



# From Arcadia to Purgatory

## The 8th 6-year cycle, Part 1

by Wanda Smit

*Wanda continues Diana's story as her Age Point moves into the 8th house.*

Diana's AP was moving into the eighth house, that place of loss and gain, but still being in Libra, it coloured her world with the glow of affability. The AP/North Node quincunx early 1993 created a yearning to spend as much time as possible by herself and on herself, doing the things she enjoyed most: being creative. She decided to work on a freelance basis rather than full-time so as to 'buy' more time for herself.

Strange how lately, I have no great desire to go out. Except when it is a special aesthetic or social event. Almost as if I have everything I want at home: books, music, memories.

I have grown weary of social outings that became increasingly empty and meaningless. I have never enjoyed small talk. I have moved to my own centre again which has always been on the periphery of society.

It is a place I adore.

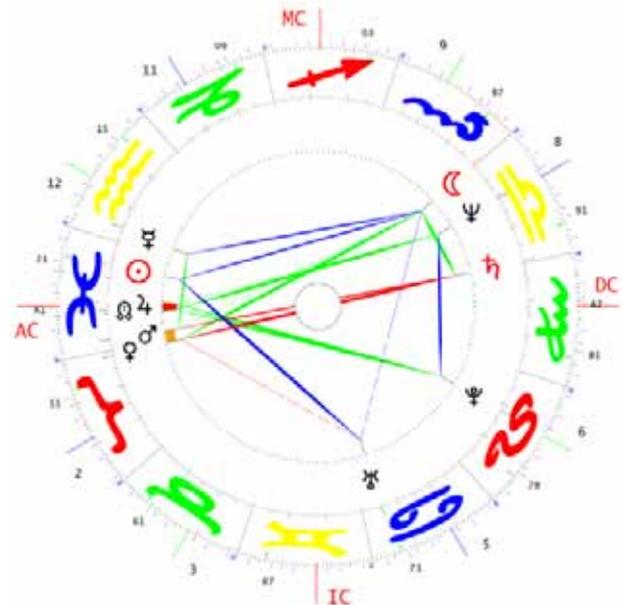
She was engaged in an exhilarating creative project: redecorating her home. Once her living space had been transformed into a magnificent sanctuary, she often entertained a small, but intimate group of friends. On the horizon, Neptune, that planet of love and inspiration, was dimly visible. She now incorporated her understanding of the planetary energies into her house with Neptune dominating in one of the bathrooms. She didn't yet know Astrological Psychology's Age Point Progression. All she knew was that Neptune was her ruling planet. And that, according to Jung, one's house is a symbol of one's self.

The different rooms seemed to be 'ruled' by the different gods: the living room where she entertained her friends, listened to music and wrote at the coffee table, sitting on the plush carpet, was decidedly ruled by Mars, Venus, the Moon and Mercury, those planets at the angles of The Search Figure. She was now experiencing the creative, emotional and philosophical highlights of her life as the many journal entries illustrate.

Finally I have the lifestyle I have been planning for so long! The security of an investment in the form of my house, and the freedom to work or travel, at least for a few months, and write. And now, having moved into the cottage next to my house – a spontaneous decision that led to the realisation of this dream – I can live out my fantasies.

How I long to be in Europe, traveling this time from Vienna to Prague by train, so as to see more of the Bohemian countryside.

This intense experience of the Neptune/AP conjunction would last for more than a year and culminated in her trip to Prague. The magic and mystery



**Diana**

26.02.1951, 07:00, Wolmaransstad, South Africa

she experienced in this city resulted in a travel article aptly called Neptune's World.

With the advent of Neptune in Diana's consciousness, the screen of the Projection Figure was completed. There is no doubt in her mind that the Jupiterian energy controlling this figure had let her experience the most intense learning curve in her life, starting with the loss of her stepfather 12 years earlier when Pluto had appeared. But her deeper learning still had several lessons to go through, the most intense of which would be triggered by the Pluto square in 1999.

With Jupiter being the energy that differentiates between truth and misconceptions, Diana was finally seeing through some of her fantasies.

What a fool I have been, thinking my mother will make it all right. Of course, she can't. Her helplessness in her own life, and her need for others reflect on my life too; the distrust and dislike of men, yet the firm belief that they will come and save us. Is this where the concept of God the Saviour had its origins?

It reminds me of my first encounter with Renzo and the spirituality I saw in his blue eyes. He, in turn, said he saw love when I walked into his world. This spirituality and love we projected onto one another only to discover that we have to find it in ourselves first.

Projection is sheer illusion. Like a film is only make-believe life.

How this year off work, refining my creative projects and my surroundings has given me time to reflect on and relive all these emotions that have always been in me, but were suppressed by the pressures of earning a living. Who knows what it will lead to? The throwing off of more burdens? Oh, to breathe freely.

And To Forget Venice.\* (Title of an Italian film in which the characters have to let go of their delusions.)

Just before the Neptune conjunction, Pluto blessed Diana with the ability to draw on her deepest self in order to bring this Plutonic energy, this dark man whom she had internalised during her childhood, to consciousness.

To have found which archetype underlies, now and maybe forever, my psyche! Hephaestus, of course, the blacksmith. How often have I not gotten my hands dirty or scratched or bruised by more masculine work such as carpentry or tiling? This is the reason, too, why I sometimes resent the way my mother asks me to put up some pictures for her or to fix her washing machine. It is not her request for help that irritates me, for I have become her surrogate husband since my stepfather's absence, but the realisation that she has spent a lifetime waiting for someone to fix things for her. And if he (or I) doesn't turn up, they would be left undone.

This receptive rather than active feminine aspect of her is one I have never learnt to appreciate; one that causes endless disagreements and arguments between us. How we have fought, pointlessly, because it is the marriage of the masculine and feminine in me that underpins the creative process.

Like Hephaestus, born of a mother with no intervention by a father, I too am bound to my mother's creative process in a powerful and painful way. But where she created children, I created works. I set up my life so that I could work and sweat away in my subterranean forge, refining and transforming hard materials with physical strength and willpower – a characteristic many of my friends dislike.

And even if this hard labour of mine causes me suffering at times, it is what my life is about. This introverted creativity that seeks to penetrate the layers of darkness for myself and, hopefully, for others. Is this what I am to do with my life forever, or do I need to soften it so that it is more acceptable to the more gentle people around me?

It has also become clear to me that what I liked most in Mark was his Hephaestian qualities. "I love his lifestyle," I said to a friend, "I want his lifestyle."

Now I seem to have it.

The AP/Mars quincunx in December 1994 awoke in Diana a hankering after her other sense of the masculine – the thinker and writer. She contacted her mentor, whom she hadn't been in touch with for six years. With her AP halfway between Neptune and the Moon, both energies of emotion and love, she was involved with two men. But neither the inspiring relationship with her mentor, nor the one with Ludwig, a man with whom, she says, she felt

the safest and the most secure, could prevent the death and destruction of 1995.

While Diana was still experiencing the creative, emotional and philosophical highlights of her life, the spoilsport Scorpio was looming. With her mentor now in the East, she was left with the other man in her life: Ludwig. Were his brooding intensity and firm Calvinist belief that 'everyone has a cross to bear' a preamble to the experience of Scorpio, that energy that demands the paying of one's dues? She wasn't aware that her AP was moving towards the sign of Scorpio, the bringer of pain and gain, but in her physical environment, Pluto suddenly shook her to the core.

Through bad workmanship when laying an underground cable, the municipality had left a hump across the street next to her house. Every time a double-decker bus or a large truck went over it, the earth would shudder and shake. These 'earthquakes' happened so regularly that she started feeling destabilised. Her peace of mind was further destroyed by the long fight she had with the city council who only took corrective action after receiving a letter from her lawyer. Until then, they'd thought she was 'some crazy woman'. And indeed, she felt as if she were going insane. The fault line in the road was finally repaired and her inner turmoil subsided.

With Mercury's blessing and Mars's bout of nostalgia in 1994, Diana's journal writing was at its peak. She was in Arcadia, penned by her Mercurial qualities, not without rather utopian hues: her natal Mercury is in idealistic Aquarius. Then, the very month in 1995 when Diana's AP moved into this sign, her father died. It was not a traumatic event as she had 'lost' him in childhood already. It was one of life's ironies that the man she associated most closely with her father, Ludwig, was the one who accompanied her to her father's deathbed where he lay in a coma from which he never recovered. Perhaps Ludwig's dark depression was simply a reflection of the one her father had been in thirty-six years earlier?

Her house provided no comfort. Particularly not when the house-shaking tremors started again, this time because of a newly constructed traffic circle next to her house. In addition, there was an endless row of beggars knocking on her door, begging for food or money. The desperately poor from rural areas in the country were streaming to the city now that apartheid had been lifted; as if they had come to demand their dues, another Scorpionic trait. Alone in a house with French doors on three sides, she felt vulnerable. After all, Johannesburg had become a crime capital and no-one felt safe anymore. Then there was a burglary in which her sound system and all her CDs were stolen one night when she was asleep.

It seemed that everything in her environment was conspiring to bring her down. She started having panic attacks (which were a foreboding of further thyroid problems.) Diary entries at that time illustrate the sense of threat she experienced all around her.

How deathly life has become! The tedium of being in a crime-ridden city, imprisoned in a house that has exhausted me with its demands to be taken care of. The suspended action that is required of me because Ludwig refuses to act. Sell the house, live at the coast, write plays, novels and articles... move on to another life, with or without Ludwig? Is he not always with me, anyway?

Yet a fear has crept into my soul: the constant threat of violence that lies over Johannesburg. Once again, I feel it in my throat which is tight, as if gripped by a steel hand. All of this is aggravated by the daily accounts of murder and mayhem.

Africa is Pluto's world. How I hate his endless displays of power! Terrorising mortals, playing the tyrant. He is truly the dark side of God, more so than Saturn whom I regard as the dark side of the Great Mother, the one who restricts and reprimands, but also rewards.

He is my most potent adversary. He is that black, rapacious bird that sits so heavily on my tree. That hangs like a dead-weight around my neck. There's no throwing him off, only a bearing of this terrible burden.

The year before, Diana had had everything she valued most in life, but now the tides had turned. History seemed to repeat itself. All the losses she had had thirty-six years earlier when her family left her father, would now be suffered again: she would stop seeing Ludwig who, like her father, had withdrawn from life, and she would leave the house she had turned into her sanctuary, as well as many friends with whom she had shared those idyllic years.

Her friends and family were horrified when she sold her house, but she felt that the destabilised house was undermining her. She needed something smaller and more secure. She bought outbuildings – to the horror of her mother – on a panhandle stand safely tucked away behind a large house. It was as if she had gone into hiding, away from the extreme emotional difficulties she had suffered over the previous year.

But if she thought leaving her life as it was behind by moving to a more safe and sound environment, Pluto would continue to demand his dues. The task she had now taken on was the most difficult one in her life. Perhaps moving out of her lovely house had been a mistake, she sometimes thought, but her ever-increasing panic attacks demanded drastic action.

At the encounter in 1995 with her emotional ego – the Moon – rather than wine and roses, she felt the excruciating sting of Scorpio: she now found herself in a place of extreme physical and emotional hardship. It was the rainiest season in sixty years and her building plans had to be suspended. Consequently she lived not in a house, but on a building site, or in a squatter's camp as one of her friends so aptly called it. She felt totally defeated and considered selling the place and admitting that it had all been a big mistake, but she was too proud for that, pride being her second worst quality.

When green, thought-provoking aspects to her relationship planets were formed by the AP, involving Saturn, the Moon and Venus, she realised that it was the most forsaken she had ever been. She had stopped confiding in her journals, almost as if previously enjoyable activities like writing and reading, music and literature no longer mattered. Social outings were a small comfort. She was completely at a loss as to what was happening in her life. She had never felt as 'out of control' and the only comfort she found was in her two cats.

It was the bleakest period in her life, and would worsen over the next year when she had to go through the 8th house low point which the Hubers consider to be the major low point in anyone's life.

Only when Uranus was aspected a year later was the transformation of her house complete and she could 'live' again. It was during the Sun trine in 1996 (which followed the low-point) that she dealt with all the thoughts she had had on the meaning of her life: her relationships, her vocation, her writing. It was as if she could see the sun again, after so much darkness.

Enough  
of this dark  
dank existence  
of the dusty  
musty maze  
that wends  
its weird  
eerie ways  
down detours  
to demons  
and dragons spitting  
fire and flames  
stifling the air  
with poisons  
sharpening their teeth  
on roots  
that never see the sun  
warming the morning  
polishing the pond  
birthing the glory  
of the day  
dispelling darkness  
bringing brightness  
to the splendour  
of the midday sun  
when mad dogs  
are on the run –  
but not I  
now under the big blue sky  
of which the moles  
in their holes  
can only dream.

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