay for with my debit card. On the very first call we both profess our love to each other. I can't help it. And neither can he, it seems to me. We click in so many ways it's unfathomable. We have a bottomless kind of spiritual love, a meeting of two minds kind of love, a sharing of life's experiences and an understanding of death row and misjustices, kind of love.

Marvis can only speak for half an hour each time but we manage to cover many topics. We discuss how society is changing and that racial biases are coming to a head. He tells me about his trips to Thailand with his uncle Gary. "My uncle met with drug kingpins in the Golden Triangle," he says. "While I took side trips to the tropical islands of Thailand. I never wanted to be a part of my uncle's illegal and dangerous dealings, but he wanted me to enjoy the beauty of SE Asia. I traveled to the beaches of Pattaya and the islands of Phuket, Tarutau, and Koh Samui. I even went to Penang, Malaysia, and Singapore."

I tell Marvis about my cruise to South America with my nieces on their honeymoon. Of course, I talk about Bev and Jewel and their marriage.

Then, unexpectedly, Marvis asks me to marry him.

"Yes," I say, without hesitation. "I'll marry you, Mr. Marvis le Tron Jackson." I know it's an impulsive decision and that my nieces will probably ream me for making it. But after living twenty-two years on death row while facing the threat of death every day, every moment really, I've developed a sense of urgency about life. That is, I feel like I must seize any offer of happiness the moment it happens. I can't delay a decision, hem and haw about it, and let the opportunity slip away. And besides, Marvis is now living in the same boat. From moment to moment, he doesn't know whether Gavin will lift the moratorium and he'll be a "dead man walking." Life seems so fragile and vulnerable to the whim of death. Perhaps it's a feeling only those who have lived or are living on the Row can understand.

"You will fulfill my life when you become my wife, Miss Lucy Davis," Marvis says, then asks me another question that takes me totally off guard. "Where do you want to go on our honeymoon?"

At first, I'm thinking he's being funny, factious. Obviously. But then I remember he's all about visualization and I say, "I've always wanted to honeymoon in Hawaii. It was my dream long ago, before I shattered my life with reckless and delusional impulses."

"I'll take you to my favorite place in all the world," he then says. "Koh Samui. It's the world's most beautiful island. The Pure Land Paradise of Thailand is where we'll go on our honeymoon."

At that moment, our phone call abruptly ends, as it always does because Marvis le Tron, as a disciplinary inmate, has a limited amount of time to speak. Essentially, our connection cuts off.

I immediately go to the internet and look up Koh Samui and fall in love all over again thinking about being there in honeymoon bliss. I plan to tell Marvis all the places on the island I'd like to see, during our next phone call. I never know when that will be because he doesn't either. What a whimsical love life we have.

Day and night, I think about Marvis le Tron. Dream about him. Daily, I call my girls and talk only about him. I talk to my cats about their new daddy. I post blogs on my social site about spiritual love. I read everything I can find on the internet and Amazon Kindle about Pure Land Buddhism.

Twice more I drive the Cadi to San Quentin while the girls babysit my cats. Each visit is even more enthralling than the last. Just seeing Marvis in person and then sharing our Bodhisattva philosophy, which is what I now call my notions about helping women on death row, and others in general, brings me a sense of joy I've never experienced.

Through Marvis, I feel complete in ways I didn't realize needed completion. I had been happy, satisfied simply being a Cat Lady running the Lucinda Bowers Foundation and promoting my books with my girls. Now I realize there's more to myself and that's Marvis le Tron.

I'm about to make a third visit to San Quentin when COVID-19 hits and the entire world shuts down in a global pandemic. Marvis is unable to call me but he sends a letter that puts me on the edge of my seat. I become afraid for him, fearing he might die before we officially marry and seal our union as husband and wife, for eternity. Even if eternity is only the moment at hand.

To my beloved fiancé, Miss Lucy Davis,

In this letter I want to tell you about the sickness rampaging through our prison. San Quentin has one of the largest spreads of COVID in the US. At first, the prison was pretty good about monitoring outbreaks but then last May, eight buses arrived with one hundred twenty men California was transferring from a prison near la Chino. They probably all had COVID-19 and infected the prison like wildfire. We have no protection in here and over half the inmates have tested positive. We're living in massively overcrowded dungeons with no ventilation and welded-shut windows.

They force us to remain in our cells like caged animals ready for the slaughter. We can't go anywhere. No showers. No fresh air. We are seven hundred men packed together in 4 by 9 cells stacked on top of one another. I thought death row was hell before, now it's the bottom of purgatory. Illness surrounds me.

All the time I'm hearing someone shout, "Man down!" Then the staff checks our oxygen levels to see if we're sick. But there isn't room in the hospital ward for everyone. The prison can't keep up with the men falling sick. Out of a prison population of 2200, twenty-seven prisoners have already died, twelve of them were death row inmates.

Outside the prison, people are protesting to free prisoners because of COVID-19. They're talking about inmates within 90 days or less before their release, not us on death row. No one cares about us. We're killers condemned to die anyway. It's like ignorant fucks used to say about the AIDS epidemic when it first hit. That god was cleansing the world of gay sinners. It's how I feel people are looking at our situation. They don't care if the pandemic snuffs us out because we are sinners anyway. What a hell this world can be.

I'm so sorry to write about this troubling news but I must. It's what's going on in the world and I can't keep anything from you, the love of my life. Now my only hope is to make it through this plague so I will see you once again. You are the lotus flower on the lake of my rebirth.

Love you eternally in the moment at hand, your Marvis le Tron

After reading this most troubling letter, I drop everything, put the cats in their portable kennels, place them in the Cadi's back and passenger seats, and drive to Sedona to see the girls. Despite recommendations not to visit family during this time of a raging global pandemic, a phone call isn't sufficient for me. The girls are in quarantine, but I insist on the visit. They agree if we avoid hugs and kisses and keep our hands sanitized. Only they can console me and I want them to do so in person, even without a hug. Besides, I want them to help me make another podcast so I can update my news about the women on death row.

Podcast Episode Seven:

Women on Death Row Updates

Lucy Davis here during the global COVID-19 outbreak. Today, my first update is about the one woman in Oregon who was on death row. That's right. Was. On Aug. 3, 2020 the appellate court commuted the death sentence of Angela McAnulty to life in prison. As I explained in a previous podcast, the trial court had sentenced McAnulty to death for killing her 15-year-old battered and starved daughter in 2009. In a brief to the appellate court, Angela discussed how her court-appointed trial lawyer had given her an inefficient defense. He had convinced her to plead guilty in exchange for a life sentence but hadn't made any deal with the prosecutor who maintained the death sentence.

During Angela's trial, her attorney was working simultaneously on another capital case and thus not devoting his full attention to her case. He failed to investigate Angela's background of childhood trauma that he could have used as mitigating evidence and he failed to show the trial court that Angela would not pose a future danger to society which is a law Oregon requires before the court imposes a death sentence.

My other update concerns the one woman on federal death row. On January 13, of this year, the Federal Government executed Lisa Montgomery. In 2007, a jury in Kansas City had recommended her death sentence for strangling Bobbie Jo Stinnett then cutting her open to steal her unborn baby. Montgomery kidnapped the baby and took it across state lines which made her crime a federal case. She was the sixth woman executed on federal death row. The other women include Mary Surratt, a slave owner and co-conspirator in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and Ethel Rosenberg who the US accused of providing the Soviet Union with top military secrets, along with her husband. The Rosenberg conviction for espionage occurred during the McCarthy witch-hunt era and the Feds may have railroaded the Rosenbergs into a hasty condemnation. Stinnett died by hanging, Rosenberg died in the electric chair, and Montgomery died from lethal injection.

This is Lucy Davis ending my updates about women on death row. Follow me on Facebook and Twitter #survivinglife and remember, eternity is in the moment at hand but history has a way of repeating itself. What's the reality of our current political climate during this global pandemic? Does our society treat all people with equal justice? Do the courts? Are some people doomed to die needlessly because of political whim? Because of their social standing? Because we don't value them?

When I return to Mesa, I focus on writing letters to women on death row. Each day I grow increasingly worried about Marvis but there's nothing I can do because I'm in quarantine along with everyone else. I can't even visit my nieces anymore. My cats alone are keeping me company until I have video chats with the girls. Marvis and I exchange letters and he survives as a young healthy man. But he fears for me because I'm near the vulnerable age of 60.

By April 2021, both Marvis and I receive our second Pfizer shots and by the end of the month I drive to Sedona and leave my cats with the girls, then spin off to San Quentin to visit my fiancé after not having seen him for over a year. I may have become a visualizing Buddhist, but I thank Jesus and his father god for seeing us through the pandemic. At least so far.

Between April and June 2021, I drive to San Quentin three more times while the girls stay with my cats, of course. We are all vaccinated now and happy to get our lives back to a semblance of normalcy. I'm eager about my upcoming marriage scheduled for June 14th.

Marvis wants a Buddhist ceremony to set our marriage on the right path and without hesitation I agree, although I'd agree to a Hindu, Fakir, or Jewish ceremony, for all I care. I just want to formalize the union with my fiancé for the eternity in each moment that we live, that's how strongly I feel about Marvis le Tron Jackson.

Over the phone, I arrange for a Buddhist monk and nun from the Berkeley Pure Land Monastery to offer meditations at the ceremony. I give them a large donation and tell the director that anyone will do as long as they can recite Pure Land sutras and a few other sutras that Marvis suggested to me.

I also ask two reporters to attend. My girls suggest that the publicity would be good for my books and foundation. The first reporters I contact, a man and woman from the LA Times, quickly jump at the chance probably because of my fame or perhaps notoriety.

The man is especially enthusiastic about attending the event because he's writing a piece about women attracted to men on death row. I'm guessing he wants to paint the women as somehow not quite right in the head and the death row men as knowing how to manipulate and charm a woman into falling for him. It's well known that men on death row, unlike their female counterparts, receive lots of mail from women interested in relationships, women from around the US and even from Europe and Australia. Bundy had lots of such female fans. So did Jeffrey Dahmer and Charles Manson. I suggest this to the reporter and he tells me, "Usually these women are against the death penalty and come from abusive backgrounds. They welcome a nonphysical, non-threatening relationship that won't last forever."

I don't respond to the reporter's insinuations. Why should I bother to explain that his hypothesis isn't the case with me? Sure, my childhood was abusive and so was my first relationship, but that's not why I'm eager to marry Marvis. We have a meeting of the minds and I've never found that in a man. I doubt I'll even read this reporter's piece, but I invite him to my wedding because I don't really care what he has to say. I know myself, for myself, by myself and I know that I'm in love with a man who thinks and feels the same way I do. It hardly matters what anyone else has to say about us.

When I was a little girl mom used to tell me that whenever my horrible brother called me a name, simply say, "sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." I had tried her approach a few times, but it always backfired because my brother teased me more and sometimes actually threw sticks and stones at me and caused me more distress. I had believed my brother was right in whatever degrading name he called me. This was long ago and I've become tone deaf to anything that doesn't add a positive view concerning what I'm all about. Especially now that I'm marrying the only man I've ever really loved with my very essence.

A Wedding at San Quentin

June 14, 2021

A week before the wedding, my nieces and I, with my cats, drive the RV to a campground near the prison. In Berkeley, we buy outfits for the wedding. I find a lowcut, ivory laced dress with trumpet sleeve and a thick black leather belt. The girls pick it out for me and agree it makes me look stunning. They buy themselves matching ebony jumpsuits with wide split legs and flared sleeves. They tell me they don't want to distract from the bride and I tell them they're both too gorgeous not to. As a final touch, we all agree to wear our jade jolly buddha charms on gold chain necklaces.

The ceremony takes place at 4 PM in the prison's visiting room which serves as the wedding chapel for death row inmates and their brides. In fact, two marriage ceremonies occur just prior to ours. I'm sure the reporter interviewed those women for his piece on death row wives and girlfriends.

Unless Marvis can somehow find freedom in an appeal, or gain a pardon like me, which is highly unlikely, we'll never be able to physically seal our union. Because of his disciplinary restrictions as a Condemned Grade B inmate, Marvis isn't eligible for a forty-hour family visit in a private, apartment-like facility, like the Condemned Grade A inmates are.

At the wedding we'll at least have human contact, although guards will always be present. Over the phone, Marvis says he looks forward to touching me for real and seeing me dress like an angel.

When the event finally arrives, the girls and I enter the visiting room along with the two reporters. A corrections officer, Sgt. Dupont, is present to oversee the service. Three male guards are also in the room along with the Warden's Executive Assistant, Ms. Rosemary Taylor.

The monk and nun are lighting jasmine incense on a table altar at the front of the room. They are both Caucasian, have shaved heads and wear orange robes. The middle-aged monk is pasty white and lanky, the nun is thin, about my age, and has a pleasant smile. She's the kind of spiritual teacher I'd like to know and I'm hoping to at least talk to her after the ceremony, about Pure Land Buddhism.

In the center of the altar is a wooden statue of Amitabha, a vase of roses, a bowl of oranges as an offering, and three candles which I alone will be lighting during the ceremony because the prison won't allow Marvis to go near matches or the candles.

When the monk and nun begin reciting Pure Land sutras, a guard enters the room escorting Marvis who is wearing his orange jumpsuit with CDRC on the back and his chain jewelry on his ankles, waist, and wrists. My groom stands by the Amitabha Buddha and the guard steps aside.

No one from my groom's family is present to witness our marriage. His uncle and older brothers have left him to his fate on death row, rather like my own family had done to me years before. Marvis previously told me his sons wouldn't be present because he cut off contact with them after his conviction and KiKi lives in Thailand. I didn't press the issue but I suspect it's because they're still young and he just doesn't want them tied to a daddy on the Row. I really haven't asked him anything about his past relationships or his childhood mostly because our time together is so brief and we fill it with discussions about our present lives and philosophies. We live eternally in the moment at hand.

Marvis smiles and holds out his chained hands gesturing me to stand at his side. I feel a flame at the core of my being as I near the man I'm about to marry. In my mind, he's the Buddha himself standing beside. He is all I ever wanted and all I will ever need.

My sister was right; it suddenly strikes me. I'm middle-aged now and long ago, when we were kids, Tracy remarked that I probably wouldn't find love until this very time in my life. Okay Tracy, I'm thinking, I get the last laugh because this was all worth the wait.

My nieces take pictures with their smartphones that the prison allows them to bring into the room and so do the two reporters.

I stand before Marvis, our hands clasp together, and the flame inside me explodes throughout the room because I'm feeling his physical touch. I can't tell if the fire comes from my very source of life or from Marvis or from the Buddha on the altar.

"Your touch is a powerful visualization," Marvis utters. "I feel the illuminating light of Amitabha fill our perceptions. I'm released from death row even if for only a moment. You're the best thing that's happened in my life."

"You are the same for me," I can think of nothing better to say. We're not ready to exchange the vows we've prepared. We haven't revealed to each other what we will say, but I spent many days reading Pure Land sutras in preparation.

The ceremony begins when the monk talks about cultivating mindfulness and loving-kindness which he calls bodhicitta, then he instructs me to release the hands of Marvis and light the candles as an offering to Amitabha Buddha.

"Namo Amitabha," The monk chants with the nun. He then nods to Marvis to begin with his vows.

"Om Gate Gate Para Gate Para Sam Gate Bodhi Saha," Marvis chants and then says, "This is our path of transformation into a union of consciousness. We awaken to help each other awaken. Our marriage is a vehicle for helping others end their suffering and find contentment, peace, and wisdom, no matter where they are in life or where the world has placed them. I

cherish our love today, tomorrow, and in the Western Pure Land of the sun, moon, and illuminated light of never-ending life. You are my goddess of transformation, Ms. Lucy Davis. You are my life sentence. I'm proud and happy to be yours."

The nun smiles at me, prodding me to now say my vows.

"You've completed me when I didn't know I was incomplete," I say, tightly grasping his hands chained at his front. "Together we help each other grow and generate compassion for those suffering from restrictive minds. We can do anything together. We inspire each other with a profound understanding of the nature of living. Together, we live in paradise where no one or nothing can disturb our practice of achieving complete clarity without the fetters that chain us to ignorance. We live in the Pure Land Mind for the benefit of those unaware of their potential Buddhahood and we'll never regress from the path of becoming Buddhas."

Jewel Anne and Bev hand me the two simple gold bands I bought the day before in Berkeley. Marvis and I exchange the rings and the ceremony ends with the monk pouring a vessel of water over our joined hands and saying, "This symbolizes your togetherness as creators of good deeds, partners devoted to wisdom, compassion, and harmony of thought, speech, and actions."

I'm terribly sad when the ceremony suddenly ends and the guard rather abruptly leads Marvis away and out the side door. He barely has a moment to look back at me, but he does, and he winks and whispers "I love you, my wife."

Then he's gone behind the metal door and I'm thinking that most likely my husband and I will never again feel each other's flesh until we make the ultimate journey to the Pure Land Paradise of Amitabha.

Chapter 10: Living in Honeymoon Bliss

June 15, 2021

Koh Samui, a Tropical Island Paradise

Like the quiet,
The human
Falls against my ears,
As the murmurs of the ferry stretch
Across the sea.

Approaching island
Solitude,
Where the evening moon-sun
Scatters stones
With little homes.

It's the horizon I like.

All night long, I can't stop thinking about Marvis Le Tron Jackson. My husband. About our wedding. About feeling his physical touch penetrate my skin and heart. It was so fleeting, the time we had together in the flesh without the glass partition between us. Without seeing my own reflection in front of his face. It was so momentary to hear his vows to me, to say mine to him. And then, wham! Zap! It was over. Fate accompli.

Now, here I am without him, my husband, in my RV bed with four cats sleeping at my feet, Graham and Mai Tai are at my pillow. I want my husband with me but the guards took him away. I can only anticipate our meeting again, face-to-face, but always and forever with a glass panel between us, as if we're protecting ourselves from the pandemic. I'm left to visualize what we had for that brief ceremony and pretend to re-live it over and over again in my sleeping dreams, in my daydreams, and in my waking hours.

The next day at noon, as pre-arranged, the warden grants Marvis a non-contact visit with me for two hours.

I'm sitting before the glass panel in the visitation room. No one else is present except for the guard at the door on the inmates' side of the plexiglass panel. The one other person who had been in the room on the visitor's side has just left. Her visitation with a death row inmate ended when I sat down.

I quietly await the arrival of my new husband, Mr. Marvis le Tron Jackson. He has promised to take me on our honeymoon to Koh Samui via visualization. He promises it will be as real as any actual honeymoon and that we'll be living in the Pure Land of honeymoon bliss.

I'm thinking about what Marvis said to me during our wedding when suddenly, the door on the other side of the panel creeks open. My husband enters the room dressed in his orange jumpsuit and wearing his wrist and ankle cuffs. His Chinese tattoo of the three buddhas highlights his face. A guard in a gray uniform follows immediately behind him. When Marvis sees me, his smile glows brilliantly, and so does mine, I'm sure. I can feel his essence break through the plexiglass and reach me. I tremble, as if he's touching me once again.

Marvis sits before me, the panel between us. He places his cuffed hands on his lap and I see the gold band on his finger. "How are you doing, Mrs. Jackson?" he asks.

"I'm fine, husband," I answer and touch my jade buddha charm with the hand that bears a gold wedding band. I deeply inhale, waiting for him to send us on the honeymoon journey he promised.

"Are you ready, my dear wife? To journey by ferry to Koh Samui? Our island paradise."

"I've been ready all my life," I say. "There's nothing I want more than to live with you in honeymoon bliss. Should I close my eyes?"

“No. Keep them on my eyes, on the three buddhas on my face. I’m not closing mine during our journey because I want to fully see you every moment of our honeymoon. Can you smell the frangipani garlands we are wearing?”

“Yes,” I say. “And the gardenias and honeysuckle you’ve woven into my hair.”

Marvis places his palms upon the plexiglass between us. The chains jingle as they drape from his wrists to his waist. I place my palms against his and feel his warmth, as if I’m touching his flesh like I did the day before during our wedding.

“Now, Mrs. Jackson, listen to the murmuring ferry travel across the blue green sea from the main land to our island paradise. Do you see the water casting a purple hue?”

“Yes,” I answer. “And I see the greenness change to deep aquamarine.”

“Perfect,” he tells me. “That’s from the coral reefs and the shallow shoals. It’s evening time, an hour before the sun sets into the Western Pure Land and the moon rises in the east. Tonight, the sun-moon illuminates the many islands in the Gulf. The calm, peaceful sea sparkles with six-star bursts. Can you see the sun-moon on the horizons?”

“I do,” I say. “It’s clear in my mind. I see everything you’re describing.”

“We’re landing at the shore. I’m helping you off the ferry into the warm sea that’s a constant 86 degrees, like bath water. You take my hand and I lead you to a long tan beach where pillaring coconut palms sway in the warm ocean breeze. Purple and yellow orchids blossom in the palms and fill the breeze with fragrance.”

“I can smell the flowers and see the palm trees dance to the beating of my heart.”

“Exactly,” Marvis says. “Now we’re walking down the beach, hand in hand, the evening breeze blows your hair as it shimmers in the setting sun.”

“What am I wearing? What do you wear?” I ask.

“We are barefoot. You wear a batik dress of rainbow colors—purple, blue, red, yellow, and green. I’m dressed in a batik sarong and am shirtless. My hair hangs to my shoulders in many long braids with colorful beads.”

“Like Bluebird beads,” I suggest feeling a sense of levity because I’m so very happy. “Where are we going?” I think to ask. “To our honeymoon resort?”

“No. There are no resorts on our island paradise. Very few people find their way here. . .”

“Only those who are mindful and calm and live to generate warmheartedness toward others.” I’m repeating something that Marvis wrote in one of his letters to me.

“That’s right. We’re staying in an isolated bungalow surrounded by leaning coconut palms, hibiscus bushes and orchids in fragrant frangipani trees. Our bungalow has a front veranda, a thatched roof, and two side windows with crisscross bamboo shutters. It stands on stilts one hundred yards from the long porcelain beach.”

“A rustic tropical island hideaway? That sounds perfect, my husband.”

“Every day of our honeymoon we lounge on the porcelain beach, eat yellow mangoes, and drink chilled coconut water with brandy in coconut shells. About mid-morning, we watch the clouds drift in from the sea. Sprinkles begin to fall drop by drop, then the monsoon gathers force and pelts us with warm refreshing rain. We retreat to our veranda and listen to the howling winds whip the palm fronds around our bungalow and when the roads become streams flowing into the rice paddies near the beach, we run down them, hand in hand, splashing through mud puddles and feeling free and wild. Our laughter is louder than the clashing thunder because the midday monsoon is more thrilling than. . .”

“Disneyland rides,” I suggest.

“Yes. Pirates of the Caribbean. Drenched and muddy, we return to our bungalow hideaway, nestle onto our bed, and watch geckos on the ceiling stalk and eat insects. We fall asleep in each other’s arms then wake early in the morning and open the shutters to a bright cheery day that invites us to sit on the veranda, prop up our feet, and drink coffee and eat mangoes and sticky rice.”

“I can hear the surf and the breeze whispering to the coconut fronds,” I say. “I’m touching you, holding your hand, feeling the braids of your hair, counting the beads. . .”

“Exactly,” my husband says. “And now, dear wife, we’re walking on the soft sand along the gentle surf that covers our bare feet.”

“Like spa waters,” I say as I look into his brown eyes. They are clear, pure, and beautiful. I also see his grin, his gold tooth, and always his three buddha tattoo.

“At the end of the beach we arrive at tall stone outcroppings in the surf. People of the paradise island call these rocks Grandfather and Grandmother because they represent the sexuality of a man and a woman.”

“The phallus and vagina?”

“It’s pure where we are. Nobody is a player in this paradise, like I used to be before I ended up on death row and learned how to distinguish what is real from what is unreal. In our island paradise there are no ill-begotten thoughts of lust. I’m not a man who subjects the woman he loves into fulfilling his sexual desires. On this island of honeymoon bliss, there are no misapprehensions of reality.”

“And I no longer believe what I used to believe about love,” I say, “when I loved the first man I thought loved me. It had been nothing but a misjudgment of my reality. . .”

“A delusion. You no longer believe in false claims about love and I no longer believe that my lust for the unreal brings me satisfaction. Because I’m now with you. Together, we join in consciousness because what we are seeking is what we already possess. We have each other in the place of paradise and when we touch, we experience the truth of our existence. We are no longer separate. We transcend our animal instincts to become godlike. We are the observers of our existence. Our reality is heartfelt, mindful, and spiritual. The physical is merely a tool to achieve this awareness. And with this awareness, we help others. That is our goal in paradise. In the Pure Land Mind.”

“This is what we achieve together,” I say and feel his warmth fill my body like an elixir.

“We learn each other’s dance because we are each other’s bodhisattva.”

“I have known the Bodhisattva I have become. Because I’m married to you.” By his grin, I can see my words please him.

“Are there hula dancers on our paradise island?” I think to ask, remembering my longstanding dream of having a honeymoon in Hawaii. “I’ve wanted to watch hula dancers since I was a little girl. I believed they were a part of any island paradise.”

“No,” my husband says. “There are no hula dancers on our island of honeymoon bliss. Instead, beautiful women dance to flute, harp, and drum music. They are Amitabha’s arhats, his greatest supporters. Their dance tells the story of living with sublime compassion. They have long nails and agile slender fingers that bend with their dance. They wear sparkling costumes, tall cone hats, and move as gracefully as deer. Their voices are angelic as they sing the Pure Land sutras. We watch their dance then continue down the beach, following the footprints we left behind that are now in front of us because the scrubbing surf of time hasn’t washed them

away. We follow the curved beach. Along the way we stop at a beach diner to drink the juice of passion fruit and mangosteens and eat the day's catch with papaya salads."

"Do we see our three buddhas?" I ask, looking at his magnificent tattoo. "Are they with us on our honeymoon paradise?"

"The painted eye of buddha is everywhere we go in paradise, surrounded by the gods of all religions. In paradise, we live in the moment of eternity and keep peace within ourselves. The world no longer stands in our way with its difficulties, setbacks, and conflicts."

"In paradise, are we dreaming about our existence?" I ask.

"No. We are now awake," he smiles at me with his eyes.

"And will we never be apart again?"

"Only in the physical realm. . ."

Suddenly, the door guard approaches Marvis and wakes me from my visualization when he says, "Your two hours have ended."

"When we are apart," Marvis says before the guard physically leads him away, "Visualize our paradise and look for me on the horizon where I'll be waiting for you to join me in honeymoon bliss. We'll never regress back to this world of defilement or any other world of samsara. Just remember that when we stop for the moment, we clear our thoughts of all its worldly clutter and awake to realize that we are alone and yet, surrounded by the sea."

I watch the clanking metal door close behind my husband and sit quietly for a moment to absorb what I've experienced and all that he's said to me.

I want to stay where I am, indefinitely, but it's time for me to leave the room. Another woman has entered to visit with another condemned inmate. I don't know if she's a girlfriend, a wife, sister or even mother of the man she's come to see.

I'll return to Mesa tonight, with the girls and my cats, to wait until my next letter or the next opportunity to see him or hear his voice over the phone. But I can't stop my life, even in the moment at hand, because I'm still alive and as long as I am, there are things I want to do for myself and for the benefit of others. They did not execute me. They did not stop my song.

Enjoying the seascape, nothing else

There's nothing like the sea
Expanding out in front of me
While evening rays of liquid gold
Catch the splashing surf unfold
And westward winds blow soothing air
Around my breasts, through my hair.
And I upon these porcelain sands
Eat yellow mangoes from the land.