



by Anae Swan

a former member
of the Guardians,
former Abbess,
former Minister
of the Elements

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Conversation in the Alcazar

My travel alarm went off in my hotel room. I was staying at the Almodovar, in Toledo, Spain. The hotel was named after the old gate to the Jewish Quarter - how apt. I woke with a shiver of excitement as I remembered my appointment with Rabbi Abraham Abulafia. Mysteriously, a message had been awaiting me on my arrival from Germany the night before. I had been told by the Senior Guardian of my Lodge that I would probably be met along the way by various Lodge members as I completed and cleared patterns from my past. I knew the Dachau mission was done - I could still feel the open channel left by the unclosed pentagram and the Holy Beings doing their work of lifting all to light and life and love. So here I was, beginning to feel like a little spider on a very big web. The message from the Rabbi, asking me to come to the side gate of the old Synagogue Santa Maria La Blanca at ten a.m. was yet another strand of this web.

How wonderful it was to throw open the window and see a fountain splashing in the early light down in the courtyard, and to inhale the heady scent

of jasmine and orange blossom. I felt so alive! The air was sun-drenched and dry. I put on a short blue linen caftan and walking shoes, incongruous but interesting. Splashing orange water on my face and arms, I dabbed Neroli between my breasts, where the amulet just nestled. I noticed it was gleaming a soft amber light, and tucked it inside my caftan to prevent drawing attention to it. I grabbed my bag, making sure my press pass and my micro-recorder were in place, and left my room. I had decided to go on foot to savour the richness and beauty of this ancient city, with its Moorish past. It had also been a refuge of the Sephardic Jews in medieval times, and a place of origin of my Lodge, The Guardians of Grace, who followed the Jews when they were expelled from the South of France.

The day was so beautiful. It would be maybe fifteen minutes walk if my map was accurate. Time to go. It would not do to be late, and I was very intrigued. Rabbi Abulafia - where had I seen that name before?

I arrived on time at the side gate, not much out of breath. It was so good to walk and enjoy the movement of my

own body after so much sitting on airplanes and other transport. On the instant of my arrival a man opened the wrought iron gate set in the adobe wall and I was taken into the Rabbi's study without delay. The man waved me in while he went to get some iced drinks for refreshment - the day was already hot. I stood in the open doorway. The room was cool and somewhat dim. As I waited for my eyes to adjust, I heard a splashing fountain and smelt damask roses from beyond the gracefully arched open windows.

"Please, come in and sit down. It is so good of you to come" spoke a pleasantly cultured voice.

As I moved into the room a man rose from a deep armchair and came forward holding out his hand. He clasped my hands between both of his in a way that was both intimate and yet formal. At first I was aware only of bottomless dark eyes of expanding universes. He led me to a chair, the twin of his, with a small copper table in between, and I sat down rather abruptly.

His voice soothed ... "Yes, this climate....you walked, and then coming suddenly into the cool... it can unsettle one. Thank you for coming. My message was rather uninformative, I'm afraid...but I trusted your intuition ... and curiosity."

There was a hint of amusement in his voice. His man re-entered and placed a tray of refreshments on the table, and the rabbi waved his hand in invitation.

"Please. You must be thirsty." I was.

He had taken his chair again. I sipped slowly at the cool deliciousness, using these moments to take stock of him, just as he took stock of me. Rabbi Abraham was unexpectedly young, and yet somehow ancient, or perhaps eternal, very beautiful in the way that only a man of deep meditation and contemplation can be, with that

aura of vibrant stillness yet relaxed alertness. Here was compassion and passion incarnate.

With a sigh of pleasure that was almost sensual I lowered all wards and guards. He smiled, I still had not spo-



ken. Then I saw the statue of a golden dragon sitting on the corner of his desk. He caught the direction of my gaze. "Yes, I think we have much to say to each other. Perhaps after you are rested we can walk in the Alcazar. Much history is contained in the Sephardic Museum there that may interest you, and there is much that is not there which I can tell you about. But first, while we finish our drinks why don't you tell me what you know of the history of the Guardians."

"Well, it is not much, pretty sketchy but here goes from memory". And I recited the lineage of our Lodge like a kid at school.

Around 1155 Some working-class Christians in southern France, weavers and scribes, adopted two principles at odds with the conventional thinking of the period

All are priests and princes after the manner of Melkisedeq, and none can say 'I am King by will of God and you are less than me,' or 'I am Priest by power of Church and you are less than me.'

Jew or Muslim who serves God sincerely in their own religion will achieve salvation as well as any Christian.

Then, in 1167 at the Council of Tours, the Cathars endorsed dualism, the belief that matter is evil, created by the Devil, and only spirit is good and created by God. From that time, we knew that we were not Cathars; and have always affirmed the Unity in our rituals in these words: *The Lord Most High is our God. The Lord Most High is One.*

In 1192, when the Jews were expelled from France, although we were not Jews, we fled to Toledo in Spain, where we met Chiyot of Provence, learning from him the Solar Mysteries.

In 1282 we moved to southern Italy. Always willing to help Jews in their need, we rescued Rabbi Abraham Abulafia from imprisonment in a monastery near Rome by disguising ourselves as Franciscans. To this day, we wear brown robes. We learned the Qabalah from Abulafia. From this time, we used the name Guardians, *Shomerim*.

Around 1450 the Guardians began to use the recently invented Triumphs or Tarocchi as meditation images, combining then with the Tree of Life to form the images and places of an Art of Memory system.

Having moved to Germany, about 1535 the Guardians joined in the revolt of the working classes against the tyranny of the princes. Some Guardians were killed by Lutheran soldiers. At about this time, one of the Guardians was burned as a witch by the Calvinists in Switzerland for saying God loved the Jews and would receive them into his heavenly kingdom.

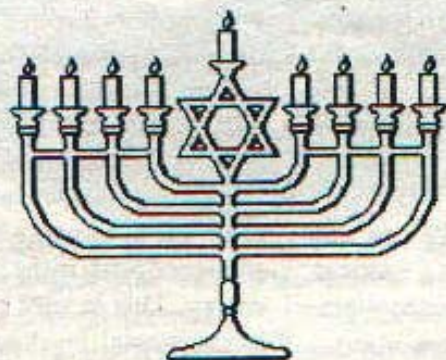
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, secret societies flourished. The Guardians had their greatest numbers and had to apply their rule that whenever there are 22 Guardians, the order shall split into two. The Senior Guardian moved

with the other Guardians at that time to London, taking with him the ancient Seal of the order. The German Guardians retained the ancient Badge of the order.

At the end of the 19th century, a young man was invited to become a student of the Guardians by his uncle. His name was Burford.

In 1930 Freedman Burford became Senior Guardian. Alarmed by the rise of Nazism in Germany, he tried to re-establish contact with the German Guardians. by 1933, he knew that all were dead, killed at different times helping Jews to escape Nazi persecution. The Badge of the Order was lost. Over the next few years, the Guardians' families moved to Australia, 'to escape the coming holocaust.' The tradition of the Guardians was that new members usually, but not necessarily, were drawn from among the members of their families. Now, none of their children developed any interest in the Mysteries, and no new Guardians were made before 1967.

In 1960 Michael T-C, who had studied Qabalah since he was 18, issued a set of riddles about the Taroc and Sefiroth, hoping it would lead him to someone who preserved a true tradition of the Qabalah. It was shown to Freedman Burford who invited him to become a student of the Guardians.



In September, 1967 Freedman Burford died, having appointed Michael as his successor as the Senior Guardian of the order, and delivered to him the ancient Seal of the Guardians.

At Midwinter, 1973 the first General Ritual of the Pentagram was celebrated in New Zealand, and at Midwinter, 1980 The Senior Guardian proclaimed the Three Watchwords for the New Age of Aquarius to be 'Communion, Compassion and Co-operation with all living beings on earth.' During 1980-1981 an increasing awareness was growing in the Order of the importance of the feminine aspects of the Mysteries.

January 1, 1981, coinciding with a Jupiter/Saturn conjunction in Libra, was celebrated as the beginning of the Age of Aquarius.

On January 1, 1996, Gabriel died and Raphael Freedman received the Seal of the Order in direct descent.

