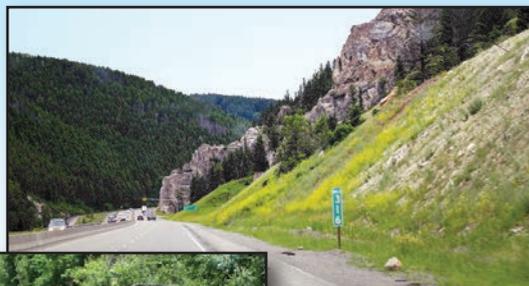


# From a **DEATH GATE** to **SHAKTI BLISS**



The rain was coming down lightly as the sun was setting on a beautiful spring evening. I was driving from Livingston to Bozeman, crossing into the shadow of the mountains as I reached the pass separating the Gallatin and Bridger mountain ranges. The temperature was 45F. The danger of snow and blizzards was only a distant concern. The date was March 25, 2016.

As I drove along, I passed a car. Then another. And another. Something about this struck me as odd. I am a fairly conservative driver. Usually the other cars are passing me! I glanced down at my speedometer. Sixty miles an hour. Exactly the speed limit. The road curved gently back and forth between the mountains. Why was everyone driving so slowly?

I felt an increasing sense of fear and dread. Something was wrong. Maybe there was an accident ahead, or I had missed a sign about road construction. Maybe there were elk or deer on the road that everyone else knew about except me. Whatever was happening, I'd better slow down, too. Now!

I hit the brakes. My car swerved in an exaggerated way. I hit the brakes again, and the car headed for the guard rail on the left. I hit the brakes a third time to avoid the guard rail and overcorrected to the right. In a flash, I knew: black ice! The rain had frozen on the road in the shadow of the mountains. The revelation came too late.

I was heading for a steel post on the right side of the road at full speed. There was no hope of regaining control of the car. I screamed once. Time slowed. A profound silence came over me. I was no longer afraid. The car hit the steel post, bent it like butter, and careened towards the side of the mountain.



My thoughts existed in some kind of space apart. I looked objectively at my situation, as though from some higher vantage

point. No one else was in the car with me. My children were safe at home. I was already off the road. I wasn't endangering other cars or drivers. It was only me. I was going to live or die. I wouldn't know which until the car stopped moving. I let go and waited.

I struck an embankment at the foot of the mountain and flipped back towards the road, then hit the ground hard enough to crush the roof and shatter every window save one. The car rolled again and again. It dug into the mountain, filling up with shattered glass and then dirt from the repeated impact. It reminded me vaguely of a roller-coaster ride.

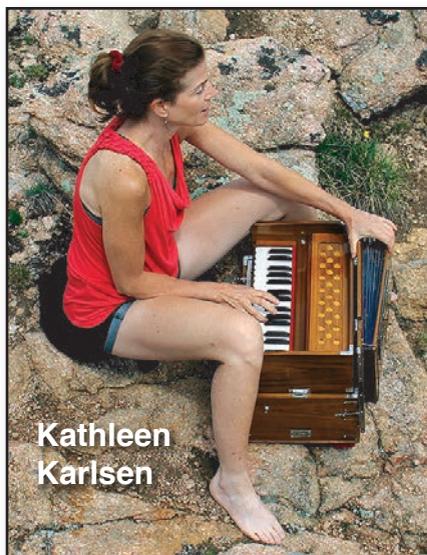
Then the car abruptly came to a stop. Time sped up again. I was hanging from my still-intact seatbelt. All of the air bags were deployed, and the car tipped precariously.

I heard voices calling to me in the dim light: "Are you OK? We can pull you out through the passenger side. You have to get away from this car...."

I was still on earth! In fact, I was miraculously and completely unharmed. The car was utterly destroyed. I had passed through a death gate and lived.

The experience of passing through a death gate is distinct from a near-death experience. In an NDE, the body stops functioning while the soul travels to another dimension and then returns. Passing through a death gate is beginning another life without the temporary physical death (and the accompanying traumatic injuries). It sounds like the easy route, but I was about to find out just how momentous restarting your life can be.

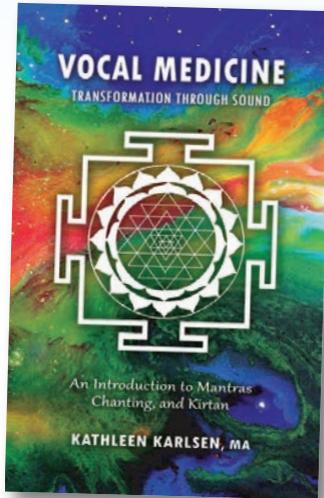
Over the course of the next few months, the life I had lived before the accident came completely



**Kathleen  
Karlsen**

unraveled. Friendships, partnerships and future plans dissolved inexplicably and wrenchingly. I experienced unexpected and noteworthy challenges in every direction. I had been in a place of peace and fearlessness for a moment. Now I was plunged into the darkest night I had ever known.

I had felt since my teenage years that my life was to be dedicated to the healing power of music and art, but up until now, this had been mostly theoretical. Other obligations had taken precedence. In fact, I had always been in the role of helping others to fulfill their



My marriage was under significant stress. At the same time, my father began to decline into the final stages of Parkinson's, a heroic journey of suffering and debilitation. In addition, one of my children struggled with a frightening recurrence of PTSD from an

earlier traumatic brain injury. As the end of the year approached, the combined effects of everything that happened in the aftermath of the accident was taking a toll on my health. I was numb at best and overwhelmed and grief-stricken at worst.

The eventual resolution of this tumultuous period and my own emotional and physical recovery is the starting point of my recent book *Vocal Medicine*. In the last months before the accident, I had found the practice of kirtan.

As described in *Vocal Medicine*, chanting played a central role in my life during my emergence from this painful, transitional phase, eventually leading me to form the Shakti Bliss Kirtan Band in order to share with others my love of mantras and the healing power of chanting.

The name Shakti Bliss contains the Sanskrit term "shakti," defined as the feminine energy of creation that empowers and enlivens all forms of manifestation in the physical universe. Shakti also refers to the kundalini energy or Mother Light that is raised to the crown during

enlightenment.

Shakti energy is the ultimate bliss and the doorway for divine union. On that rainy spring evening, I could not have foreseen my journey from a death gate to Shakti Bliss. In the last three years since the accident, my life has been blessed abundantly with transformative experiences. Most importantly, I have even greater faith in the journey yet ahead. ■

*Look for Kathleen's book, "Vocal Medicine" at [KathleenKarlsen.com](http://KathleenKarlsen.com) or on Amazon. Information about Kirtan events, her ongoing posts and images can be found on Instagram (@shaktiblisskirtan), Facebook (/shaktiblisskirtan) and at [KathleenKarlsen.com](http://KathleenKarlsen.com). Get on Kathleen's mailing list for notification about upcoming events. Contact Kathleen through her website, or call (406) 599-3235.*

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missions. Now I knew that my life depended on fulfilling my own mission. If I didn't make every possible effort to do that going forward, I felt deeply that I would not survive the next death gate.

My husband and I had spent decades raising five children and had worked extremely hard to run a business together. Just when we could have been settling into a steadier pace in life, I was determined to risk everything we had built to pursue my self-declared mission in sacred music and art. There appeared to be little hope for success or recompense from my efforts.

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