



CHAPTER 4

Shishu Bhawan

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EARLY THE NEXT MORNING I hailed a rickshaw and was taken to the Motherhouse. I asked the man pulling the rickshaw to stop first at a coffee-house along the way. I hadn't slept most of the night and knew that I would have to find a new hotel for the next night.

I was surprised to find that the streets were already alive and bustling with traffic. The cracked sidewalks were crowded with people bathing themselves around fire hydrants that had been opened for that purpose. This was also my first experience on a rickshaw, and I felt sad that this poor, bare-footed man, acting as a human horse, was pulling me through the streets of Calcutta.

After two cups of coffee we made our way onto Lower Circular Road and I was left at the main entrance of the Motherhouse. The morning began with 5:30 a.m. Mass followed by breakfast for the volunteers before they fanned out to the various facilities run by the Mission.

It was at breakfast over tea that I would meet my first fellow volunteers. I spoke with Kari Amber McAdam, a young student from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire who had received a fellowship to work with Mother Teresa. She was volunteering at Shishu Bhawan and offered to accompany me there after breakfast.

We walked the short distance to the orphanage and at that moment I felt frightened at the prospect of being around babies. I had never once changed a diaper. Kari on the other hand seemed like an old pro as I watched her handle a baby. The other volunteers also seemed very comfortable with the operation and their roles.

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Several of Mother Teresa's orphans gather for a group photograph at Shishu Bhawan. One girl clutches a Western doll whose forehead has been painted with Hindu markings.

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