


CHAPTER

Kalighat — Home for the Dying and Destitute

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ONCE MOTHER TERESA GAVE ME PERMISSION to photograph the Mission's facilities, my enthusiasm took over — as it always does when I'm behind a camera. But after a few weeks of working in the context of both a volunteer and a photographer, I found myself exhausted. Coping with Calcutta was tiring in itself. After Mass one morning, Mother Teresa approached me and suggested that instead of taking so many pictures, that I should consider working as a volunteer at Kalighat.

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Except for those very personal moments with Mother Teresa, I found that my experience in Calcutta up until that morning leaned more toward the role of an observer rather than a participant. I was accustomed to being the photographer and focusing on others doing their work. But now Mother Teresa was forcing me to put down the cameras in order to relate to her mission on a deeper level. The process of finding commitment through an open heart that began with my sick husband would be given a new meaning when I had to relate to strangers who were dying.

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I looked at Mother Teresa with mixed emotions. I loved her for caring enough about me to give me this direction, but I also perceived her as a teacher who was challenging her student to go beyond her level of endurance or what she considered her limitations.

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"Heaven is found by serving the lowliest."
—Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa's original mission, Nirmal Hriday — the place of the pure heart — has treated nearly 100,000 people over the past thirty years.

By this time, I had also changed accommodations and moved to the less expensive Circular Hotel across the street from Motherhouse. It was here that I developed a