

DRAWING ON THE PAST

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I've been working with past life memories for over thirty years but they were part of my reality long before that. Throughout my early life I had *déjà vu* experiences that gave me glimpses of another timeframe that had occurred in a particular place, and vivid dreams about another time. It was rather like watching a historical movie in which I was, somehow, involved – in a very minor role. I knew what was around the next corner, in places I'd never been; I shared emotions that belonged to some other character that was not me, *but at the same time somehow was me*. It all seemed very natural, although back then I'd never heard of the concept of reincarnation.

Such experiences are not new, they have been documented over aeons of time. As have near death experiences, the point where I really began to sit up and take notice and to ask 'What does this all mean?' Like Megan McKennar in my novel *Torn Clouds*, I too almost died during childbirth. I saw myself in what could only be 'the past'. I was lying on dirty straw, surrounded by a horde of ragged children, with a grimy old woman trying to deliver my baby who'd become stuck. In that life, it was all too much and I opted out.

Years later, a man came up to me after a workshop and described exactly that scene and said: "I was your oldest child, you died and left me to look after all those children." I could only apologise to him. In my present life, a being who was with me, who became the inspiration for Sekhmet, Megan's supernatural guide and mentor, told me I had two choices. I could opt out again, or I could get back in my body and do what I'd come to do.

Past life memories are strange things. Sometimes they arrive unbidden, as, in *Torn Clouds* when Megan visits a small Egyptian temple and time-slips into graphically reliving the Sekhmet myth, and when she visits the crypts and the past reaches out and grabs her - that incident being based on one of my own graphic experiences at Dendara. At other times memories arrive piece of by piece, like putting together the clues in a detective novel.

A friend told me only the other day how watching a documentary about wartime Britain had suddenly made sense of many small clues she had been picking up for years, and how the life she feels she lived then explains phobias and attitudes that have been with her all her life. She's convinced that she was a gunner in the second world war, occupying the gun pod beneath the plane – a tight fit – and that she

bailed out when fire started on board. She survived that incident, but the rest of the crew did not. She has a great fear of flying and of heights, especially looking down with nothing beneath her feet, and hates the sensation of falling. She enjoys watching planes flying overhead, but whenever one takes off, she experiences feelings of loss and sadness. Her belief is that she felt strong survivor guilt and a sense that she was somehow responsible for the crews' deaths. This sense of guilt eating away at her has, she believes, resulted in the two cancers she's survived in her present life. Now she feels profound relief at having put the pieces together but knows it doesn't serve her and that she must release it.

Megan McKennar's experience of lying face down in the dust before Queen Tighe was another of my own experiences that I incorporated into the novel. For someone who would find it difficult even to bend a knee before anyone in my present incarnation, it was simply amazing to feel that awe and reverence in the presence of a divine being. Many of my own vivid experiences have been woven into *Torn Clouds*, but Megan's story is not mine. She is a character that took over my typewriter one day and demanded that her story be told. Along the way we borrowed from my lives, past and present. A sandstorm at Karnak happened to me in this life, for instance, but we told it her way.

People's reactions to 'relivings' vary widely. Some discount it immediately and cannot believe. Others ponder on it for years. When the experience rings true, it is not reliving, it is living it here and now. As real, and much more vivid, than hearing these words. This is something that happened. They might not be able to explain it, but it rings so true that they simply cannot forget it. Indeed, one of the tests of a 'true' memory is remembering it vividly thirty years later. I've regressed hundreds, probably thousands, of people to other lives and about a quarter of them have had that kind of vivid yes-this-is-me experience. But a few people have had an equally graphic no-this-cant-be-me reliving. The difference between: 'Yes, this is my experience, I am here, this is me and I'm in another time frame', rather than: 'This is very vivid but I have no connection to it' is difficult to quantify and I can only say it is a question of gut reaction.

And then there're people who've had a very vivid experiences but still constantly question: 'Was this me or was I taken over by something else?' as with a friend who spontaneously experienced herself sitting alone in a cave with the bones of her dead family when she was, apparently, an old American Indian man. The sights, the smells and the overwhelming emotions were exceedingly real and, fifteen years later, she remembers it vividly but is still unsure of whether it was really her past life, although it explained why she was, when she had the déjà vu experience, fighting for Indian bones kept in museums to be returned to the Indians and reclaiming their ancient burial grounds.

In writing *Torn Clouds*, I wanted to tell the story of how events in the past, whenever that may be, culminate in the present as in Megan's illness and her meeting with her soulmate, Ramone. I was instructed to do this by My Lady, Sekhmet, in the depths of one unforgettable night. I wrote several non fiction books, but The Lady of the Flame was not satisfied. She wanted a novel, and *Torn Clouds* is the result, one that I hope you'll enjoy and which will set you asking: 'Could I have lived before'. If it has, My Lady will be satisfied.