

*Inga-Pala-Bana*

*and*

*Edam the Elder  
and Saleh*

*Past Life Recollections of  
Marie Fox O'Brien*

## **A List of Books**

Marie's Story - An Extraordinary Odyssey

### **Channeled Books**

Martin's Original Writings

Revelations

The Divine Nature of Man

Lessons

A new Endeavor

Concepts

Prayers

### **Past Lives**

Moses

Zorah

Rose

Joseph II

Edam the Elder and Saleh

and Inga - Pala - Bana

Peter and Ann

Romulus

Remembrances-The Holy Family

Martin's Life Remembered

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## **Introduction**

**Monday 12/14/92 9:05AM**

You sit there, my love, so anxious for my words, so full of love and trust, so anxious to please me in all ways. Take my hand, my beloved, and go back with me in time to another life we shared. Close your eyes, my darling, and hear my voice. Listen now.

**Inga - Pala - Bana**

**9:57AM**

I am in a huge cave. I am conscious of the fire-light flickering on the stone walls of the cave. The fire is big, in the center of the cave, constantly fed by twigs and small branches. It is not cold. The fire, I think, must be as much for light as for warmth. Perhaps for cooking too.

I sit with my back against the wall of the cave, not too close to the fire, though I can feel its warmth. I am happy. I am holding my new son in my arms. I never imagined such happiness. I never had anything of my own before. I am still sore from his birth. There was no one with me when he was born. It is our way. I knew a little of what to expect, and I had prepared some fibers for cleaning, and a wrap for the new baby fashioned out of leaves and fiber. I needed nothing else. I had a friend who helped me with these things. Her baby had died. Mine hadn't, and as I sat there I remembered the glorious moment of birth when I first saw him and then held him in my arms. I had already decided he would be called Pala. I did not know what my mother had

called me at birth. As long as I could remember I had been called Inga, but I had only a dim memory of my mother. I did not know if she was still alive, for it was our custom for the children to belong to everybody.

I knew I would not do what my mother had done. I knew I would never let my son forget me. After he was born I cleaned him off with the fiber and then little by little, gently, I licked him clean. I had seen animals do this, and ever after the young had known their mother. He was sweet tasting and sweet smelling. I knew he would not forget. I knew he would always remember the smell of my breasts and the taste of my milk. I knew he would love me.

The fire became too warm and I moved further from it. One of the women passing by helped me. She smiled at Pala but said nothing. As I sat holding this child I remembered how it came to be that he was born. When each of us first became woman, lots were chosen to see which of the men would first have us. Then there were others, chosen by lot as well, never the same twice. I grew used to this after a while, as did all the others of my age, but I was glad when I

knew I was with child, for I then knew that I was free. No one would touch me. No one knew whose child it was. I was safe for a very long time. As long as I suckled I was safe, and as long as I was safe I could keep my child with me.

**12/18/92 3:27PM**

When I stopped hurting, I gathered up all that remained of what had come out of me after Pala as I knew I should, and I took these dried things to the place where I had given birth and added them to the mound I knew grew with each new child. That way the child stays safe.

I was not sure how much I believed of all I had been told. I wanted to believe that it was I who would keep my child safe, but I knew better than to defy powers I knew nothing about. Next, I took my child and held him tight and went to the opening of the cave. I caught my breath as I always did when I saw the deep blue beauty of the sea in the distance. I stood for a moment in awe. Then, slowly, carefully, with my child held close to me, I wound my way down the steep rocky

path to the flatlands below. The trees were like a canopy, and I knew my way well through the dim floor of the forest to where I wanted to go.

There was nobody at the stream when I got there, and it took me only a moment to plunge in with Pala in my arms. He gasped when the water first covered him, and I laughed at his surprise. Soon he grew accustomed, and we were as one in the warm welcome water. I loved it when I was alone, and there was no one to disturb the peaceful quiet. Then I realized that I was not alone, nor would I be totally alone ever again. I knew this for an absolute truth. Pala and I would never be apart.

After a long time, I climbed out of the water, and almost instantly we were dry. I looked for leaves and fibers to fashion a sling to carry pala, and this took a long while. Soon after it was time to feed Pala again, and I sat with my back to the trunk of a towering tree and knew total peace. It was always this way when my child took from me what he needed to live. I marveled each time it happened. Pala was almost a soundless baby. He had cried out at birth, and not at all since then in distress. He knew no want. Whenever he

nuzzled I was ready for him. He knew always the steady beat of my heart, the warmth of my body. I knew that soon he would grow out of this total dependence, but I put the thought from my mind. I did not like to think of anything changing.

I knew as I walked back up the path to the cave that there would be food waiting for me. The earth was rich, and each day the women gathered fruits and roots and nuts and brought this bounty back for all to share. The men did nothing. That was their problem, I thought. There was no leader and so no one followed. Their pleasure was in taking certain roots and making of them a mead, a brew that made them crazy. Sometimes they fought each other, and sometimes right in the midst of the struggle they would fall senseless and stay senseless for hours. Sometimes they would grow hoarse with yelling and then fall senseless. Some drank more than others. The children would watch wide eyed long after the women had fled, taking with them the very young. This did not happen each night, but often, and there was no telling in advance when it would occur.

Some of the men did not drink of this brew again once they had tried it, and they would sit quietly and watch the rest. One of these men became my friend.

**Sunday, 12/20/92 4:03PM**

He was just sitting at the edge of the men's group one day and I was just at the edge of the women's group when I looked up and found his eyes on me. I was not pleased. I did not want any man's attention. I did not return his smile, and he turned away, but after that I was often aware of his presence. I was feeding Pala one day in the woods when he came upon me. He watch for a few minutes and then went on his way. I had stopped being alarmed by his presence --- I knew he meant no harm --- but I did not know what to think. It was not natural for men and women to be together except for one purpose. He would be ridiculed and so would I. For a long time he seemed to be forever where I was, often just out of sight, but I could tell he was there. When I walked to the stream with

Pala, I knew he was following me, and I knew he would sit a little way off and watch us. Sometimes I would see him, sometimes not, until I began to walk back and I would turn and find him following a little way behind. Once when I was walking along more quickly than usual I tripped on a root and fell. Pala was not hurt, but he cried in alarm and so did I. Then I felt hands lifting me up, more gently than I had ever been touched, and he watched as I comforted Pala and rubbed my ankle. I held Pala out to him. He shook his head and looked frightened. I smiled at him for the first time, and he smiled back. We spoke for the first time, and I was less frightened by it than I thought I would be. He seemed more like a woman than a man in his gentleness. I asked his name and when he told me I laughed, for Bana meant “tree” in our language. He did not look like a tree, I told him. He smiled and said he had been given this name when he became a man because he was tall like a tree, taller than any of the other men.

We went back to the cave separately, he behind me on the path. We knew it would not do to be seen together, but as I stumbled with my sore

ankle on the rocky path upward to the cave, I felt arms steadying me, and I knew they were his. He stayed outside the cave some time after I went in, and I found myself watching for him. I had never known a man like this before. I liked him, and as I fed Pala I began for the first time to wonder who was his father. I knew it was not this young man, but I hoped it was someone like him.

Slowly we got bolder when we were some distance from the cave and out of sight of all. One day we walked all the way to the ocean. I had never dreamed that this was possible. I had known its beauty from afar, but close it was even more wondrous. I let the silky sand run through my fingers and toes and sat Pala beside me. He sat well by then, but he frightened himself by putting his sandy fingers in his mouth, I brushed away the sand, but it did not stop his crying. I let him suck on my finger and that satisfied him. We stayed longer than we should have, and all the time I wanted desperately to go in the water, but I was afraid of being swallowed by the monsters I had been told lived in the sea. It was almost dark when we got back to the cave, and I went

ahead as usual. It was a long time before Bana came in. I was glad he was so careful.

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# **Edam the Elder and Saleh**

**Monday, 7/26/93 1:10 PM**

Martin asked me today to remember a life of hardship we shared in a distant land long ago. When I tried, I could first see a double line of women shackled together by a rope running down the middle of the column, and each person is tied to this rope around the wrist closer to it. We are all barefoot and thinly clad, and the stones are cruel underfoot, particularly when we are forced to run. There are soldiers on each side in short armor over short tunics, and high foot coverings of soft leather strapped almost to their knees. They are carrying whips which they brandish and then flick at the women for no reason other than pleasure. For pleasure too, they flick at the women in front to force them to break into a run, thus forcing the entire column with them. Some stumble, and the lash is harder. Some cry out in protest, and they too are forced into silence by the fury of the whip.

I feel the tears flowing down my face, but I do not dare brush them away. My fear grows each instant, and I see over and over again the sleep-

ing village so cruelly aroused in the dark just before dawn by the shouts of the invaders. They are in such numbers that there seems to be one for each house in the village. When we stumbled from our beds we were faced with a stout soldier of middle age brandishing his sword and shouting for silence. Behind us stood our children, abruptly awakened by the noise, huddled together in fear. When I tried to hold them in my arms, the soldier grabbed me roughly by the arm and pulled me away. My beloved sprang forward to defend me, and I begged him not to invite death, to think of the children. He dropped his arms, and his head sank in defeat.

In a few minutes, two younger soldiers, these not in armor but in simple tunics, appeared in the doorway, and the old soldier roughly shoved me toward them. The children cried out in pain, and the soldier cruelly slapped the youngest and commanded silence. She was just three and lacked understanding, and began to cry even more loudly until her sister, seven, clapped a hand over her mouth and held her tightly. The boy, five, stood silent stoically looking to his father to know what to do.

I was herded along with all the other women into the central square and watched as the same soldiers who had seized us went back into the houses and brought out the men, whom they herded into a group some distance away. I could not catch a glimpse of my beloved. Left alone, the children cried piteously. The sound drowned all of us in sorrow.

Finally, the same soldiers gathered all the children together, and I saw with gratitude that they seemed gentler with them. We stood there in three large groups, fearful, shocked, silent. Then they culled. One of the armored soldiers separated from the main groups the old, the infirm, the maimed, and led them away to the end of the village. We could hear anguished cries for what seemed an eternity, and then there was silence. When the soldiers returned, they were stony faced, but we could see splatters of blood on their persons.

Then began the task of tying together in columns as I have described, and as soon as one group was secured, we were forced to walk where the soldiers directed. I longed to turn around. I longed to protest. I longed to dare all

to escape, but I knew that there was no escape. I knew too, that I had to live for my children, that they needed me no matter what happened immediately, and I refused to believe that I would not ever again see them or my true love. I needed to be strong. (660 words)

**Wednesday, 7/28/93 2:17 PM**

It was a long time before I saw my family again, but as I stood there helplessly that morning watching those I loved best being cruelly treated, I wanted to shout out my rage and to know the finality of the sword of the enemy, but I knew in my soul that this would be cowardice, that to live for another day was the ultimate test of courage. I tried to speak to my wife and children with my eyes, since we were bound to silence by our captors, and before they led me away I knew with absolute certainty that they had seen the love I tried to convey, and that we would one day know great happiness again. So although I did no cringing before these soldiers, I was intensely aware of the humiliation all of us suffered, being forced to abandon our families --- our wives, our

children, our mothers, our fathers --- to a fate we could not even dimly envision. All I took comfort in was a firm belief that the day would come when our situations would be reversed, that we would be the controllers, that our captors would know the humiliation of defeat and capture. This was not the first time our village had been pillaged. For as long as I could remember, strife had torn our land, and leader after leader had promised peace and given us war. I counted myself blessed these past few years that I had not been called upon to rape and pillage in the name of manhood, that I had been afforded peaceful years with the wife I had loved since we were children together and the children we had borne in love and gratitude.

It was in the nature of our people to exist peacefully at all times, and from the time I was a boy I had tried to fathom how a handful of men calling themselves leaders had the power of life and death over all of us, and could play at conflict as though it were a game, suffering little themselves, chancing the lives of others in the hope of great gain and temporary supremacy. There did not seem to be any limit to the greed of our

leaders, and the people followed, docile and mute, powerless in the face of force.

My soul shriveled when I heard the sounds of death, and I thanked the gods that my children were strong of mind and body, and that my wife knew no physical or mental fault herself. At least they would live in the hands of these barbaric soldiers, and I shut out of my mind the pictures that kept intruding of the indignities that they could know in captivity, and tried to concentrate instead on the strength of character and the love that each one knew, even the youngest child.

The sun was beating down fiercely when the men who had not yet been led away stood in a small circle, silent, each lost in thought, each one having seen his family led away without being able to speak the briefest words of love and farewell. The crying of the children tore at all our hearts, and it took all the self discipline I had to watch as the whips cruelly punished even the youngest child for crying out. In the end, all the sounds we heard as they marched the little ones away were the shuffling of the soldiers' feet and the muted whimpering that the children were unable to control.

Then a great outsized officer took us in charge and bade each of us pile into the center of the opening all the household goods from each home that were of any value. The judgment was not left to us. A soldier directed us in all we did, and in a short time this task was completed, and each one of us was given a sack to fill with all the booty collected, and then a second sack. As we worked we slowly became aware that we would be carrying these sacks, and the more clever managed to pack the lightest items first. When the task was completed, we lifted our burdens, two bags each, and were commanded to follow the lead soldier in a single line.

We had not been long on the road when the smell of smoke reached our nostrils, and we knew without looking back that our village was burning, that all that would be left of all our industry for so many years would be a pile of rubble and ashes. In a sense I was contented with this destruction. It meant that the home I had lived in and loved in would know no desecration, that it would remain always in my memory a place of beauty, that someday we would, in the

fortunes of war, be together again, and that with my hands I would build a new home for those I loved. (828 words)

## **2:45 PM**

We walked all day without respite of any kind. The sun was cruelly hot, and the ground cruelly hard. Anyone who faltered knew the lash, and anyone who collapsed was cut loose from the column and abandoned. I almost began to think that it would be wise to pretend to collapse and chance surviving in the barrenness, but then I saw one of the soldiers cut loose someone forward in the column and with a single stroke of his sword cut off her head as she lay helpless. The severed head rolled a few inches from the body, and as we passed by, we averted our gazes from the bloody sight.

The anger of the soldiers seemed to grow with each passing hour, and the frequency of their cruel acts increased accordingly. I was numb with fatigue and thirst, and my feet seemed to move forward of their own volition. I knew I

had no choice but to survive in any way that I could, I knew with absolute certainty that one day I would be needed by the family I cherished more than life itself, and this certainty made faltering unthinkable.

For some time after the sun passed the noonday mark, we could see a spot on the horizon that grew in size each passing hour. Finally I could discern what looked like a fortified town or castle. I could not tell which. Maybe both. The walls around the fortification were high and of red stone, and above them rose domes of red, varying in size and height. As we drew closer I realized that it was not as large a compound as I had thought. The gates were open as we approached, and our guards picked up the pace in their eagerness.

Inside the gate lining the walls were crudely sheltered hovels. We were led past these into an entrance to the great domed building that loomed over everything else and down a hallway to a large room with an earthen floor. High on one wall was a tiny opening, barely admitting light. As our eyes grew accustomed to the dimness, several of the women spied an earthenware ves-

sel in the corner three quarters full of water, and there was much pushing and shoving to reach into the water with cupped hands. The soldiers laughed at this desperation and joked that it was a good thing we had been cut loose from our bonds or we would have trampled each other in our eagerness. Finally reason prevailed among us, and we grew more orderly in our behavior. The water was brackish, but I drank it gratefully and hoped that the supply would be replenished. After we had drunk, we sank gratefully to rest along the walls of the room, still too exhausted to even look at each other, much less speak, had we been allowed to. One far corner of the room was clearly intended as a place to relieve ourselves, and one or two did so. Most of us were so parched that we had no such need. As I sat there, I tried to visualize my husband and children, and I prayed that they were safe. I knew my husband's strength and cleverness, and I was sure he would survive whatever treatment they devised for him. The children gave me more concern. They were so young, but I knew their docility and helpfulness, and I hoped that both these qualities would serve them well for how-

ever long our captivity lasted. (585 words)

**Saturday, 7/31/93 4:11 PM**

At first we lived in hope that each day would be our last day in this dungeon. Then we lost count of the days, and it became harder and harder to hope. Once or twice a day -- we were never sure how often it would be -- the door opened just long enough for food to be thrown in onto the floor. Sometimes it was bread. Sometimes it was slop, remains from the table in liquid that was not always identifiable. Sometimes, I thought, it was dregs of wine, sometimes foul tasting liquid, rancid and bitter.

At first we were polite and reasonable, sharing equally and waiting patiently for our portions. Before long we were reduced to the behavior of animals, leaping on the food to be first and secure the largest share, violently and brutally pushing aside the weaker. It was the same with water. We never knew when the supply would be replenished, and in the end we had to be kept under control by a guard while the jug was being filled. He brandished his sword, and we cowered with fear. When he was gone, the scramble

began. The stench grew daily, and when finally someone came to pour corrosive over the excrement, the acrid fumes were even worse than the stench they were designed to correct.

I tried at first to keep track of the days, but soon I lost track. For a while I made a slight tear in the edge of my garment before sleeping, but as we grew weaker, day and night became confused. We slept to escape at first. Then we slept out of weakness. More and more of the women barely awakened to eat and drink before slipping back into unconsciousness. When I noticed one of my sisters who was too weak to scramble for food, I tried to secure enough to share with her. It was harder to share water. There was so little to go round. Gradually we stopped talking completely. At first we had tried to keep each other's spirits up with conversation, words of hope and courage. Then we began to speak of the joys we had known in our life before the soldiers came. Slowly we found speaking too wearing and silence became constant. Once in a while we would hear a quiet sobbing and turn our eyes upon our sorrowing sister. We were too weak to do more.

I kept myself alive, literally, by willing myself to remember all the beauty of the life I had known with my husband and children. I began with the night before the soldiers came and tried to remember every word, every gesture, every feeling. I closed my eyes, and I was back again where I longed to be. Then I tried to remember every detail of the day before that, and the day before that, until finally I could remember little detail. Then I began again. It was miraculous how clearly I could hear the voices I loved so well, and I prayed that wherever they were they were hearing my voice speaking words of love and courage to them.

Thus the days and nights passed. Some of us died, and when the guards saw death, they roughly removed the offending body. Each time this happened we were drawn closer together in our resolve to survive. (557 words)

**4:35 PM**

As we were herded along the trail, we knew

without question that we would never see our village again, and I knew without a word being spoken that my captive brothers knew equally well that our captivity would be temporary, that however we needed to achieve it, we would know freedom again, and that we would find our families and reestablish our homes in a new and safer place. We had no cause for the optimism we knew. For years we had heard rumblings of war, and we had learned from travelers through our village the varying degrees of power and domination that each would-be conqueror had achieved. Not all of our land was so torn with war. There were pockets of peace and prosperity, and we had been fortunate that we lived in one of the privileged enclaves, but our fortunes changed abruptly that fateful morning.

As we marched in enforced silence, my concern focused upon the children. I knew my wife to be a woman of rare courage and ability, and she and I had tried to instill into our children a strong sense of their own worth and competence, and I felt we had succeeded, particularly with the two older ones, but I knew as well that there was little chance of their being treated with kindness

by their captors. I could only hope that they would escape truly brutal treatment. I knew that those bent on conquest often took the children into their own homes, and that although they were slaves in fact, they often were called upon to serve and to be companions to children their own ages. I comforted myself with this thought and hoped that the youngest would not be separated from the older two. I knew I could count on my daughter to fight to keep the younger children with her. She would use whatever charm and cleverness she had in this cause.

My thoughts returned repeatedly to the days of love we had been privileged to know, and I barely noticed fatigue and thirst. We had not been shackled together, though we were heavily guarded, and it was possible to stride more rapidly than the rest of the group. I found myself in the front ranks before I slowed my pace, and as we marched along I was conscious of the captain's eyes upon me. He said nothing for quite a while, and I took the opportunity unobserved to study his face. It was a strong face, but not harsh, seamed with age, though I took him for not much older than I, but clearly he had spent

much of his life in the harsh elements of sun and sand. He was muscular, yet trim, and his eyes were both thoughtful and kind.

Finally he motioned me to his side, and we walked together a while before he began to speak. He asked my name, and I told him I was known as Edam the Elder, that I had a son of the same name. At this his face softened, and he told me that he too had a son with his name, a son he had not seen for too long a time. As we walked, he asked me more questions, and I answered briefly and honestly. Then he gestured that I was to return to my position in the forefront of the group, and he marched on alone at the head of the column. (575 words)

## **Sunday 8/8/93 2:41 PM**

There were about half of us left when one day the door opened earlier in the morning than usual. We looked up, those of us who were awake, apathetic and unresponsive. An officer stepped through the door with two guards behind him and flinched at the smell, and perhaps

at the sight, for he covered his nose and mouth with his hand and retched visibly.

He muttered to the guards, and they ordered us to stand. Some could not. Those who could did. I tried to stand straight and tall with whatever dignity I could command, and as the officer moved from one to another of us, he pointed to indicate that some should step forward. When he got to me I looked directly in his eyes. I wanted to be chosen, though I did not know for what. Anything was preferable to the dungeon, at that point even death. The guard told me, as he had the others, to turn in a full circle, and when I had, he told me to step forward.

There were eight of us chosen in all, and we did as we were told and followed the guards. Those who were left lay down again and followed us with their eyes as we left. There was no sign of emotion. We were taken to a large open area and blinked against the strong light. We were told to undress, and when we did, commanded to clean ourselves with the water and rags that stood nearby. There was a shallow pool nearby that smelled sweet, and when we were cleaned off we stepped into it and immersed ourselves.

It was hard to believe that we were really knowing such luxury, such kind treatment, and I wondered fleetingly if what lay ahead would be a high price to pay for this comfort. When I looked at my naked, emaciated body I felt no sense of regret, for I knew that the slight roundness of my stomach meant that the child I was carrying was still growing. Losing this child had seemed inevitable at first. I did not know if anyone had noticed my condition, but our captors, being men, would not be likely to be observant of such things.

We were given clean plain garments and soft foot coverings and led into a richly furnished room, clearly sleeping quarters for women. Reclining on a pile of cushions and rich fabrics was a woman who watched us narrowly as we approached and lined up in front of her. She was no older than I, but richly attired and adorned. She bade us lift up our garments to reveal our legs and then to show her our hands. She lay back and closed her eyes, and with an imperious gesture indicated that we should be taken away. It was later that we learned that the attendants

we were replacing had been cast out because one of them had offended this lady of authority. We were to learn much more than this in a short time to come, but each of us was grateful to be clean and well fed and I, for one, was prepared to do whatever I needed to survive and to see my unborn child survive, and to live in the hope of knowing love once more. There was never a day which passed without my speaking words of love and courage to my husband and children, and I knew they spoke to me. (579 words)

## **Thursday 8/12/93 2:20 PM**

In the midst of all the turmoil, I kept returning in my mind to the home I had left so reluctantly and the love I had known there.

As I had anticipated, we were led to a new place to settle. Our imprisonment had, in the end, been brief, the victors of one day being the vanquished of the next, and I was quickly reunited with my wife, my beloved Saleh, but we were among the many who had no concept of what had happened to our children. In an effort to

find them, I left Saleh with friends who could offer her shelter and solace, and I went in search of the three most precious of my possessions since the moment of each birth. There was no doubt in my mind that I would find them. There had been little killing of captives and, I was told, none among the children, though they had been cruelly treated at times according to common reports.

In preparation for my journey, I was able to get reports from those who had more information than I about where the children had been taken. There were several locations, each dominated by a chieftain closely allied to the leader who had destroyed our village in the hope of greater spoils and in the hope of selling his prisoners for good prices. In the end he had been disappointed in the latter hope. In the first hope he had been disappointed from the start. The booty we had hauled for him on our backs was of trivial value in light of the cost of warring, and the soldiers, ill paid and ill treated, had deserted this leader and this desertion had led to his downfall. In the end he was not toppled by another would be conqueror. His kingdom had simply crum-

bled, disintegrating under the weight of desertion and disaffection among his warriors. And so, we were left within a period of months to fend for ourselves, limited severely in provisions or possessions. A kind of natural leadership emerged and natural groupings occurred. Those who could find each other from one village banded together and sought to find a new location for the homes we hoped to establish in peace.

During captivity I had been favored by the captain who was charged with the responsibility for our well being, and I was pleased to serve this honorable man. He was indeed embittered by the treatment of his men, and he was among the first to urge them to disband and to return to their families and seek to maintain the peace and refuse further war-like ventures no matter how tempting the prizes offered and promised. He spoke to me privately, though it took some courage to do so, before the disbanding of the army, and said that there was land to the north of our home village that would give us a life richer and easier. He was instrumental in reuniting us with our wives, but regretfully, he said, he

had no knowledge of where the children had been taken. He would, he promised me, do anything he could to help. For the moment, he added, he was powerless to do so.

My joy on being reunited with Saleh was tinged with sorrow. The women prisoners had been much more cruelly treated than the men, and although my beloved had survived, she had not survived unscathed. She had held the child she carried so joyfully for the beginning of the imprisonment, but in the course of her servitude she had aborted and had herself suffered severely, almost to death, in the process. Her concern was not at any point for herself, but she was overwhelmed with the loss of the unborn at a time when her only solace was from those imprisoned with her. Caught up in their own sorrows and deprivation, they were of little help.

I wept with her as I held her in my arms when we were reunited, and she spoke to me of the sorrow she had known. I had only to look at her to know the deprivation she had known, but when I spoke of her suffering she refused to dwell upon the hardship she had known and thought only of her lost children, both born and

unborn. As I held her frail body close to mine to lend comfort and strength, I told her that I would not rest until I had found her lost little ones and returned them to the love we felt for them, to the absolute security of her embrace. She looked at me with haunted eyes. My heart cried out in anguish, but I smiled my reassurance, and as I held her gaze I saw the beginnings of faith and hope reflected in those eyes I loved so well that had seen more sorrow than was bearable for so gentle a person.

And so, as soon as I knew my Saleh was well cared for, I set out on my quest. (840 words)

## **Monday 8/16/93 7:10 AM**

At once I knew that I would not find my children readily. Wherever I went I was met with kindness and concern, but all the children seemed to have simply disappeared. I found as many questions as answers. To each parent similarly bereaved, I promised to return with any word of these young ones.

After several days of fruitless wandering and un-

successful questioning, I discovered myself back near the camp where we had been held captive. There were few people about, and although I felt strangely vulnerable in this place, I determined to question those few soldiers still about. To my surprise, I was met not with hostility but with kind responsiveness, but they were, to the regret of both of us, unable to tell me anything at all. They were not certain where their own families were, torn as our land had been by the fighting, now over but still exacting a price from its people. These former enemies offered me food and shelter, and it being late in the day, I accepted gratefully.

Before we slept I spoke with them of all that had occurred these past few years in war and destruction, and I asked them about their own experiences. They told of having been taken from their villages and forced to carry arms under threat of death. They spoke wistfully of the families they felt they might never see again. I asked if they had searched, and they said that their village had been destroyed so that it was reduced to rubble, and that there was no sign of survivors in the area. They had been completely

stymied in their efforts, and in their despair had returned to the place most recently familiar to them and there had found others with the same story to tell. We sat in silence for a long while, each lost in his own thoughts, and it was then that the captain came to mind. When I described this man, their eyes brightened with the memory of him. He was, they said, the only officer to whom any of those forced into service felt any loyalty. Although he had been a soldier all his life, he had not coarsened, as had the rest, into a total disregard for human life. My spirits lifted at their words. Certainly, I thought, this man of authority could help me, if only I could find him. They professed ignorance of his whereabouts. When the hostilities had ended, he had simply disappeared, along with the rest of the professional soldiers, but they felt certain that he had not deserted his profession, and their only suggestion was that I try the few remaining military garrisons scattered throughout the countryside. These, they said, were not hard to recognize, and I need have no fear. The animosity they felt during the war had been inspired by a need to win, not hatred of those they were told were the enemy. They advised me very exactly where to

find one of these garrisons, one to which they had been taken directly after they were forced to join the army of soldiers who had so devastated the land and who had in the end been both devastators and devastated.

New hope filled my soul as I slept that night, and I awoke with the dawn and left my sleeping companions with both pity and gratitude. I wished them well. (568 words)

**Tuesday, 8/17/93 8:30 PM**

The years of servitude went quickly in the end. At first each day seemed endless. At the end, each day flew. There was such a sameness. We were not ill treated, but neither were we well treated. Our lady was a creature of passion and anger and would fly into rage at the slightest provocation. The food was too hot or too cold. There was too much or too little. Our touch was too harsh or too gentle. It was too hot or too cold. She was imperious in all ways and commanded punishment freely, but our overseer was a kindly man, himself a prisoner, and he spared

us at all times, reporting punishment he had not meted out, anguish that had been unfelt, and treatments that had not been inflicted.

We mourned, all of us, for what had been lost, yet we counted ourselves blessed that we had not perished in the days of our confinement in the room we remembered with horror. Although it was forbidden, we spoke to each other in whispers of our dreams of freedom, of our determination to one day know again the happiness that had marked our lives.

And one day it all changed. All our captors disappeared in the dark of the night, taking with them all that they could carry of any value. We were adrift, and briefly we engaged in play acting that pleased us. Each of us in turn played the grand lady, sitting on the great plump dais, commanding and demanding, and the rest acted out their obeisance in mocking fashion. After a while we tired of the game and wondered what was to become of us. Our overseer counseled patience, and said that there were enough supplies to last a few days. We would eat and drink better, he said, than we were accustomed to. As if to prove his point, he took us to the provision room and

gave us leave to help ourselves. Some were gluttonous and sorry afterward. The rest marveled at the plenty and stowed away what we could for the future. All of us gave thanks that we were free. All of us hungered for knowledge of those dearest to us. We waited. (371 words)

### **Wednesday 9/1/93 2:00 PM**

In the end, all my efforts were to prove fruitless. I spoke urgently and often to anyone who would listen to my need for information about my children. I followed false leads from place to place, but there was no sign of my beloved little ones anywhere I went. It was as if all the children had vanished from the face of the earth. I encountered others who had searched without success and who had surrendered themselves to the inevitability of their loss and who had begun to rebuild their lives knowing in their hearts that they would never be fully happy without their children but determined to seek happiness even at the same time as they felt their loss acutely.

It took me a long time to give up. Even the cap-

tain, who was so anxious to help tried to persuade me after a time of the futility of my mission, but I could not give up the search until I was persuaded in my own heart that there was not the slightest hope. I turned homeward with a heavy heart, dreading the moment when my Saleh would look into my eyes and know the truth.

As it happened, she ended up comforting me. I knelt before her, my head in her lap as she ran her fingers lovingly over my face and head and told me that she had long since ceased to hope, that her only fear while I was gone was that something would harm me and that she would be left totally alone. Our reunion was sweet, and I realized anew that I was blessed in this woman I felt I had loved forever. She had done much in my absence to create warmth and comfort in our new home and had been helped in every way by those close to us before our capture and imprisonment who had joined together to create a new community. Already there were children born in this new place, and with each new birth came new hope and cause for rejoicing by all. There was much joy in receiving each new life into our

society and no end to the generosity of all those who sought to help these new parents. They were, in a sense, our royalty, these new little ones, a harbinger of fortunes that would bring us peace and plenty.

Before long I had reason to hope that my Saleh was with child, but she said nothing, and I dared not ask at first. When she spoke of the newly born her eyes filled with tears, and I knew the pain she was feeling. When she did speak to me of the child she was carrying, her joy was almost overwhelmed by her fear of loss. She did not dare, she said, hope that her body, so abused during captivity, would be adequate to the needs of the unborn child, and she did not dare hope. I did my best to console her, not wanting to create false hope, but feeling sure in my soul that this child was sent to us, a sign of the beauty of the love we shared and a promise of future happiness. And so, for many months, there was no conversation between us of the child we both longed for. Saleh grew large, and the worry in her eyes gradually disappeared, but still she could not speak to me or to anyone else of this child, so wanted, so needed, and it was not until she

was almost full term that she let herself be persuaded of the truth of the miracle we were both to know. Her pent up emotion released itself in a flood of tears one evening as we prepared to sleep, and I held her in my arms in soothing silence until she was calm.

After that evening our happiness knew no bounds, and we spoke constantly of our love for each other and for this child we would soon know. She never ceased to mourn for the little ones we had lost, but more and more her thoughts were joyful rather than sad, and she smiled as she worked and as we talked. My joy was unbounded and I loved my Saleh more than I thought it possible to love. (716 words)

**Thursday, 9/2/93 5:30 PM**

During the time Edam was gone, I lost myself in work. The more exhausting the work was, the better it served me. Before the men left, they had constructed the rudest of shelters. Everyone had worked feverishly in the knowledge that all of us wanted desperately for the search for the chil-

dren to begin and to end with the children's return soon. We had taken some supplies from the place we had been imprisoned --- some food-stuffs, some tools, some household goods --- and these we shared as need arose.

After the men left, the work continued, and it was a blessing. There was much to be done, and from first light to last we labored. We dug ditches. We tilled and planted the soil. We made building blocks out of the river mud and leaves and grass, and began building permanent dwellings. There were some men left to work, but most was done by the women. We sought to comfort each other, but our real consolation was in hope. There were a lucky few who found themselves with child immediately, and these we cherished and protected.

As the weeks and months passed, hope faded. One by one the men returned, discouraged by their failures. One by one they abandoned the past and worked for the future. Edam was the last to return, and by the time he did, I had long lost hope. His return was sweet to me, and it drove out much of my fear. He was strong enough for both of us during that time, and he

said that while he had given up his search, he had not lost hope. Someday, he said, we would be reunited with our children. In the meantime, we would hold them in our hearts. (293 words)

## **Tuesday, 9/7/93 3:00 PM**

In all of the months that we awaited the birth of our child we never doubted that we would know joy unparalleled in beginning once again to establish a family bound in love. Each day we recalled with pleasure all the days we had know with our children in our old home. They were never out of our hearts, and as time passed it became less and less painful for Saleh to speak of these lost loved ones, to hope that one day we would be reunited in love. As it was, each day's passing made it less and less likely that this happy day would come, but each of us refused to give up hope totally.

It was spring when our son arrived. When I awakened and saw Saleh lying beside me, her hands clenched, I knew it had begun. It was not easy for her. The hardships she had encountered

in captivity had taken their toll, and she was aged beyond her years. I stayed with her until the very end when the women insisted that I leave the ministrations to them. The wonder of birth was something I had never witnessed, and so while I surrendered the care of Saleh to skilled hands, I remained in the background able to see and hear. Saleh remained strangely silent during all of her labor until the moment the child was fully expelled. Only then, as she held him in her arms and put her lips to the top of his head, did she permit herself to speak and to smile, a smile of such brilliance as brought tears to my eyes, as well as to the eyes of these experienced older women who had seen birth so often. Almost immediately I was at her side, holding her and our son in my close embrace. "He is perfect," Saleh kept murmuring, "He is perfect." Only then did she speak freely of the fears that had haunted her awake and asleep for months past. She feared that the child would be marked in some way by the horrors she had known, by the deprivations she had suffered. She had feared that she was too old to have a healthy child. She feared... she feared... and all the rest of the day the fears

poured out of her as she held her perfect son in her arms. And with each expression she grew dearer to me. I was struck anew by the stoical strength of this woman I loved who had for such a long time protected me from the full horror of her experiences and from the fear that possessed her.

It was almost dark before the women left and we were alone. It was a sweet evening. We spoke briefly of the past, but then dismissed these memories and spoke of the beauty of the years that lay ahead in this new place. Each day more and more settlers joined us, men and women of peace who had, like us, been uprooted by war and now sought a permanent haven, a place of new hope. Each was welcomed in turn with hearts full of love, and each new member of our community found the peaceable fellowship he had been seeking.

It was a strange community, in a sense, composed of so many more adults than children. All of us, it seemed, or almost all of us, had been similarly deprived, and a whole generation of children had been taken from us. We knew in our hearts that each new soul come to us would

compensate for this loss greatly, though not completely, and our children newly born were treated as the treasures they were. We could not have asked for more kindness, more generosity from our fellow villagers. They came hesitantly at first, fearful to intrude on such a joyful occasion, but then when our pleasure in their presence became apparent, our little house quickly filled with well wishers, and each one left a token of their joy in our joy from their meager resources.

I never left Saleh in the weeks that followed without someone's taking my place with loving care and loving companionship, and both she and the child thrived under such loving surveillance, and wherever I went I was greeted with smiles and expressions of fellowship and congratulations. It was a sweet time, and our pleasures increased daily.

Our little settlement was growing, and each day saw fresh progress in providing ourselves with the comforts and necessities of life. Our needs were simple, but we were joined in a common determination that never again would we be at the mercy of those who would use us as pawns

in the game of war. To this end, we made preparations. (3:20 PM) (795 words)

**Friday 9/17/93 3:51 PM**

In the course of time, our small village was blessed in many ways. A new generation was born and graced our lives. My darling Saleh entered into motherhood anew with great joy, and in her eyes I saw a happiness I had hoped for so desperately. We were never closer than in those halcyon days. Our days were full of industry --- building, supplying our needs, welcoming newcomers who sought the peaceful existence we enjoyed and supplying their needs as fully as was possible

It was hard to imagine a more dramatic change than this bliss from the misery we had known in captivity. It was a society rarely blessed in many ways. Not only were we joined together in bonds of love and caring, but we were devoted to meeting each other's needs in many ways beyond the ordinary. More than once our table was close to bare because Saleh had met a need greater than ours. It is impossible to convey the joy we both felt in those early years of our settlement.

There was no end to the tasks that lay waiting for completion. There was absolute agreement among all of us on the priorities in our society. The needs of the children came first, and each child was treasured equally by all. The children responded to this outpouring of love by blossoming into caring individuals at each stage of their development, and not once did I see tempers flare into destructive behavior.

We shared the responsibilities of leadership equitably, each man in time serving as part of the governing council, serving the rest of the community in various ways. It was not long after we originally settled that the question of property rights arose, and there was almost universal agreement that all we owned, all that we had developed in housing, shops, and farming, would be owned in common by all the citizens, and that each would draw from the common treasury according to his needs and the needs of his family, however extended that family. There were those who spoke with foreboding of the dangers in such a system of shared ownership, and there were those who left our society, feeling that this did not meet their needs, but overwhelmingly

our men, women, and above all our children thrived in this loving sharing and contributed willingly to the common cause without any regard for personal repayment. It was enough for each one of us that we shared the results of our labors in love, and that each citizen was fully aware of the love that dominated our lives and led us into the prosperity and progress we knew. For indeed, we did prosper and we did progress. From a simple collection of mud shacks, our people went on to build larger, more elegant dwelling places of both wood and stone. We were a citizenry of equals, but there were those among us better endowed with native skills, and in the course of time they shared their expertise and there emerged a cadre of young artisans whose pleasure was in combining beauty with utility.

All of our land was peaceful during this era, this period of recovery and progress, and although we heard through travelers passing through our village that in distant places the violence of war still threatened, we were content to believe that this threat would remain a distant threat, and that all we had accomplished would endure and

be enjoyed and continued by generations to come.

This was not, of course, to be. Violence disrupted our idyllic existence. (4:12 PM ) (597 words)

**Monday, 7/24/95 6:42AM**

"There has never been a time without love." This is the thought that kept all those tried by war and devastation sane and hopeful. In the midst of tragedy hope survived, and with it a determination to know once again the absolute security of a peaceful existence.

It is not that we were unprepared for an assault upon our township, for we had learned early the bitter lesson of unpreparedness. Over the years as rumors of battle and aggression reached our ears we had taken steps to protect our community as best we could. We were not a sophisticated people, but we knew the basic needs we would have in the event of aggression directed against us. We had carefully amassed a supply of food and other necessities which would permit our women and children to survive some distance from the town. We had carefully selected a spot that offered natural protection and was not easily spotted from a distance. All the citizens had been carefully trained for an emergency, and often an orderly withdrawal was ordered by the

leaders of our community to insure the safe conduct of all when the emergency came. We prayed that such a day would never dawn.

We had also determined that never again would we be taken by surprise, and to that end had set up a series of observation posts some distance from our settlement. These were manned by a willing group of young men who prided themselves on being given such grave responsibility. There was not a moment each day that we did not feel secure in knowing that their vigilance protected us.

Finally we had devised and amassed weapons to protect ourselves in hand to hand combat should we be faced with that challenge. We were pleased by the ingenuity of some of our citizens in their concepts and designs and we dared hope that in battle we could stand our ground.

In all of this preparation we realized that if war came we would have the advantage of surprise, that the aggressors would not expect preparedness and resistance. This served to still the fears remembered so clearly by all but the very young. My Saleh was at first frantic with the thought that she and our child would be once again sepa-

rated, but as the months passed and she participated in all we tried to do to protect those we loved she calmed and confessed to me that she felt great hope.

All that we did in the face of threat served to unite us as a people and to make each of us more aware of the importance of love shared. We were motivated in all we did by a loving concern for all those with whom we had shared the building of our peaceful settlement and all those who had come to join us over the years. Most of all we felt a fierce protectiveness toward those we were bound to in the ties of family love, and each individual vowed silently and intensely not to see harm done to these precious souls.

And so when the first warnings of approaching armies reached us we were prepared to act, and act we did. It was not without tears that the women and children began their journey to the hiding place, but it was with full understanding and agreement and full faith that the separation would be brief. We watched them go with heavy hearts but with smiles of encouragement. Each loving embrace became a memory that would sustain us in the days to come. (7:05) (599)

words)

[8563 words to date]

**2:46PM**

It was a sad journey to our haven. Even the children sensed the serious nature of our departure and they were, one and all, subdued. The women spoke little and moved in haste. We carried with us what we could of household needs and mementos, but knew that our place of safety had been well planned and supplied. Our simple needs would be easily met, but we felt a prideful need to carry something of our homes with us.

We knew each step of the way well, having traversed it so many times, and we were careful not to leave an obvious trail behind us as we had been instructed. We stopped to rest and refresh ourselves once or twice and to give the children time to play, but our steady pace was otherwise uninterrupted, and we arrived at our camp well before nightfall. When we did we were grateful for all the painstaking preparations that had been made for our comfort and survival. The place it-

self had been cunningly chosen. There was a stand of trees through which we had to pass to get to the open flat area which was to be our home for a while. Behind the camp was a hill high enough to afford protection and alongside ran the river, a welcome source of water and coolness. A high ridge of earth had been fashioned along the top of the river bank to hide us from view but which was easily traversed for access to the water.

We knew exactly where our supplies had been hidden, and within a short time of our arrival we had distributed supplies as needed and were able to rest and converse. The children had been warned of the danger of excessive noise and they played quietly under our watchful eyes. My gaze repeatedly strayed to my son, so much the son of his father in his stalwart build, in his fair coloring, in his caring disposition. Like all the children he had been disciplined from birth to be aware of the need of obedience at all times but particularly in times of crisis. These children had known nothing but loving care and concern and they responded readily in all they did to what their elders asked of them.

It had already been agreed that the women would share equally in the vigilance we felt necessary, and so each one was given the hours each day and night when she would observe from the edge of our hiding place any untoward sight or sound. We expected no visitors. The men had warned us of that needful deprivation. Their concern was for our safety and to that end they wished to do nothing to jeopardize the secrecy of our location. (3:10) (450 words)

### **Wednesday 7/26/95 6:45AM**

After the women left we set out to make further defensive preparations. It had occurred to several of our planners that there would be some advantage in surprising the enemy early in his attack. We knew that he must approach from the south, and there was a great open plain it was logical to assume he would utilize in his approach. It was believed by our citizens that the army would cross this plain at night in order to surprise us at dawn. There was logic in this belief. We had known early morning surprise before.

To this end, we established a series of traps and ambushes some distance from the edge of town. The traps were simple -- deep holes covered with brush and difficult to discern. We were careful to dig them deep enough and wide enough so that escape would be difficult if not impossible. We established camouflaged outposts for some of those most skilled in weaponry. The plan for these men was to let the army pass by and then cause confusion and consternation by attacking the invaders from the rear. Our hope was that they would be demoralized by both these tactics and lose their fighting edge. We knew from our past experiences that many of the soldiers fought unwillingly, that they had been forced into a war that was not theirs. Only a small minority, we felt, had the business of war central to their lives. We were few in number, but we were determined to make up in cleverness and intensity what we lacked in numbers.

We took further preparations, and in each household carefully concealed anything of value while leaving in plain sight objects that might seem desirable to the simple mind. We carefully removed

all personal items whose loss would have been painful to your wives and children and stored these things separately.

In all of these activities we never lost the slightest degree of hope and determination. Because our information was so scanty we were not at all certain when the attack would come or how great the number of our aggressors would be. We had only been told that we were in the path of the invaders and that no village, however small or unrewarding, had been spared. Our hearts should have been heavy with despair, but they were not, and when the outposts reported back that the speck on the horizon was the start we were almost relieved.

With efficiency born in absolute faith each in the other and a discipline born in preparedness and cooperation, we prepared to defend our homes. Those posted in ambush left with the blessings of those left behind. Those left behind quickly made the last minute preparations, and each man went to the spot agreed upon where he could be most effective in protecting all he held dear.

I cannot speak for the others, but I felt almost

exuberant that we had so prepared as to have the odds less than fully against us. I was sure that in the midst of the horror of combat we would prevail at least to the extent of survival, that never again would I know the horror of separation and imprisonment, that never would those I loved be anything but safe and secure. I was not alone in these feelings I am confident. (7:08)  
(558 words)

**Thursday, 7/27/95 3:43PM**

What I remember most about those days of hiding was the sameness. Day after day we followed the same routine, limited as we were in our resources and the need to remain invisible. We rose with the light and we slept with its passing. We slept under the skies, the children clustered together in the center, each on a mat that he knew was his, with the adults surrounding them, the mothers tending to choose to be closest to their own children. If a child cried out in the night his needs were swiftly met and he slept again comforted.

I often wondered if all the mothers slept as fitfully as I did, but no one complained and I never knew. We were careful not to feel sorry for ourselves, not to seek or give sympathy, but rather to share all hardship and loneliness with loving acceptance. We were all aware of the love that had sent us to this spot and of the love we all bore for each other, from the oldest to the youngest.

Each morning the mothers upon awakening would tend first to the needs of their own children, feeding, cleaning, assuring. Then the children were free to play as they chose while their mothers looked on, chatting quietly among themselves. Small groups of children took turns going down to the river bank under the watchful eyes of one or two of the mothers, and this was an endless delight for both the young and the old. Principis had a friend of his age, as dark as Principis was fair, and the two seemed to grow more inseparable each day. I watched these two as they cavorted in the water at the edge of the river and wished that the pure joy they knew would never end.

In the heat of the day after the noon meal we

sought the shade of the trees lining the grassy area. Some slept lightly. Some spoke quietly. Most sat and dreamed silently. I was among this group. I thought often as I looked at my son of his brothers and sister lost to me so long ago. I counted the years it had been and tried to envision them as young adults. I thought of how they would love their brother and he them. I told myself it was foolish to think they would ever be found, but hope refused to die.

Sometimes the children sat entranced while one of the mothers told the story of how their parents had come to this place to build a settlement where the children would know happiness and peace. Then someone else would speak fancifully, telling a tale of strange creatures that roamed the earth and their magical qualities. Then the children would take turns in story telling. There seemed to be no limit to the imaginations of these little ones.

One day someone found a stand of tall grasses by the river and discovered that they were easily uprooted. She carried an armload back the first day and provided endless hours of weaving strands of grass into objects both usable and

frivolous. The children created toys of all sorts. They created fanciful head gear and bracelets for themselves. The adults were more practical and sat weaving mats of all shapes and sizes. Each gathering of these grasses provided hours of distraction.

By nightfall we were ready to sleep, young and old alike, and my last thoughts each day were of Edam and my last prayer was that we would soon be together again, that my son and I would know again the peaceful security of his love. I missed him. (4:10)

### **Sunday, 7/30/95 6:28AM**

At the start of our vigil there was much speculation among the men as to the nature of the attack we anticipated. We were aware that the pattern generally in such warfare was to sweep a section of the land, devastating and marauding, seizing anything of value, and taking prisoners as it suited their purposes. We were also aware that not all of those fighting were heartfelt in their devotion to the cause of military conquest, and

we devised a plan to defend ourselves which we hoped would take advantage of this inherent weakness.

To this end we secured our households as best we could and we stationed ourselves in various places where we would go undetected so that when the invaders came they would perceive our settlement as deserted and let down their guard. This is exactly what occurred. There was a noisy approach, much shouting, as they drew close to the edge of town, designed, we felt confident, to create fear and confusion. Then the shouts died away and there was puzzled silence.

From our vantage points we could see little, but we silently waited for the moment to act. Our plan was a one-on-one defense. Soon my opportunity came. I could hear approaching footsteps from where I crouched unseen, and at the moment when a hulking shape turned the corner I sprang forward, seized him by the legs, threw him to the ground and struck him senseless. He uttered not a sound, and in line with our plan I quickly bound him hand and foot and stuffed a cloth into his mouth to prevent his crying out when he regained consciousness. Then I took

his arms and secreted them. I dragged his body into a sheltered spot and resumed my vigil.

I was to learn later that this pattern was repeated soundlessly in scores of places throughout the town and that slowly the enemy began to realize the extent of the deception practiced on him.

We could hear their leaders shouting for a response from the soldiers and noted the increasing frustration in their voices. Finally there was silence, and we could hear the sound of footsteps retreating. We were later to discover that the only harm done to our townspeople was that done to the brave souls who had volunteered to strike at the enemy's backside as he began his attack, but even these men suffered few injuries having attacked in stealth and silence.

In the end we were saved completely from damage to ourselves and our property in that first attack, and as we emerged one by one from our hiding places we saw the retreating soldiers, diminished in number, as they headed back to where they had come from, and we speculated about how long it would be before they returned with fresh troops, or, indeed, if they would return. We hoped that we had seen the end of this

group of marauders but we feared that we had not. We were, however, exhilarated by the success of our defense and led into the folly of assuming that it was without flaw. (6:50) (520 words)

## **Monday, 7/31/95 6:36AM**

We longed, one and all, to send the news of our successful defense to our loved ones. We spoke among ourselves of this wish, and to a man we decided, strong as our desire was, that it was wisdom to wait a reasonable period for a renewal of the attack before raising false hopes. For two days we did little but watch for those approaching troops.

Immediately after the withdrawal on the day of the first attack we had closely questioned each of those whom we had taken prisoner. As we surmised from the start, most of the men were unwilling warriors, having been captured earlier and forced into service upon threat of death. Many had been separated from home and family for long periods of time and expressed great longing

to find a peaceful existence with those they loved. Others, generally younger, had been seized as young men and felt less desire to return to their original dwelling places feeling that they were free of relationships that bound them to a single place. When we spoke to these men, one at a time first and then in a group, they reinforced our feeling that we had been wise in our handling of the situation. When they offered to a man to help us defend ourselves in the event of a repeated attack we were immediately uncertain of their sincerity and usefulness and disputed among ourselves in their absence. Finally we were agreed that we would accept their offer of assistance but under close observation.

These prisoners, for that is indeed the apt description, became our allies and were useful immediately in providing us with detailed information about the nature of the aggressors. They said, totally agreed, that the great majority of the ranks fought, as they did, because they had no choice. Having been taken in battle they continued to be pawns. Having experienced the fate of prisoners everywhere, they knew that absolute obedience to their captors was the only

thing that stood between them and instant execution. They had seen some of their cohorts die in rebellion. They chose life, however repellent.

We spoke to them of what we would expect of them, and to a man they agreed. Each one of them was assigned to one of us and within hours we had begun to forge bonds of brotherhood. They were aware of their good fortune at having fallen into our hands and were equally determined to avoid recapture at all costs. (6:52)  
(417 words)

**Tuesday, 8/1/95 8:32AM**

When the second attack came there was a calmness that possessed us, a confidence born of faith and trust in each other and an awareness that God was on our side. We so loved each other that it was unthinkable that the enemy could triumph over such motivation. They came in greater numbers, but our numbers were augmented by our new allies, and we easily handled the first wave of attackers. We were not prepared for the second wave. They came upon us as we

were preparing to believe that we had triumphed a second time.

They were great in number, but beyond that the enemy must have chosen its most ferocious and experienced fighters, and they moved with stealth and sureness to overcome us just as we were recovering from the recent onslaught.

Weariness possessed us, and I had a sense of foreboding when I realized the cleverness with which the enemy planned our downfall. Not only were we weary, but we had neglected to keep our weapons in hand, thinking the fighting at an end, and the element of surprise they had achieved added to our confusion. In a sense we were leaderless, having planned our defense in total cooperation, each man his own leader.

There were a few quick casualties, and seeing our comrades in arms slain so brutally seemed to galvanize each and every one of us, and we quickly fought back with a desperation which we did not know we were capable of feeling. It was as if we communicated without words as we seemed to meet each maneuver of the enemy with swift response. It was clear that these soldiers were not accustomed to failure and the

fighting grew fierce.

In retrospect I must say that our townspeople seemed guided by a power beyond our understanding, perhaps ever protected by such a power, for we seemed to anticipate each new move of the attackers and to blunt its effectiveness with cunning tactics. We utilized some of the weapons our brothers had devised and these were thoroughly effective in all ways. They disarmed the enemy without killing him outright and this, not surprisingly, created more terror than death might have.

In the end, we lost many comrades to death and injury, but those who survived were able to save many of the injured and our homes were largely intact. There had been a few efforts, quickly met, to set fires of destruction, but having been warned by our new allies of this possibility we were able to prevent extensive damage.

One by one the attackers retreated. Some laid down their arms and asked to be taken prisoner. These we treated with kindness, aware that the sickening nature of combat could touch the hardest heart. Others disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. Those who stayed with us in-

cluded one captain who offered the information that this was the last effort that would be made to capture us, that we were not significant enough to warrant further attacks. At first we hesitated to believe this man. What he said was so perfect to our ears, and we feared that this was an effort to lull us into the security that would spell future defeat. As he spoke further, though, he became too convincing to be dismissed. Though a professional soldier, he professed himself sick of the kind of war he was forced to fight. He was understandably proud of his abilities as a military man, he said, and felt it demeaning to participate in a war of plunder where the enemy was generally defenseless and subdued without a struggle.

This man reminded me of the captain who had befriended me in my first captivity and I was more inclined than the others to understand and accept all he said of his feelings. I spoke in his favor. (8:56) (641 words)

**Thursday, 8/3/95 4:38 PM**

After several days and nights had passed, I began to consider what it would be like if no one ever came for us. When this thought first came into my mind I pushed it away, but it returned stubbornly and often and I had no answers. I spoke to no one of this, but I think I was not alone in my fears. Conversations grew shorter, and when I looked at my sisters I saw in their eyes what I knew they saw in mine. No one spoke of this possibility. We were not concerned for the immediate future -- our supplies were adequate for much longer survival -- but for the long future.....? That was a different thing. Only the children were free of worry. It was almost as if this was a holiday for them, a special adventure.

Then one morning before dawn our look-out was startled by the sound of approaching voices. She froze in terror and then, recognizing the voices, rushed toward them. There were three of them, loved ones, who came with the news that we had prevailed over the enemy and that it was safe for us to return. When they spoke to the assembled mothers and children they told us to

take only what we felt necessary on our trip back, that all we had left behind would be safely collected and brought back at a later time. Hurriedly we made preparations to leave. There was no wild rejoicing, but rather a feeling of thankfulness and a strong desire to know more. Almost all of the women had experienced the horrors of war and we needed to be reassured that no horrors lay in wait for us. We were told that our questions would be answered in time, but that it was their mission only to see that we were safely returned to those who awaited us.

I remember little of the return trip except the intensity which gripped all of us and for some the fear of the unknown. It was impossible to believe that we had escaped unscathed from an enemy attack.

We found the men gathered together on the edge of the town and needed only to look at their faces to know that sadness lay ahead. My eyes searched the crowd frantically for Edam, and when I found him I thought I would cry out with relief and joy, but there was no crying out at all as we waited for someone to speak. Almost immediately one of the men in the front rank

began. He spoke first of the miracle of our victory over the enemy, of the wonder of saving our homes and our loved ones. Then he lowered his head and said that there were those who had paid for our victory with their lives and that it was our first duty to honor them. There was a gasp from the women as he paused. He said that others had paid a lesser price. They were, he said, injured or maimed, but alive to know our love and gratitude. Then he spoke slowly the names of the dead.

There were agonized cries as each name was spoken. The bereaved women and children were immediately surrounded by comforting arms and words, and tears fell endlessly. At last, the litany of names ended and the men turned and we followed them back to the center of the town where a large group waited in silent tribute to the dead who, wrapped in rough brown fabric, only their faces visible, lay side by side on the ground.

I felt a wrenching of the heart as those newly widowed rushed with their children to embrace those they had loved in life and mourned in death. The silence was overwhelming until a sin-

gle clear voice was raised in a song of mourning that we all knew. We listened with heavy hearts as the melody soared, but we heard the sounds of sorrow even more clearly.

Later, in the security of our home and Edam's protective love, Principis and I listened in awe as Edam spoke of all that had occurred in our absence. As I sat in his warm embrace I knew peace, and I drew Principis to us as though we were one, not three, as indeed we were. (5:10)

### **Saturday, 8/6/95 5:48AM**

It was glorious to know the sweet sense of peace that pervaded our village after our series of skirmishes with the enemy that had no face. All we knew of him was that he lived in a distant place and craved to dominate and enrich himself at the expense of his fellow man. We knew he was only one in a seemingly unending series. We had suffered grievously at the hands of one of his predecessors and we knew that he would have successors that threatened us, but we were growing in numbers and therefore in strength, and

with an eye to the future we determined that we would never be without defenses.

To that end we maintained a discipline among ourselves, a total cooperation and sense of responsibility. We assigned the responsibilities of leadership to those most apt, and we conferred among ourselves as to what we would be wise to do in our own best interests. There was a harmony that we had known always among ourselves and those who chose to join our settlement quickly sensed this total peaceful agreement and readily adapted to it. While there were occasional disagreements these were minor and quickly resolved.

All of us were agreed that we needed a first line of defense, and to that end we began construction of a wall encircling our homes. We knew that we must construct such a wall with care and cleverness so that it could not be easily breached. There was a wonder among us, a young man with a genius for building that seemed God-given, and we asked him to assume leadership in design and construction. He agreed readily and chose several of his compatriots to assist him in the beginning phases of the work. He asked our

indulgence in time. It would, he said earnestly, be wiser to proceed slowly and to strive for perfection than to rush and find ourselves with an imperfect defense. To a man we agreed and assured him that our faith in him was complete, that he could proceed as he saw wise with the full cooperation of all.

The work was, as he had prophesied, slow and laborious, but as the weeks and months passed and we could observe this great wall rising above us we were gratified in all ways. Even the children helped in its construction, tirelessly carrying materials and performing simple tasks, and we were united as we had never been, one and all putting heart and soul into our mutual protection.

Along with the material advantages of this protective wall came this spiritual and emotional unification which those who were the original settlers had known from the beginning but which was new and gratifying to those who chose to join us as brothers. (6:06) (464 words)

**Sunday, 8/6/95 5:29AM**

At all times during this period of growth and strengthening we welcomed into our hearts those who chose to join us in our efforts to create and maintain a peaceable world within the greater world. Generally we were gratified by the motivation and the contributions of those newcomers. Occasionally we would be disappointed in the integrity and performance of a newcomer but this was rare.

The harmony which we knew was not ever endangered by influences either from without or within. It was as if we were impregnable in this regard. Each of us knew the limit of our needs and those of his brother, and it was our pleasure to strive to meet these needs fairly. There was no temptation to amass wealth or to exceed our brothers in material possessions, or even to rival him in creature comforts. We knew absolute contentment each with his lot.

We strove to develop the talents of the young as they grew in grace and goodness, and it was a miracle to us how the needs of the community were met by the various talents of its young men

and women. It was a joy to see the future in such good and trusted hands. Principis was both our pride and our inspiration. He seemed to be able to do everything he tried to do with both skill and ease. It was our pleasure to watch him as he met one challenge after another, never hesitating to try the most difficult and succeeding invariably. I know that as parents we took a special pride in our young son, but we were not alone in our admiration and wonder. With total modesty he won the hearts and faith of all who knew him. Among his peers he was a natural leader and they looked to him with loving loyalty.

Our lives could not have been happier, Saleh and I agreed, but when we spoke of this I saw a far off look in her eyes, a longing that sprang there unbidden, and I knew that she was thinking of our children, lost to us so long ago, and wishing that they could be part of our happiness. At such times I took my Saleh into my arms and we spoke wordlessly of these loved ones. I knew that never would my Saleh be fully happy and content until she knew the fate of our young ones. I reasoned with her that if there were any possibility of our being reunited it would have

happened by now. I urged her not to be saddened by this continuing loss, and at such times she would nod her head sadly and turn away to hide her tears. I knew she would never give up hoping that the day would come when she would know perfect joy. I longed for this day to come. (5:47) (479 words)

## 5:25PM

It was a day when I had much time on my hands. Principis was visiting his dearest friend. Edam was meeting with his brothers about important matters. I had no work undone. I was not inclined to take on a new project. I decided to go through the gate and walk to the fields newly planted where I had worked earlier in the day. The smell of fresh earth was sweet to me.

When I got there I saw that there were a number of people, mostly young, still working in the fading light. I sat at the edge of a newly planted row and tried to envision the rich green that was soon to come. I rolled bits of earth between my fingers. Then I sat quietly, eyes downcast, and

absentmindedly folded and refolded the fabric of my dress. It was an old habit. I was almost unconscious of doing it. Gradually I became aware of someone standing close to me. I lifted my eyes and saw a young man. The setting sun blinded me when I tried to look at him directly, but I thought I did not know him, that he must be new.

"Forgive me," he said in a quiet tone, " but I have been watching you, and you remind me of someone, but I am not sure who."

I said nothing, and he bent down on one knee so that our faces were level and I could see him clearly. When I did, my heart stopped and then began to beat fiercely. I realized that I was looking at my own face. Words would not come.

"I am sorry if I startled you. I did not mean to offend," he said and started to rise.

"No," I said insistently and put my hand on his arm. "I was startled," I added, " but not offended." I asked him if he could remember who it was that I reminded him of and he shook his head slowly from side to side.

I did not dare speak with him further, but I did

say that perhaps I could help him. I asked him to come with me to speak with my husband. "He knows many people," I told him. "Perhaps he can answer your question." I knew the answer I wanted to give him, but I did not dare. Perhaps the intensity of my need was blinding me and leading me into error, I thought, but in my heart I knew with certainty that this was my son. How I controlled myself I will never know.

We walked back through the gate in almost absolute silence. I was bursting with questions I did not dare ask. I needed Edam's words and wisdom. I asked the young man to wait in our house as I went in search of my beloved. I did not have to search at all. As I turned to leave he was approaching. I could see the puzzlement on his face when he saw the young man, but I was not prepared for the explosion of joy that transformed his features. I watched the young man looking increasingly puzzled and he searched Edam's face with hungry eyes.

The next hour is one that is emblazoned in my memory. When he told us that he was called Idan, we knew it was a corruption of his true name. There was much he did not remember,

but as we talked (5:47) [ I was interrupted at this point and completed the writing on 8/14/95] and told him our story he listened closely. His earliest memories, he had told us, were of being a child- servant of two elderly people who, while demanding, were not unkind to him. He had no idea of his age when he was first in this house, and as he grew, he said, he asked questions of them they were either unable or unwilling to answer. He grew into young adulthood in this manner, despairing of ever knowing more of his origins. When his master died, his mistress felt unable to live alone and went to live with one of her sons nearby. In gratitude for the many years of service she had given Idan a small sum of money and his freedom. He went first to a larger town nearby and apprenticed himself to a jeweler. He was apt, he said, and quickly learned this exacting trade. When the old jeweler died in turn, Idan decided to go further away to a town he had heard of, noted for its peaceful prosperity. Thus he had found us.

Nothing we told him of the day of our separation brought back his memory, but he said that he often had dreams of violence and death and

sorrow without understanding their source. In the end, each of us knew with certainty the truth of our relationship, but we knew too that there was much rebuilding to be done to compensate for the missing years. This stranger, our newly discovered son, had been lost to us for such a long time. It was with joy that I anticipated this time of reacquaintance. (848 words)

14,492 words to date

**Sunday, 8/27/95 3:08PM**

My life was transformed. I awakened each morning with the joyful awareness that my son was found, that I would see him that day, hear his beloved voice, know the wonder of his closeness. I was not alone in my joy. Edam had never seemed happier. We spent hours with our son, sometimes singly, sometimes together, and in those hours we knew such pleasure.

It was my custom and enjoyment to walk each day as long as I was free to do so, and often my son joined me. He was hungry to know every detail of our lives since he had been taken from

us, and then later, every detail of our lives before the day we were separated. He at first had no memory of those happy times, but gradually details worked their way into his consciousness. It was as if the horror we all had known had robbed him of memory and now love was erasing the horror and permitting memory to return. We both cried the day he remembered being torn from his sister's embrace and sent marching with all the boys to a fate unknown. Then memory stopped and he recalled the first days of servitude. When the three of us spoke it was much the same. Each of us described all the days we had known apart from each other and strove to create in our son an awareness of the love that we had not forgotten for a single day. When he described his years of loneliness my heart ached for him. Though they were not cruel or abusive physically, they had forbidden freedom of any sort. He was allowed outside the house only to do necessary errands or to deliver and receive messages. He was allowed no friendships with those his age, and he had grown into young manhood with no experience of love or caring. It was a miracle, I thought often, that he

was not embittered, but he was not, and it was as if our assurances of the love we had always felt for him nurtured him and compensated somewhat for the deprivation he had known.

We were careful not to demand too much in response, but as time passed Idan sought us out more and more often, and there was little question in my mind about the fullness of love and belonging he would eventually feel. Even so, I was not prepared for and will never forget the day he touched my sleeve and called me "Mother." Emboldened, I took his hand in both of mine and held it to my lips. "I have so longed for this moment," I heard myself say, and then I felt his arms encircle me, tentatively at first and then with the strength of love. (461 words)

