

THE MAGICAL THEATRE PRESENTS...

# DREAMING DOWN HEAVEN

*Gini Gentry*

Foreword by don Miguel Ruiz

## Prologue

Gigi sighed, pulled off the black suede Marc Jacobs platform boots, and put them back in their box. “I guess I won’t take them,” she said reluctantly to the bored salesgirl, who gave her the inimitable look of scorn that was obviously a job requirement at every Manhattan boutique.

Ignoring her, Gigi stuffed her aching feet back into her last-year’s spike heels with a sigh. Something was seriously off. It was unlike her to resist the temptation of a gorgeous pair of boots. The Gigi of a mere few months ago would, at this very moment, be riding a surge of adrenaline as she swept triumphantly toward the cash register, boots in hand—or possibly still on her feet. She would have told herself something bracing like, “So what if I’m facing the holidays alone? At least I’ll be looking fabulous. And I’d rather spend the money on boots than a stupid turkey dinner.”

So what was wrong? It wasn’t that she didn’t have the money; of course she didn’t! But she had a wallet full of credit cards. It was something worse: Shoe shopping was not making her feel better. Retail therapy had failed her!

Gigi heaved herself off the seat and trailed out of the store. She walked listlessly down the crowded West Village sidewalk, head bent against the brisk November wind. Occasionally she glanced up to peek into a shop window, but instead of admiring the sumptuous array of pre-holiday goods, she could see only her own reflection. To say the least, this did nothing to lighten her mood. Her thick brown hair, shaggy and neglected, was whipping around in the wind like a nest of snakes. The bedraggled black scarf wrapped several times around her neck nicely highlighted the dark circles under her eyes and accented her pasty face, delicately sprinkled with zits from a recent chocolate binge. All in all, she resembled nothing so much as a down-and-out Medusa. It wasn’t exactly the look she’d been going for.

Gigi let out a gusty sigh that startled a toy poodle walking past. The dog strained at its leash, yapping wildly as its owner gave Gigi the stink-eye.

“Sorry for being so hideous I scared your dog,” she muttered under her breath, swallowing the tears of self-pity that threatened to rise.

She’d sincerely hoped a little shopping would pull her out of her slump. But clearly it was going to take a lot more than that. After all she’d been through, feeling better was going to involve a major life change. Like moving to a small tropical island, getting a job serving fruity cocktails at a beachside bar, and flirting with aging playboys. She could almost hear Jimmy Buffett playing in the background and

smell the ocean breeze. A mysterious man with a Matthew McConaughey body and a Swiss bank account would rescue her from the clutches of a Hugh Hefner lookalike and whisk her away on his yacht...

“Urgh!” She slammed into something and stumbled backward, flailing wildly to retain balance in her unsteady shoes.

She managed to avoid a serious fall by grabbing a nearby parking meter. Heart pounding, she looked around furtively to see if anyone had noticed. Luckily the Manhattan sidewalk swarm had produced only a couple of quick stares. Everyone kept moving steadfastly, heads down against the chill wind.

Gigi took a deep breath to calm herself and peered at the offending object, a sandwich sign that proclaimed:

Eternity

Used and Rare Books

Come in and Browse! Comfortable Chairs. Free Hot Tea!

Sounded nice. Gigi pictured herself in a worn armchair with a cup of Earl Grey and a shabby old tome. It sounded like just the cure for her chilled bones and aching feet. She had no real desire to go home to her empty apartment yet, and besides maybe they carried travel books! Hadn't she just been thinking about traveling? She owed it to herself to go in.

Somewhat heartened, Gigi pushed open the door. A bell tinkled and warm stuffy air washed over her, ripe with the comforting scent of musty books.

“Good afternoon,” said a sixtyish man behind the counter, peering at her over his bifocals. His eyes were a surprising bright blue, and his voice lilted with a crisp British accent. He wore a neat Harris Tweed blazer with elbow patches atop a sweater vest. Past the counter, unruly rows of bookshelves spilled over with thick, ancient-looking volumes and worn paperbacks. Omigod, it was just like the bookshop in that movie with Hugh Grant, what was it called? Notting Hill. As if she'd stepped into Bonny Olde England for a moment, where every problem could be solved with a chipped mug of steaming tea. It was just what she needed.

“Hi!” Gigi replied gaily. “Where are your travel books?”

“Just there, past the fantasy section,” said the bookish gentleman, pointing. “And please help yourself to tea. I just brewed a fresh pot.” He indicated a table in the corner flanked by two comfortable-looking overstuffed armchairs. It was all just as she'd pictured it.

“Thank you,” she said, and headed to the travel section. She’d just browse a little, get some ideas. Maybe this moving to an island notion was actually feasible. After all, what did she have to lose?

Gigi spent an enjoyable half hour collecting a stack of books to browse through. Most of them looked hopelessly outdated, but who cared? She was just getting ideas. She could hop on the Internet later and get current information. She lugged the books to the corner and plunked them down beside an armchair, then made herself a cup of tea with milk and sank into the chair with a contented sigh.

Immersed in imagined adventures in Bali, Thailand, and the Caribbean, Gigi was only vaguely aware of the bell over the door ringing and people coming and going. She sipped her tea as she worked her way through the stack of books, setting a couple of more recent ones aside for possible purchase. Finally she reached the bottom of the pile and looked at the last book, puzzled. She didn’t remember selecting it. It had a faded, gold-embossed cover that had once been elegant. The title, in swirling script, read: *Dreaming Down Heaven*.

“Odd,” Gigi thought. “It sounds like some kind of spiritual book, or maybe it’s supposed to be in the fantasy section. I must have grabbed it by mistake.”

She opened the book idly. The inside cover was inscribed with a handwritten note: “To my beloved student, December 10, 1972. May this book help you awaken to your magnificence. Love, M.”

Gigi’s heart skipped a beat. December 10, 1972—the day she was born! What a strange coincidence! Despite the familiar sinking in her stomach that accompanied thoughts about her looming thirty-fifth birthday, Gigi felt a stab of interest. What did *Dreaming Down Heaven* mean? And was the fact that it had been inscribed on her birthday some sort of sign?

The man behind the counter cleared his throat. “Sorry, miss, but I must close now. It’s after six.”

“Oh—is it really?” Gigi shot out of the seat. She’d been here for over two hours. It was really high time to go home and...and do what? Shoving the thought away, she grabbed the three travel books she’d selected and went to the counter.

“I’ll take these,” she said. “Thanks for letting me hang out for so long.”

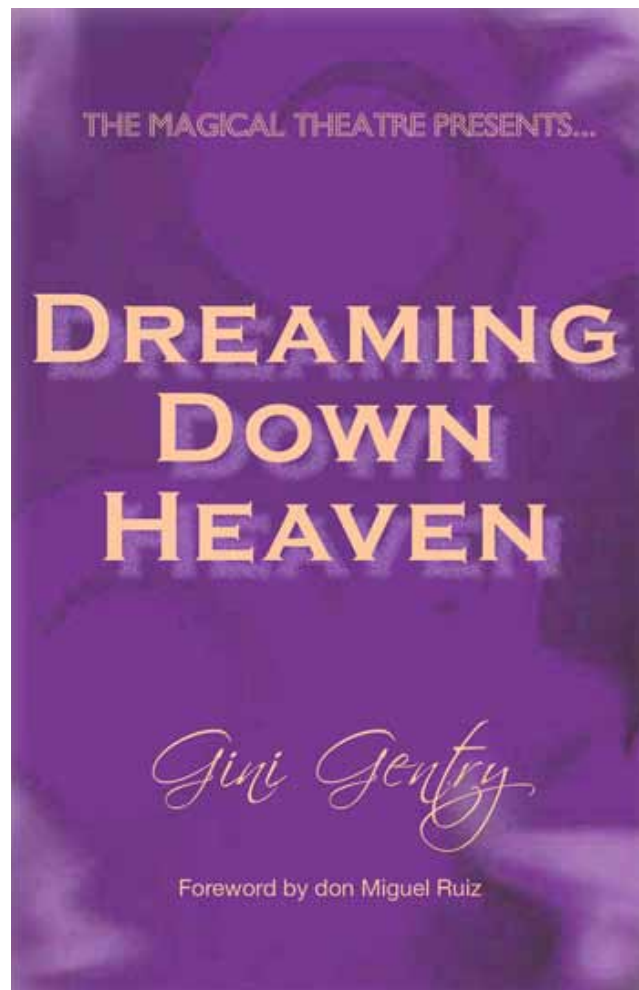
“Absolutely no trouble,” said the man, smiling. “People do it all the time.” He pointed to the book under her arm. “That one, too?”

Gigi realized she was still holding onto *Dreaming Down Heaven*. Suddenly she was

unwilling to let it go.

“Yes, this one too,” she replied.

“Excellent choice,” said the man with a wink as he rang her up. But before Gigi could ask him what he meant, he hustled her out the door and locked it behind her. Gigi wrapped her scarf around her neck and hurried down the street. She couldn’t wait to get home, open a bottle of wine, and find out what Dreaming Down Heaven was all about. Then she’d start planning her move to the tropics. After ordering in Chinese, of course.



**Order Gini Gentry’s “Dreaming Down Heaven” today!**  
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