

The

OWL

A Sacred Stories Magazine
Summer 2022

UNABANTU NOKUPHILA

What the Goddess
of Love and War
Can Teach Us About
Unity Consciousness

THE NINE ORDERS
of Angels

The Heart of the Matter
for Spiritually Conscious Parents

Motherhood ReWilded
A Lasting Legacy

UP CLOSE
AND PERSONAL
with Valerie
Love



WELCOME

Welcome to The Owl!

A collaborative sharing of contemporary ideas, fresh perceptions, art, beauty, Universal wisdom, and modern inspiration across traditional and non-traditional spiritual and religious teachings. We invite everyone to the table to share in the rich feast of Life and Living.

Ariel Patricia



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Come On In & See What's Inside

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Owl
A Sacred Stories Magazine

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A Sacred Story

by Linda Varos

It was springtime and a wonderful time for a 6-year-old to explore the unmarked boundaries of her new home property. My mom opened the curtains and doors wide and invited me to play in the yard as she watched from the kitchen window. Everything outdoors was exploding with life. The grasses and trees were bursting with shades of green so bright it almost hurt my eyes. The shrubbery and plants were so alive you could feel their presence surrounding you. A strong breeze made a rustling sound in the trees, almost overwhelming the melodic warbling of the many woodland birds. Every day I couldn't wait to run outside, open my arms wide to let the sun bathe me with joy, my eyes opened wide as I touched everything in sight.

One day while walking along, I felt drawn to a deeper corner of the property. The tall trees arched over the wild shrubbery and made a semi-circle around the grass and flowering weeds. I stopped in the lime green grass center of this semi-circle and stood there, frozen in place as if by command. Suddenly a beam of sun entered directly overhead. As if a bucket of liquid gold love had been poured into me, a loving energy came in through my crown and filled me up. Loving hugs and a sense of complete protection filled my body.

Simultaneously, everything in my view shifted as if I'd walked into a movie or a dream. All that was unfolding was totally unfamiliar and out of the ordinary. The movement of each natural area that surrounded me became exaggerated. The trees bent and flowed in one direction, while above and around them, a moving energy field appeared. The wild shrubbery below them was also moving rapidly but at a different speed than the trees. Again, I could see their encompassing and flowing energy field dancing in the sun. Lower than the shrubbery were at least two more layers; the wild flowering plants and the green grasses, swaying to their own music, their energy fields caressing and dancing with them. These energy fields were almost clear; yet they were as easy to see as their movements.

Then all of this zoomed out, and I witnessed everything at once. Like a great symphony, they each played their song, moving at different speeds, yet flowing in harmony together. The beauty was overwhelming. I felt it all vibrating through my body, and the ecstasy of the moment lifted me even higher.

I felt awestruck, overwhelmed, ecstatic with the vision and the internal

sensations of tremendous, loving support. In an instant a thought poured in, which sticks with me to this day, *Oh! This is what's happening all of the time, only we don't see it, and no one talks about it!*

I simply knew. And I knew it was never spoken of. I accepted this unseen field of energy movement as another reality because 'the knowing' struck me deep. It not only enlightened, it uplifted me in such a way that I understood I am forever protected as long as I stay connected to the knowledge that it is, it will always be with me.

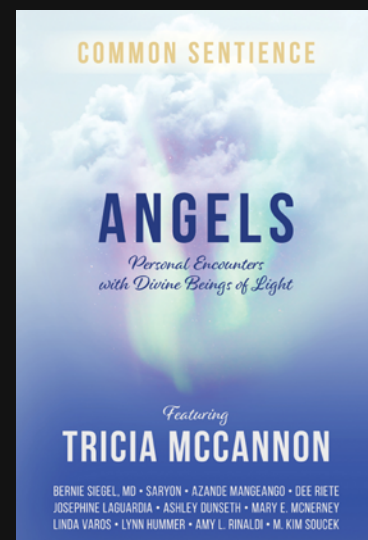
This moment in timeless time, gave me an instant awareness of an unseen parallel world that is always with us. My child self accepted it as commonplace, which set the path that has continued to unfold through my entire life.

Because of this experience, and the gift of a wonderful family, I was blessed to live my entire childhood in a complete state of trust, interacting with nature in a 'friends and family' sort of way and knowing protection from higher unseen sources was always there for me.

Life has provided many gifts and struggles, blessings and lessons learned, errors in judgment, as well as much joy, love, and bliss. In the deepest, darkest moments of conflict, or when things

feel out of my control, I redirect my awareness to the unseen, parallel field of joyful energy, that symphony of beauty and love. It sparks my knowing again and brings me peace. From these experiences, I have learned to see with new eyes; and to know there is a magnificence that is always waiting to uplift us if we desire and are willing to meet it halfway by joyfully opening ourselves to receiving.

***Linda Varos** is an awakening alchemist, and creator/guide of The Path of Personal Shamanism™. She is a modern mystic, clairvoyant-medium, artist, author, energy healing facilitator, and teacher. Linda has worked one-on-one with clients from all over the globe for more than 40 years. Linda is a contributing author to the bestselling book *ANGELS: Personal Encounters with Divine Beings of Light*, a book in the Common Sentience book series. Contact Linda at lindavaros.love*



A full-page photograph of Valerie Love standing in front of a large, ornate black wrought-iron gate with gold-colored decorative elements. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top with gold star patterns and a gold necklace. She is looking upwards and to the left.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

*with
Valerie Love*

Valerie Love (aka KAISI) is the author of 24 books on practical spirituality, magick, the occult, Christian Witchcraft and the author of the upcoming book WITCH: Divine Alignments with the Elements, Energies, and Cycles of Nature, a book in the Common Sentience series. As an ordained minister of spiritual consciousness, practicing Christian Witch, and global retreat leader, her soul mission is to inspire to freedom. On one of her Ayahuasca journeys

in Peru, Valerie received the name KAISI, meaning one who plants seeds and nurtures them to grow, a Divine blueprint for her work of ascending consciousness. As a professionally trained coach, Valerie travels globally and leads retreats in exotic and spiritually charged hot spots for women to rise to their zenith and birth their most magnificent work into the world. She's affectionately known as the Divine Midwife of Soul Destiny. <https://valerielove.com>

Ariel Patricia: Valerie, it is a pleasure to speak with you. Please tell us who is Valerie Love?

Valerie Love: Thank you. I am a Divine being of magick, love, and power. My name is Love because I had a sacred download from Spirit. I live magick, and I am here to exercise Divine power. That is who I am in a nutshell.

AP: Valerie, that's powerful and I hope empowering to all that are reading. I am sure there is a story to tell that brought you to the place you are today. Let's begin at the beginning. Tell us about your childhood.

VL: I was born to a 19-year-old single mom who named me after her favorite soap opera character, Valerie. We lived in Harlem, New York City in my maternal grandparents' home. It was a multi-generational experience because I lived with my mother who lived with her parents, and then my grandfather's parents lived upstairs in the building. It was a big family with everybody around all the time, lots of people coming and going.

One summer afternoon when I was about three years old, we were coming back from the supermarket, and my mother met a gentleman

from the Jehovah's Witnesses standing on a street corner. Right away the faith spoke to my mother because she had a lot of questions about the nature of life and the universe, and he had a bible to answer her questions. She converted to that faith, and I grew up in the cult of Jehovah's Witnesses.

AP: Tell us more about your experience growing up as a Jehovah's Witness.

VL: The Jehovah's Witnesses are very strict. We were not allowed to celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, or any other holidays. We also weren't allowed to celebrate our birthdays. I didn't experience holidays or birthdays again until I left the faith when I was 30 years old.

I did everything they told me to do. They told me to go to school up until high school and while I was in high school to study a trade that I could apply in the world and make a living. They didn't allow us to go to college, so we didn't go to college. They told us to get married to another Jehovah's Witness, settle down, and have a family.

AP: What were you encouraged to study?

VL: They encouraged me to be a nurse when really, I'm a writer, I wanted to write. So, in high school, I settled on taking stenography and secretarial science. That is what they called it back in those days. High school was where my gifts of writing started to blossom.

One of my high school teachers said to me, "Hey, you can get a scholarship to college." I was like, "No way. That's not going to do me any good because my mom's not letting me go to college." My teacher talked to my mother. No, not allowed. I grew up sort of with an abolishment of the world and only the Jehovah's Witness paradigm was what we were exposed to. And that was hard to do in New York City.

But one thing that my mother did was she exposed us to culture. She took us to the Met, the opera, and the ballet. In New York, there's so much to do and there are so many different people. It's a big melting pot, I love it.



AP: It's fascinating, especially in a place like New York City that you can be so separated in a sense from the world. Be in the world, but not of the world. How did that happen? Did you question why your friends celebrated birthdays or could go to college?

VL: It was a total indoctrination. There was one central organization that used to be headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, called the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. You could only associate with Jehovah's Witnesses, and they believed everything that you believed. They keep each other accountable and if you're talking about birthdays or about astrology, things that will never be mentioned, then they would say you need to talk to the elders.

We were taught that when we went to school to not associate with people that are "of the world." We were to do only the minimum to pass our classes - no extracurricular activities. After school, you went straight home and you're with the other Witnesses.

There was another aspect to it as well. My mother was very close with all my teachers. The Witnesses have a protocol and every year in September when your child starts school, the Witness parents tell the teacher, "This is my Witness child. When you're doing Thanksgiving etc., let my child go out into the hallway." We're also religious and conscientious objectors and we don't do the Pledge of Allegiance, so we never had to stand and do pledges.

It was almost like being in the world but not really. I don't know if Witnesses are still able to do this because the era I'm speaking of was the '60s and '70s. We didn't have the internet or many TV stations for information outside our immediate world.

AP: Did you ever object or question why you couldn't participate in

school activities or have friends that weren't Witnesses?

VL: I absolutely rebelled, and it wasn't about holidays or birthdays. High school was a huge turning point for me. In high school, I was in the drama club, and I was writing. I began to experience growth in myself, to discover who I am and my gifts. This was never allowed before. It was almost like the birdie hatching out of the shell and that was when it really began.



Mrs. Freeman



Valerie Love

1979 Washington Irving High
School Yearbook Photos from
classmates.com

Something pivotal in my life was when my English teacher Mrs. Freeman put a note in my student mailbox, "Come to my office at one

o'clock." I was terrified thinking I did something wrong and bracing myself for what was going to happen.

Mrs. Freeman said, "Valerie, your writing is amazing. We have this program and it's a three-year program. You're in the 9th grade and I pick the top 10 students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades and they're with me for three years. I teach them myself. We'll be reading Chaucer and Shakespeare and Poe."

She was singing the song of my soul when it came to literature and all the books that my mother would never let me read. But now I would have to read them for school assignments. Mrs. Freeman changed my whole world about literature and words and the English language. That's my gifting, being a keeper of the word and writing, speaking, and telling stories, being a lore mistress as I call it.

AP: So interesting. Mrs. Freeman, even her name is symbolic. So now you're in high school and your gifts are starting to open and you're starting to question a little bit. But

that's still a huge jump to who you are and the magickal work that you do today.

VL: Ever since I was a little girl, I saw spirits and experienced things that other people weren't experiencing. I could look at people and I could see what was going on with them. I would sit in the Kingdom Hall, and I would look at someone, peering energetically, and I could see things. People were very uncomfortable with that. "Tell your child to stop staring at me," they would say.

Yet, by the time I turned seven or eight years old, that was just kind of beat out of me. "No, no, no spirits, no anything other than the physical world." So, I went from being a magickal child with gifts and abilities to being told, "No, that's the devil, that's bad, that's the demons."

My experience was saying one thing but the information that I was getting from the world was saying something different. And not just the world, from people I loved. That I would say was the beginning of the inner conflict between religion and magick.

AP: Did you turn your gifts off then?

VL: Oppressed I would say.

AP: Oppressed, an interesting word for a witch. So now you're in high school, you're writing, acting, and more of your creative gifts are turning on. You said you were with the Witnesses until you were 30. How did you go from high school to claiming your path as a witch?

VL: It still took quite a long time because our unfoldment is this path of the heroine's journey. Yes, I did everything they told me to do even though inside something was really stirring. Yet, all my friends were Witnesses, I only knew Witnesses, and I only lived that life practically all of my life. So it was an extremely difficult extraction. And how it unfolded was gradual. So first, after high school, I was working, making money, having fun, still going to the Kingdom Hall, and eventually at 23 years old I got married.

At 29 I was pregnant with my second child, my son was two years old, and my husband and I were having challenges. I'm also having spiritual



Valerie and her family before Valerie left the Witnesses. L to R front row: Valerie's daughter and maternal grandmother. Top row: Valerie's younger sister, her mom, and Valerie.

experiences and wanting to write but I can't write because the Witnesses only get their literature from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. As a woman, I also can't speak and teach from the stage unless I'm speaking to another woman on the stage.

So, I couldn't be a writer or a teacher. That was going to be the extent of my life and I would not have been able to reach my potential. Something about

me knew this and I had a deep sadness. There was so much in me, I could feel it, and I would write in journals, but I couldn't think about writing books. It felt like a prison and that took me into a very deep depression after I had the baby.

Some people say I was in postpartum depression. It was hard, it was very hard. I remember going to the medicine cabinet one day and there was a bottle of the 800 milligrams of Motrin that they had given me after the baby for pain. And I remember asking myself, *How many would it take for me to go to sleep and not wake up?*

As I reached for the bottle, something snatched me back. *Who's going to take care of the baby? And who's going to take care of Cory, your three-year-old son?* My kids pulled me back from the edge and I realized if I was that close to ending my life, I needed to know what was really going on with me.

That's when I heard from my soul.

I was laying in bed one day, and it said, *Get up*. And I sat up and I looked around and it said, *Get dressed*.

It was a major unfolding because when you're that depressed even getting up and dressed is a big deal. It's a God sign. It was giving me step by step commands in a voice that made me get up and do it because I was just so lethargic.

I went outside and the sun was shining. The voice said, *Breathe*. I took a deep breath, and it was like I had breathed for the first time in my life. *Was I holding my breath for 30 years?*

Then the voice said, *Walk*. And I began walking. To this day, I walk as a healing modality, I walk as a meditation.



The voice said, *Live or don't live, but you're not going to do this. This, just getting by.* That inner teacher and guide that we all have, was teaching me. And it said, Live or don't.

It wasn't judgmental in any way. It gave me a choice. It also told me I wasn't going to keep doing this half in and half out, just being a zombie. And that's when I made my decision. I'm going to do it. I'm going to live.

AP: Valerie, thank you for sharing. I know your story will help a lot of people. So, you made the decision to live, and you made the decision to tune more fully into your gifts. What happened next?

VL: The first thing I did was start reading. I couldn't go straight from Fundamentalist Christian to here's how to be a witch, I couldn't do that. So, some of the first books that I picked up were books on Hinduism and Buddhism. They were safer to me. I could understand the teachings of Buddha because he seemed a lot like Christ. The Buddha is a symbol of peace and meditation, what can be wrong with that? My mother was very upset that I was

leaving the Witnesses, and that I was reading these books because she thought they were very dangerous books. But my mother found what worked for her and now it was time for me to find my path.

When a person's soul wakes up, it's like a bear coming out of hibernation, super hungry, so we just started devouring. I was devouring books on Buddhism and many other topics. And it was very scary because I kept going deeper. First, I was reading Christian inspiration and books on Buddhism. Then metaphysical topics, psychic mediumship books, the angel books. One day I was standing in a bookstore, and I wanted to pick up books on witchcraft and I remember something in me said, *Oh, no, you're going to the dark side.* I was so afraid that I was going to go off an abyss or something. But that never happened. I didn't grow up with the concept of hell, as it's not taught in the Jehovah's Witness religion. They teach obliteration for those who are unrepentant sinners. I'm thankful I didn't have hellfire to contend with as I was going through this transition.



The more I pressed out of my little shell, the more I saw that I didn't die and the more it emboldened me. And I kept going. And when I found books on witchcraft, I thought, *It is so familiar.*

AP: Bravo to you Valerie for following your soul. What did it feel like when you found your calling?

VL: The calling found me. It found me because many times I was lost. I didn't know where I was going or where it was going to end. It was an unfoldment giving me what I could handle at the time. It wasn't this big blinding moment where everything became very clear for me and what I was going to do with my life. The further down the path I walked, the more was revealed to me.

AP: Valerie, there is fear and misconceptions surrounding witches. Please tell us what a witch is.

VL: A witch is an emissary of the Goddess, a way shower, teacher, and healer. A Divine being inordinately attuned to nature and magic. Witch is a deep inner knowing. We know, in our heart of hearts, that we indeed

are a witch, whether we want to be or not.

AP: You say that you are a practicing Christian witch. Explain that to us.

VL: A Christian witch is a person who understands there is nothing in the essence of the witch nor in the essence of Christ that is inherently conflicting or contradictory. They gel rather nicely, in my experience. Christian witches resonate deeply with Christ, and each one in their own way integrates Christ and the Craft. A Christian witch has three possibilities in the way you can come to this path.

One is a person who knows they're a witch, they're magickal and aspire to Christ consciousness. That's me. I'm a witch, I'm a magickal person, I've always been a magickal person and I resonate deeply with Christ consciousness, love, and forgiveness. Second, it could be a person who is a Christian and is drawn to explore the magickal arts and sciences. And then third there are people who weren't raised Christian, but who love the saints,



or the Bible, or the lore of the Catholic Church. They're very magickal, and they find that Catholicism feeds their soul from a mystical perspective. Catholicism is used here as an example since it melds magic and Christ well with the accoutrement, rituals, holy water, exorcisms, and more.

AP: Valerie, what would you say to others on the path?

VL: If you're on the path of the witch - don't be afraid, keep going. It can be

a scary path, because witches like the dark, or feel at home in the dark. In Sedona, we love going out in the wilderness and doing our rituals at night on the red rocks and having our fires and all that. Don't be afraid, you can't be afraid to be a witch. Keep going, something good is waiting for you around the corner. Keep going.

AP: Thank you Valerie for sharing your wisdom and the heart of the witch.

FUN FACTS

AP: Coffee or tea?

VL: Coffee.

AP: Beach or mountains?

VL: Beach.

AP: Homebody or globetrotter?

VL: Oh, globetrotter.

AP: Favorite place in the world?

VL: Bali, it's my soul home.

AP: Early bird or night owl?

VL: Early bird.

AP: Favorite time?

VL: 5:00 AM every day.

AP: Books or movies?

VL: Books.

AP: Favorite book?

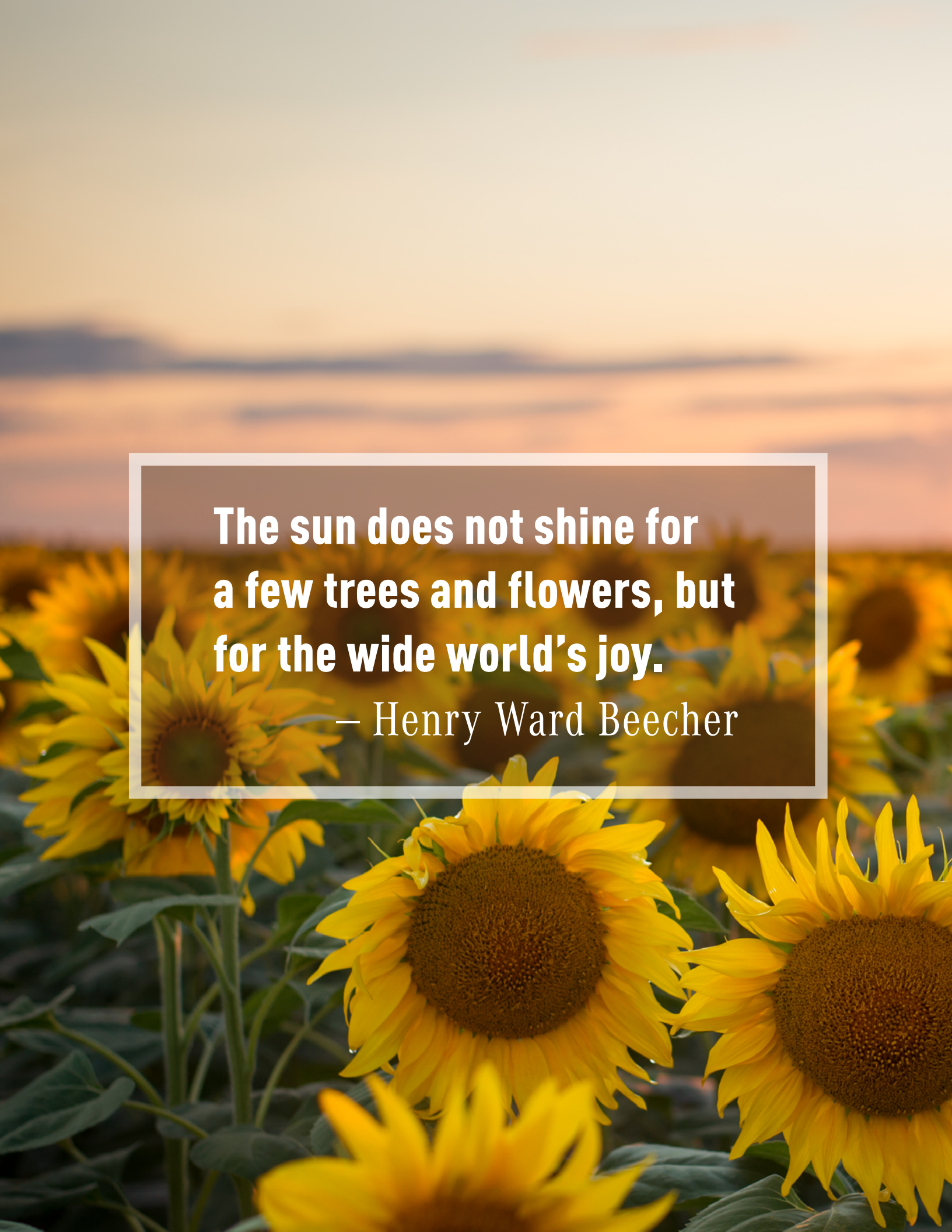
VL: Oh, it would have to be the Harry Potter series. Maybe the Bible. Bible number two after Harry Potter. Just kidding.

*Sit in sacred circle and
listen to our stories...*



sacredstories.com

**COMMON
SENTIENCE**
AN UNCOMMON BOOK SERIES

A field of sunflowers is shown at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange and yellow glow across the sky. The sunflowers in the foreground are in sharp focus, showing their bright yellow petals and dark brown centers. The background is slightly blurred, showing more sunflowers and the distant horizon. A semi-transparent white box with a thin black border is centered in the image, containing the text.

**The sun does not shine for
a few trees and flowers, but
for the wide world's joy.**

— Henry Ward Beecher



UNABANTU NOKUPHILA

*“Where people gather
at the Mother of Health”*

Named by the renowned Xhosa healer-sangoma,
Nolita Mngomezulu. Nokuphila embodies the meaning
of her name. Her friends call her ‘The Ubuntu Tree’.

Nokuphila lives between the mountain and the sea, the 7th Sacred Site of Cape Town,
she resides in the 4th node, the cultural heart and seat of power.

"In Africa, there lives an extraordinary tree. She is queen of the riverbank. A monarch, whose story stretches back millions of years. In tribal cultures, her mysterious ways have fueled myth and legend. They set her apart from other trees. She is a (Wild) Fig, Queen of Africa's trees."

—from 2005 award-winning film, *Queen of Trees*, depicting the mythology surrounding the Banyan Fig Tree, a tree native to Africa and India

Africa is the birthplace of humanity and is also the harbinger of humanity's future. To look forward to a vision of shared peace and unity during these fractured times, we simultaneously need to look back and draw support from our elemental anchors that ground and nourish us during great transformations, back toward the unique Elder Figs, particularly the grand old Mother Trees.

African folklore has long revered and worshiped the fig tree as sacred throughout the continent, as well as being a medicine chest for most ailments, physical, cultural, or spiritual. The wild figs have been places of shelter and healing for hundreds of years. They are peacekeepers and

living places of rest and blessings, rekindling, and nurturing the soul.

NOKUPHILA AND MIYERE OLE MIANDAZI

"Hallo there. May I come in?"

I wasn't sure if it was the echoing sound or the imposing vision of what I saw before my eyes that mesmerized me more as my eyes accustomed to the silhouette of a tall, red-blanketed figure greeting me from outside the wrought-iron 'Moon Gate' by the back of the Cape Town Medi-Spa where I work. Alongside the historic Belmond Mount Nelson hotel, it was a fitting frame for my encounter with this iconic figure who would assume a semi-mythical status over the following years. The moon gate, a '5 elements' iron rendering of the symbols Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space inside the gate which my father had especially built after an inspiration he had from the 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' movie, made for a surreal backdrop for this auspicious encounter.

I soon learned that the gravity-rich voice belonging to this beautiful, tall Maasai warrior and future lifelong

friend was none other than Miyere Ole Miandazi from the plains of Tanzania, a Massai Peace Warrior activist walking for Peace and Unity throughout Africa.

“I come to pay my respects to the Mother Tree who calls to me in the place of dreams and who made my legs move and has brought me here to the far south,” Miyere continued as if this was a normal track of conversation.



I felt electrified. Indeed, I had heard of indigenous people dreaming wisdoms before and was no stranger to this phenomenon after several years of traveling and working with a Khomani San family from the Kalahari. However, it had taken a full six months of walking and effort for Miyere to arrive at his dreaming tree and so the gate was instantly opened to welcome this peace warrior to enter and share his indigenous wisdoms and healing treasure.

Approaching the ancient wild fig, Miyere introduced to me in all her arboreal majesty as if for the first time. It was an experience I will never forget. Not that we hadn't always felt a sense of connection and respect to the ancient wild fig tree. Quite the opposite, yet she kept surprising us with new layers of her puzzle, bringing colorful characters to visit each with a new missing piece. This was clearly a corner piece.

“Please never refer to this mother as ‘the tree’ again Ian, for she has a special story and a unique spiritual name. You must uncover that for her work and yours to be made possible. She will reveal her message to you once you start to listen with the ear of your heart

and to walk the way the native people do, to walk on the land in the way that the earth makes you whole once again.”

Miyere continued, “She also is a great medicine tree lan. My people believe that this medicine tree was used by NGAJ, the One God, who in his form of creating the world put everything in its rightful place. He used the deep water seeking roots of this temple tree to send the cattle down from heaven to earth to live alongside us in peace and harmony. We thank NGAJ always on contacting this temple tree which He imbued with special medicine in her roots to heal both our body and mind.”

With that he bowed his head and seemed to commune with ‘the tree’ then delicately pulled a little of the hanging root stem off and offered me some before placing it in his mouth and starting to chew...

“Make tea or eat and all your swellings will be gone,” he clarified, seeing my amazement.

I would later confirm personally and with many visiting clients over the years that Miyere’s assertion that this genus of *ficus carica/natensis*

contains powerful anti-inflammatory ethno-botanical compounds and has been used for centuries by many communities throughout Africa for multiple ailments from wound closing and anti-venom to whooping cough and even assisting optimal childbirth... literally a medicine chest in our integrated wellness center’s back yard! What a blessing!

With that sharing Miyere bowed his head; placed one leg angled up to balance upon the inside of his other knee in the style of an African yogi and entered a silent communion that lasted several hours.

“Can you see how this sacred Mother tree has grown a heart lan?”



“One day when my world work is done and my people and all the indigenous people are safe once again, when we have moved again beyond borders, I will return with my spiritual elders to sit around this great mother, and again we will feel the spirit of our ancestors move us. But for now, we have other work to do...

“While you must start to listen deeply to this healing mother, I must walk and carry the no borders exhibition across Africa...however long it takes. Just turn within like these inside out figs and when the time is right, she will answer your questions and support and guide you as she does all her children.”

And so it was, this peace warrior took off and began another walk from Cape Town to Cairo, the “Ultimate Walk for Humanity”, a walk for a thriving, interconnected, borderless world.

NOKUPHILA’S MESSAGES

Following Miyere’s first visit Nokuphila began to whisper her first messages and a cascade of spiritual and symbolic gifts arrived in the following year, including the Ubuntu Water Crystal, Ubuntu Torch, and the Ubuntu Pledge.

NOKUPHILA’S FIRST WHISPER

One day, a feeling of pride while reflecting on having established one of Africa’s first integrated wellness centers was put in check by a definite, although gentle whisper in my mind. I was leaning against Nokuphila and looking at the Cape Town Medi-Spa when the message arrived, very clear, although its meaning wasn’t fully revealed until 10 years later when I became fully vegan. It is a message Nokuphila shared with me then and one She keeps repeating:

“Only when the animals and humans are gathered safely under my branches will the true healing begin.”

Nokuphila loves how Dr. Sailesh Rao founder of Climate Healers defines VEGAN as ‘Vitally Engaged Guardians of Animals and Nature.’ She agrees with Dr. Rao, that the birthing of a post-pandemic vegan world will be viewed as the “greatest transformation in human history,” and she has inspired an Ubuntu Pledge to support those ready to take this giant leap for humanity.



CALL TO ACTION—UBUNTU PLEDGE

'I pledge to honor and protect all the animals, people, and the planet herself by following an infinitely sustainable, cruelty free vegan lifestyle that heals the climate and restores right relationships in the true spirit of ubuntu.'

MEET NOKUPHILA'S CUSTODIANS

Being chosen as custodian of an Elder Tree is no small task. Bonding with a Mother Tree is a wonderful journey of seeding and growth, that blossoms over time, and begins with a story.

When I first met Archbishop Desmond Tutu, I asked a question whose brief, enigmatic answer would in part shape my destiny.

"Archbishop, what will save our people in South Africa from unending cycles of suffering and violence?"

"It's close by," he answered, "closer than you know. It is here in Africa,

and it's called Ubuntu. It connects us all and is a healing gift that holds the key to your question."



"I am blessed to be sharing this profound moment with our friends gathered around the tree at the Ubuntu Wellness Center. It is significant that recently a Maasai Warrior dreamed of this sacred tree and walked by foot from Kenya to the Cape. The world moves into a new phase of global consciousness as we celebrate the great African philosophy that is Ubuntu: the essence of being human. I am what I am because of who we all are." —Archbishop Desmond Tutu, December 21, 2012

Nokuphila has become a very real presence in the lives of my vegan nutritionist wife Dawn and myself and we often begin our days as therapists

at the wellness center in silent communion with her. She loves song and gatherings and participating in the healing of all beings. By caring for her over time, and constantly celebrating her, we continue to witness daily blessings and miracles in her presence.

Our shared vision of peace, interconnectedness, and compassion remain grounded to this day under her branches. Inspired by vegan visionary visitors to Nokuphila like Dr. Will Tuttle and Phillip Wollen, we believe that the world's challenges are interconnected and can all only truly be solved if enough of humanity simultaneously adopts plant-based eating and the vegan principles of non-violence 'ahimsa'.

Dawn Macfarlane is a USA-trained plant-based nutritionist, vegan activist, and consultant with over 25 years experience supporting clients transitioning to vibrant health and to become responsible citizens for a healthy earth.

Ian Macfarlane is an entrepreneur, healing practitioner, and vegan activist. Ian established the Ubuntu Wellness Medi-Clinic, Cape Town's first integrated medical and wellness facility in 2003, where he practices



as a state-registered therapist. Ian established Ubuntu Trust NPO in 2013 to empower vulnerable township women as plant-based gatekeepers to their families and communities. This social enterprise has won multiple awards, including 'Best Humanitarian 2014,' 'Top 50 Global Spas' and 'Top 100 Global Healthcare Activators' at the 2018 World Health and Wellness Congress.


Dawn and Ian are currently busy developing a diabetes reversal program together using affordable healthy vegan foods in Africa which holds much promise and which originated under Nokuphila's branches in August 2020.

Instagram: @nokuphila_ubuntuwellnesstree
Facebook: @ubuntu108



WisdomKeepers The Nine Orders of Angels

by Tricia McCannon



Angels are Beings of Light, who have a hierarchy. This is not a hierarchy in the human sense of the word, meaning a hierarchy of power, money, race, position in society, or human egos, but rather the unfolding of hierarchy that we see in any evolutionary form.

The nine angelic orders are arranged in three distinct triads. Visually, they are seen as each angelic order radiating its essence from the throne of God in ever-expanding circles. The highest, or first triad of angels sits toward the center, which is closest to God; the second triad surrounds the first triad; and the third triad surrounds the second one. The first three Orders of Angels, or the first triad, transmit Divine energy outward toward the second triad, which then radiates its energy toward the last and lowest triad of angels.

Of the six highest Orders of Angels, none of them look human in their natural forms. As true beings of light, each order chooses a form that serves its celestial function, and if or when they need to descend into the lower worlds of time and space, they can choose to adopt whatever form is most appropriate.

The First Triad of Angels

The first triad represents God's perfection. The three qualities of the first triad are burning love, brilliant light, and perpetual holiness. Of all things in existence, love is the Divine power that perhaps transforms us most profoundly. This triad includes the Thrones, Seraphim, and Cherubim, which are all said to be in direct communication with Divine unity.

The Thrones

At the center of the circle is Atum, Sugmad, God, or the Source of all things. From this primary essence comes the vibration of love. Thus, love is the principle expressed by the Thrones, the first Order of Angels. They inhabit all the suns in the galaxies and represent the first emanation of light. They sit at the center of all solar systems, continually giving out illumination through the sacrifice of their own bodies.

The Seraphim

The Seraphim are the second Order of Angels, and they express the power of two. These are winged beings and are not human in appearance. In religious literature, they are usually depicted

with six wings and a face in the middle of their bodies. These are the doorways for Spirit to move into and through their bodies. The Seraphim's job is to modulate the audible life stream of God, which then flows out to create the frequencies that generate all the dimensions.

The Cherubim

The Cherubim are the third Order of Angels. These angels look like trapezoid diamonds with a huge eye of God in the center. Their role is to transmute the sound of God or the audible life stream. The winged Seraphim send vibrations to the visible light spectrum, which creates 144 colors, only 7 of which can be perceived in this dimension—the 7 classic colors of the rainbow. But, as souls move upward into the higher planes, they can experience more and more vibrancy and color. The Cherubim are converters of sound into light, and they produce the light of the worlds.

The Second Triad of Angels

This triad includes the Dominions, Virtues, and Powers and represents God's sovereignty over creation. These



three qualities are limitless power, irresistible force, and eternal justice.

The Dominions

The Dominions are linked to the creation of the intricate web that underlies the visible universes. They are the connector beings in the matrix of dark matter, which is the scaffolding upon which the visible worlds sit. Dominions hold the strands of dark

matter together at the points of intersection. These are nodal points in the gigantic spider web that links all dimensions together as the weave of creation.

The Virtues

The Virtues are the weavers of the grid of dark matter, and they weave with the energies of love, light, and sound, or music. This largely invisible canvas

The Nine Orders of Angels

becomes the scaffolding upon which all of the visible worlds rest.

The Powers

The Powers transmute the waves of light and sound into the building blocks of atomic matter. This brings us into the realm of sacred geometry, which underlies the structure of all matter. Sound has the power to create forms, and then the sound speeds up or slows down, depending on the dimension, or plane, it's on.

The Third Triad of Angels

The third triad, which is closest to our worldly realms, represents the external actions of God. In this triad are the Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. These three orders are the ones that usually interact with mankind and where we see the kind of human forms that we have come to associate with angels.

The Principalities

The Principalities, or Archii, are initiating energies of change. When these angelic beings incarnate, they are often mystics, philosophers, scientists, or even explorers of greater consciousness.

The Archangels

The prefix “arch” means ruler, so Archangels serve the Divine as powerful rulers of territories. As one might expect, they express great leadership abilities and often will oversee or regulate the magnetic fields between the various heavenly bodies, including planets, suns, moons, and even galaxies. By nature, the Archangels are vast and encompassing, so they can act as “umbrella energies” for large projects, especially if they are humanitarian in nature.

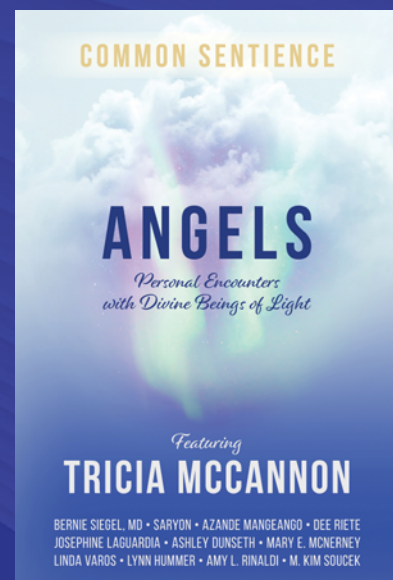
The Angels

The last tier of the nine Orders of Angels is simply called Angels. This covers a huge territory, and foremost among them are our Guardian Angels. Every person who comes to earth arrives with at least one of these beautiful companions, and some people may even have two or three angelic guides. These angels are part of our spirit team and are here to assist us with our life missions. We are loved, nurtured, and cared for at the highest levels whether we are aware of it or not.



As we consider the depth and breadth of the Nine Orders of the Angels, it is easy for us to realize that each of these profound and devoted beings is indeed a “messenger of God.” Each one of them, no matter which Order they belong to, are committed to the creation of the universe, and the spiritual evolution of each one of us. Whether functioning as Guardian Angels or helping in the atomic formation of planets, stars, and solar systems, they will use whatever methods are appropriate to help us to become enlightened citizens of the cosmos. As each soul overcomes the inner and outer obstacles of our respective journeys, we each eventually awaken to our Divine natures.

Tricia McCannon is a renowned American clairvoyant, historian, author, and teacher who has traveled the world in search of answers to the greatest Mysteries of the Ages. As a dedicated researcher and mystical symbologist, she is known as “the Mysteries Expert.” She is the author of five acclaimed books including her newest one: Angels: Personal Encounters with Divine Beings of Light, part of our Common Sentence book series.



ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

by Franne Demetrician



When my Dad died ten years ago, we were devastated and in shock. It was sudden, and I had no idea how to navigate the ensuing chaos emotionally and practically. There were many loose ends to tie up with his personal affairs. It was challenging to face practical matters when my heart was broken into a million pieces. I felt the full weight of the loss and felt overwhelmed having to address anything but my grief and holding myself and my family together. I felt disabled.

As I was showering in preparation for Dad's funeral, I felt overwhelmed with yet another flood of emotions and began to cry. This time I felt the loss and grief full-on and allowed myself to wail. My Dad was beloved by many and was my hero - the one I turned to when I needed a wise voice.

I cried out to him, "Daddy, what do we do now?"

At that moment, in my little shower, rising through the hot water and steam cloud, came his advice.

"Just keep going," he said.

I heard it twice. "Just keep going."
I knew what he meant as I'd seen him

do it all his life, a life fraught with many challenges and heartbreaks.

"Just keep going." For some of us, that statement results in the question, "How?" This is the question I often asked myself as we moved through the days and months after his death. It's a question I think most people can relate to, especially in the face of the recent incidents in Buffalo, Uvalde, and so many other places worldwide. How do we keep our center when everything around us seems to be crumbling?

New Age advice is usually something like "relax, meditate, find stillness, breathe, stay positive" and an array of pontifications that in that moment are not helpful. We are left with the question, "How do I connect to something bigger than myself when my experience at the moment is heartbreaking, devastating, and excruciatingly painful?" This is the \$64,000 question.

I wish I had an easy answer, but this question lingers in our collective consciousness as day by day we

see the losses mounting. Watching the news unfold, I feel my pain in response and look to the Heavens tearfully asking the question, “What do we do now?”

Going forward with all this happening around us requires a strategy. We know that life can and does toss us curveballs. We have a 24-hour news cycle and rampant social media that sends curveballs coming at us as if it was Spring training in Florida.

We need to cultivate the fine art of “keep going.” Each of us will need to find our own safe space, practice, and way to be with what is presented. But I think one important thing we need is each other, our communities, and our most intimate and trusted friends and family.

These last few years have resulted in what I call “collective trauma,” and I believe we are all suffering from some level of PTSD. Adding the trauma of the most recent news, it’s vital that each one of us acknowledge our pain, share our feelings with

those we love and trust, and seek help to find ways to cope.

In the book *Pillow Thoughts II: Healing the Heart*, author Courtney Peppernell says, “You can’t skip chapters, that’s not how life works. You have to read every line, meet every character. You won’t enjoy all of it. Hell, some chapters will make you cry for weeks. You’ll read things you don’t want to read, have moments when you don’t want the pages to end. But you have to keep going. Stories keep the world revolving. Live yours. Don’t miss out.”

My final thought is this — when it feels like you want to wail and stomp your feet, arms lifted to the Heavens with the burning question, “What do we do now?” Listen for the still, small voice that says, “Just keep going.”

And say hi to my Dad for me.

Rev. Franne Demetrician is an interfaith minister. She has been a licensed holistic health practitioner since 1995 and wrote a spiritually oriented weekly blog from 2015 -2018. Franne is a working artist, photographer, writer, spiritual counselor, mentor, and teacher.

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A person is sitting on a dark, jagged rock formation on the left side of the frame, looking out over a dark ocean. The sky is a deep teal color, filled with stars and a prominent, glowing band of the Milky Way galaxy that stretches across the upper right portion of the image. The person is holding a small, bright light source, possibly a lantern or a phone, which illuminates their face and the rock they are sitting on. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

AN EVOLUTIONARY *Path* TO PEACE

by Robert Atkinson

Living by principles that divide is living with a consciousness of duality. This allows generalizations, stereotypes, and biases to grow into segregation, discrimination, prejudice, hatred, oppression, racism, and eventually genocide and war, which endanger our very survival.

However, living by principles that unite is living by a consciousness of wholeness. This encourages values that engender respect, appreciation, equality, and cooperation, and leads to what eventually becomes a pervasive harmony and unity in diversity, all necessary stepping-stones to peace.

Here we can envision a process by which peace and war become opposite extremes on a *Consciousness Continuum* along which all things are interconnected and interdependent within a whole. Along this continuum, there are no divisions, only different aspects of one whole representing various attitudes and values, all part of the same reality, that come to prominence depending upon the principles being lived by.

The duality side of this Consciousness Continuum keeps us apart and

separate from others, except in our own desired, comfortable, and exclusive groups, and creates hierarchies, builds systems of injustice, and distorts the way we relate to each other and the natural environment.

The wholeness side of the continuum brings us together as one. Here we view the world with a unitive consciousness and relate to others and the planet with respect for difference, integrity, reverence, appreciation, compassion, and collaboration, which makes it possible for inclusivity, altruism, and love to be writ large.

This is what the Golden Rule is meant to lead to, unitive justice, global security, and peace on earth, where none of the parts become greater than the whole. On the wholeness side of the continuum, reality is seen as one, and all of Creation as a unified whole, what the Buddha referred to when he said, "All things originate from one essence, develop according to one law, and are destined to one aim."

On this holistic side of the continuum, we understand that the imperative of this moment is seeing each other as part of the same human family. This is

The Consciousness Continuum
How Our Understanding of Reality Evolves

Unity and Wholeness
as the Guiding
Principles:

A consciousness based
on the oneness of all
existence, supported
by universal,
unifying spiritual
principles for the good
of the whole.

Peace	Unity	Cooperation	Equality	Appreciation	Respect
	global justice	unity in diversity	harmony	compassion	integrity
	collective security	gender equality	love	affinity	aspiration
		economic equity	non violence	reverance for all life	
	universal human rights		racial harmony	the value of multiculturalism	
world unity		consciousness of world citizenship	interfaith collaboration	inclusivity	
	global harmony	a wider, more inclusive loyalty	philanthropy	altruism	
... the oneness of humanity			ecological stewardship	universal education	

Our Moment of Choice

We all start out
with an innate potential

The attitudes, values,
and principles
we live by determine
whether we end
with war or peace

The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness, by Robert Atkinson

where the evolutionary impulse itself leads humanity to greater levels of advancement toward universal human rights, gender equality, economic equity, a consciousness of world citizenship, and social, environmental, and racial justice, all interconnected stepping-stones to peace.

We are born with the potential to grow toward our inherent wholeness. We all start with this endowed capacity for wholeness that needs to be nurtured and developed, like the acorn that carries within it the tree it will become. This is as true on the collective level as on the personal level.

The age-old promise of peace on earth is what we are evolving into. What divides us today will be what heals us tomorrow. We are already connected on the consciousness continuum, as links in a chain. We are just looking at the same reality from different places, through different lenses. Further on, in our individual and collective evolution, we will all be viewing reality through the eyes of wholeness.

Adopting a holistic vision of evolution gives us the understanding that all life comes from the same Source and is developing toward its own

Oppression Continuum

... Leads Us in Opposite Directions

Choice	Generalizations	Stereotypes	Bias	Prejudice	Oppression	Racism	War
with initial	oversimplification	segregation	discrimination	exploitation	violence		
	bigotry	antipathy	conflict	marginalization			
	categorization	disputes	cruelty	powerlessness	destruction		
	separation	gender inequality	hatred	cultural imperialism	terrorism		
	difference	ethnocentrism	hierarchical statuses	fundamentalist movements	"religious" violence		
	in groups/out groups	economic extremes		territorial conquest	genocide		
	superior/inferior groups	secular nationalism		unbridled nationalism			
	dominant/subordinate groups				... non-existence		

Separation and Duality as the Guiding Principles:

A consciousness based on division, distinction, and discord, supported by dogmatic and exclusive principles for raising up the part.

fulfillment, which is meant to manifest cooperation and harmony within and around us. This gives us great hope for the future.

It helps to remember that evolution in all realms is a gradual process of growth. Evolution's trajectory is not a smooth, straight line, as we witness in this time of lockdowns, demonstrations, and confrontations. It is rather cyclical, with built-in ups and downs. The way to a consciousness of wholeness passes through many cycles of transformation, with adversity being necessary for progress, and unity being the outcome of consciously confronting opposing forces.

In this holistic perspective, all things go through cycles of birth, growth, maturity, decline, and *renewal*. Common examples of this are the cycle of the seasons, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the cycle of spiritual epochs.

Humanity's collective evolution includes periods of struggle and conflict that slow things down, but growth spurts follow those times. This holistic vision of evolution, accounting for cycles of progress *and* regress, means that, over centuries, evolutionary advancement can be seen going through various stages. After

An Evolutionary Path to Peace

millennia of conflict and separation on all social levels, having passed beyond the usefulness of unity on just the national level, we are now witnessing the arrival of a spiritual springtime that is characterizing our time by the promise of unity on the global level.

We are entering humanity's stage of maturity, the natural outcome—and culmination—of where the evolutionary impulse has been leading us.



The sacred story of our time is about the death of old systems that divide and the birth of a new global community that will unite humanity as one family.



A two-fold process of purging and reshaping humanity is underway. This will finally bring the opposite extremes of the consciousness continuum into sharper focus and make the necessity of living by a consciousness of wholeness crystal clear.

This is an unfolding process built upon the principle of the oneness of humanity, as noted in this recent statement of the Universal House of Justice, the governing body of the Baha'i international community:

However fitful, the forces working in harmony with the spirit of the age have continued to move humanity towards an age of peace—not merely a peace that rules out armed conflict, but a collective state of being, manifesting unity... [At the same time], forces of disintegration regroup and gain ground. [But] the unity of humanity is unstoppable by any human force; the promises made by all the prophets testify to this truth... It is through love for all people that the unity of the world can be realized.

World unity is the stepping-stone to the age-old vision of peace on earth. We have all the tools needed to fulfill this promise; its realization depends wholly upon the action we all take now. To ensure that the rebirth

of the planet happens as gently as possible, love is the sacred activism needed for our time; it is the unifying force that binds the universe together.

Nothing less than the entire world community working together in harmony will enable us to build the culture of wholeness needed for our collective survival. We are at a threshold never before crossed. Our collective coming of age as a single people is at hand.

Our challenge is to disregard the fleeting notions of the day, recognize their sharp contrast to the overriding unifying forces of our time, and take the action most needed by each of us – to work across boundaries, across differences.

As greater numbers embrace the idea of global citizenship, as this is reflected in various spheres of action, from interpersonal to social, a consciousness of wholeness will become as commonly accepted in the near future as nationalism was in the past, bringing us to the verge of world peace.

Adapted from *The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness* by Robert Atkinson

Robert Atkinson, author, speaker, and developmental psychologist, is a 2017 Nautilus Book Award winner for [*The Story of Our Time: From Duality to Interconnectedness to Oneness*](#), and a co-editor of *Our Moment of Choice: Evolutionary Visions and Hope for the Future*. He is also the founder of One Planet Peace Forum, and StoryCommons, an internationally recognized authority on life story interviewing, a pioneer in the techniques of personal myth making and soul making, and a member of the Evolutionary Leaders Circle, a project of the Source of Synergy Foundation.



A full-page background image of a sunset over the ocean. The sky transitions from a deep orange at the top to a lighter yellow near the horizon. The water in the foreground is dark with shimmering reflections of the sun. A white rectangular box with a thin border is centered in the upper half of the image, containing the text.

**Turn your face to the sun and
the shadows fall behind you.**

— Maori Proverb



What the Goddess of Love and War *Can Teach Us About Unity Consciousness*

by Seana Zelazo, LICSW



Inanna, the Goddess of Love and War, depicted on a fragment of a stone relief from Mesopotamia c. 2400 B.C.E.

The Sumerian goddess Inanna is waking up the hearts of her worshippers from all directions of time to help remind us of our mission and, by extension, her own—a mission to alchemize separation consciousness into unity consciousness. Known by many epithets, including the Goddess of Love and War, Inanna offers a nuanced way of *living* love. Inanna's love can uplift by transmuting lower vibrational frequency through the weapons of light she carries on her back.

The wisdom of Inanna is preserved through the artwork and writing of ancient Sumer, including through the Sumerian poet Enheduanna (who lived and wrote between 2285-2250 BCE) whose long poem, "Inanna and Ebih," captures the intense impact of the heart-centered goddess as a warrior of love. Enheduanna's^[i] poem channels Inanna and describes the goddess in a moment of contemplative self-awareness and affirmation:

*my eyes scan the earth
I know the length of it
I travel heaven's pure road
I know the depth of it
even the holy Annuna
stand in awe of me
listen!*^[ii]

Here we see how the transformation of any kind must begin with self. Inanna embodies the confidence and self-love that teaches us how to live the change we wish to bring about. In the lines: "my eyes scan the earth, I know the length of it," Inanna commands our attention with authority, highlighting her well-honed discernment. The line: "I travel heaven's pure road," demonstrates Inanna's alignment with the highest good, underscoring that her efforts to transform separation consciousness and fear-based thinking are driven by love, even in her paradoxical role as Goddess of War. The forceful aggression of that role is not destructive, rather, it depends upon her skill as a master alchemist. Akin to the transmutation of base metals into gold, Inanna as a warrior, can transform lower vibration into a higher vibration, and love is the flame to this end. Hers is not a subtle power, it rages through the land to alchemize, like a summer thunderstorm obliterating oppressive humidity.

Inanna's many myths reveal her powerful attributes. She is a love

warrior who unifies humanity by sharing her gifts with the world. In the myth, “Inanna and the God of Wisdom,”^[iii] we see just how prepared she is for her role to unite and empower. In this story, Inanna is gifted the *me*—the spiritual powers and sacred arts of civilization—by her grandfather, Enki, the God of Wisdom (an alchemist himself). This exchange occurs after Enki gets intoxicated over beers with his granddaughter. She happily takes all the *me* and begins her journey home. Once Enki sobers up, however, he realizes what he has done and sends threatening creatures to Inanna to get the *me* back. Ultimately, Inanna perseveres. Significantly, Inanna does not keep the *me* for herself, hoarding them in her temple. Instead, upon arrival in her city, she immediately shares all the *me* with her people, knowing that in doing so she brings her people together by empowering them, and thus advances the consciousness of the collective.

Inanna understands that they are not meant to be possessively held for self-aggrandizement or other ego-based drives but must be

shared. While Enki gave Inanna roughly one hundred *me*, in “Inanna and the God of Wisdom,” she itemizes the ones which signify her capacity as a teacher of ascension—the vibrational shift from fear into unconditional love and unity consciousness.

He gave me the staff.

*He gave me the holy
measuring rod and line.*

He gave me the high throne...

*He gave me the princess
priestess.*

*He gave me the divine queen
priestess.*

*He gave me the incantation
priest.*

He gave me the noble priest...

He gave me truth. ^[iv]

These *me* are highly symbolic. The staff is a kind of magic wand, and it signifies her role as an alchemist. In sharing this with her people, she reminds them, that they too can alchemize the old paradigm of separation into a new one of love. She takes the holy measuring rod and line with her to the underworld in *The Descent of Inanna*. These sacred tools are for



From left to right: Inanna (carrying her weapons on her back), Enki (God of the Watery Deep), Isimud (Enki's servant). Positioned at Inanna's feet is her brother, the Sun god Utu.
From an Akkadian cylinder seal c. 2300 B.C.E.

taking inventory of and assisting in negotiating the various initiations we encounter as spiritual warriors. The high throne represents Inanna's divine nobility, but by sharing it with humanity, she reminds us that we are all divine and can create a queendom of heaven on earth. The gift of priests and priestesses highlights Inanna's role as a High Priestess capable of leading the leaders of light. Finally, the gift of truth provides Inanna with discernment—the ability to see clearly. She shares all of these spiritual powers with her people so they may prepare for their ascension.

In the myth, when Enki tries through force to get the me back, our warrior and her faithful counselor Ninshubar fight off the attempts. This is what occurs when we go through a major transformation. In the establishment of a new paradigm, it is common to experience resistance. Inanna demonstrates warrior strength in being forcibly loving, never acquiescing, and keeping her intention fixed on aiding in the

ascension of humanity by moving into the higher consciousness of unconditional love. Her will is strong, and her power is ironclad. Her heart's pull to get the me to her own city to share it makes it so. Inanna's warrior love ultimately transforms Enki who comes to see the benefit of what she has done with the me and no longer wants them back. He declares:

*Let the me you have taken
with you remain in the holy
shrine
of your city...
Let the citizens of your city
prosper,
Let the children of Uruk
rejoice.
The people of Uruk are allies
of Eridu.
Let the city of Uruk be
restored to its great place.* ^[M]

In Enki's assertion, we see the power that is Inanna and how she is equipped to unite the people of her world. Indeed, her discernment, as captured in Enheduanna's poetry above, grants her the ability to see how to support the collective from

a higher perspective. Inanna uses her strong will and warrior force to get what she wants; unity and unconditional love. She understands that this is an internal process, and that to establish this shift we need to turn inward and unify internally. The clash that occurs when Enki first regrets his decision and tries to get the me back through force, and the ultimate harmony between Enki and herself, is a reconciling of the Divine Masculine and the Divine Feminine. The balancing of the feminine and masculine energy within is not only a major aspect of Inanna's teaching but a necessary step for our individual journey toward unity consciousness.

Inanna stands up for herself and what she believes in. She defends herself unapologetically but does so in a way that supports all. Humanity is at a crucial moment in our spiritual evolution, as evidenced by the significant challenges that have transpired on our planet over the last several years. There is a palpable internal

pressure to change and transform collectively. As a goddess who prioritizes the actualization of what she wants and as a teacher of ascension, Inanna has returned to guide us and our planet to rise together as one.

[i] Excerpts from Enheduanna's poem, "Inanna and Ebih," come from the following translation: Meador, Betty De Shong. *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.

[ii] Meador, Betty De Shong. *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. p.96.

[iii] Wolkstein, Diana, and Samuel Noah Kramer. *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. p. 12-27.

[iv] ----- p.16

[v] ----- p. 27

*Seana Zelazo, LICSW is a psychotherapist, spiritual teacher, mentor, and intuitive channel committed to helping others live unapologetically by restoring balance through the wisdom of the Sumerian Goddess Inanna. Look for her upcoming book *The Return of Inanna: The Unapologetic Heroine* in 2022. seanazelazo.com*

The Heart of the Matter

for Spiritually Conscious Parents

by Mary Ellen Lucas



Are you familiar with the idiom “out of the mouth of babes?” It doesn’t seem to be used in the vernacular today, but it’s a quaint expression relevant to today’s column. It captures how children, despite their young age and inexperience in life, can say the most remarkable things! When a young child expresses a thought or idea that denotes a level of maturity and a depth of understanding beyond their years, it can be startling.

Television shows and viral videos showcase kids saying the darnedest things. Watching kids who are adorably cute, sassy, and unpredictably funny is guaranteed to bring a smile to anyone’s face.

“Out of the mouth of babes” indicates something said isn’t just ordinary but is rather extraordinary. A child who utters a pearl of wisdom, a nugget of truth, can leave an adult with a jaw-dropping sense of awe.

To hear from an innocent child, one who isn’t jaded or stunted by strident opinions is refreshing. Here are several true examples of children voicing wise thoughts.

Kindheartedness

A ten-year-old boy in conversation with his great aunt mentioned a friend from school. She asked what his friend was like, and he replied, “She’s kindhearted.”

Surprised to hear his response, she asked, “What does that mean?”

Without hesitation, he responded, “She’s kind to everyone.”

His aunt inquired, “Are you kindhearted?”

“Of course, I am. I try to be nice to everyone!” He indignantly answered.

This young boy understood what it meant to be kindhearted. Perhaps he can be a gentle reminder that we too, can choose to be nice to everyone!

Let Your Heart Speak through Your Words

“Our marriage is in serious trouble,” was how a client described her frequent fighting with her husband.



Admittedly, and with regret, she told me that they often fought in front of their three young children. They would both become so heated in the righteousness of their arguments; that they didn't notice how upset the children became. Despite being embarrassed and ashamed, my client couldn't stop herself from getting hooked into the pattern of escalating verbal assaults. The day came when their four-year-old daughter had had enough.

"Stop fighting! Put your heart in your mouth." She shouted over her parents.

My client said she stopped, startled, amazed by what her little daughter had articulated.

What a profound understanding by this little one. If mommy's and daddy's hearts were in their mouths, maybe they would stop yelling? If their hearts were connected to the

words coming out of their mouths, even if they were angry with each other, would there be a difference?

Words spoken from the heart are clear, firm, and can be spoken without blame and venomous anger. Her daughter's directive helped refocus my client. It gave her the pause she needed to come back to her own heart, to be responsive, not reactive, and encouraged her to connect with her husband differently.

Compassion

A ten-year-old boy told his mom that one day he was going to make her the best Mother's Day gift ever! Curious, she asked what he was planning to do. He replied that he was going to make her a robot. He would build it to look just like his uncle, his mom's brother who had died. And not only would the robot look just like him, but he would make the robot sound just like him, too.



“This way,” her son explained, “you won’t miss him so much.”

Intuitively, the son honed in on a tender place within his mom’s heart. It was a hidden place, not talked about, yet compassionately her son had perceived a sadness. Instinctually he wanted to help her feel better. Following his compassionate example, we could be looking for ways to help someone else feel better, to brighten someone’s day.

Innocence

Below is a quote from a six-year-old in response to the horrific school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. His ideas expressed to his mother, who also happens to be a schoolteacher, were said with grave seriousness. We could all agree that this ought not to be this boy’s concern, yet it is. Before reading his words, please set aside the quagmire of political debate around guns.

“All guns should be sent to the President and he should break them so no kid or teacher would

ever get shot by them. Only a policeman or fireman should have a gun. No one in prison. You could get permission to own a gun from the President if you’re real good and older than 15. They really should make a law that all guns are illegal except for an emergency.”

This child who greets the world with fresh eyes, can offer a new perspective. He places his trust in adults and offers what he considers plausible solutions. Maybe this six-year-old’s innocence can prick our consciences?

Children as Our Teachers

Parents, family members, and educators provide models of what children ought to learn. However, adults need to learn from children, too. Kahlil Gibran’s poem “*On Children*” found in his book *The Prophet* describes how children may be given love “...but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.”

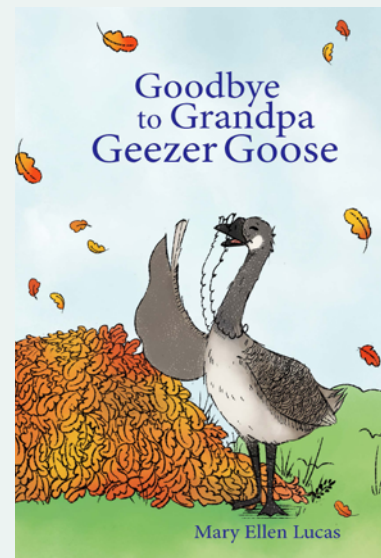
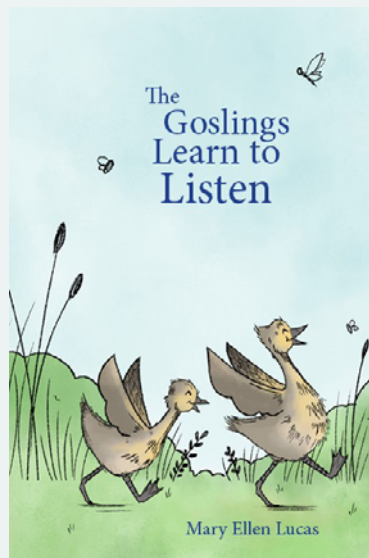
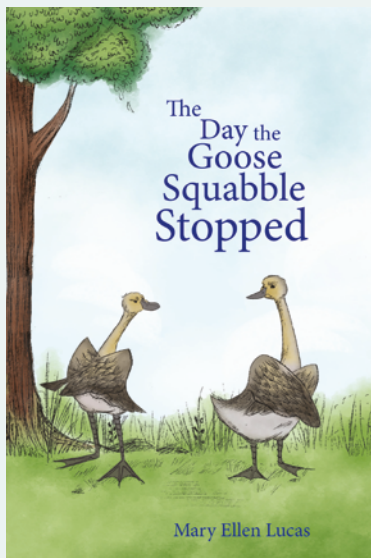
Children’s comments, if we are listening, may contain golden gems of wisdom that soften our rigid

thoughts, help us look afresh, and see from a different viewpoint, ways to connect with others and the world.

The preceding examples stated by young kids, miraculous, small marvels of wonder, remind us of what it is to be kindhearted, heart-centered, and compassionate. They inspire us to take a step back to see with fresh eyes that solutions are achievable. May our ears and hearts be open to allow ourselves to be wonder struck by these young babes who may

occasionally speak with great words of wisdom.

Mary Ellen Lucas, an Interfaith / Interspiritual Minister, believes we can learn to make wiser choices that create pathways of connection and collaboration to ensure a better world for our children. Life on Little Puddle Pond is a series of children's books she wrote with silly goose playfulness along with meaningful lessons. The books are pre-chapter books and appropriate for children four to eight years old. Available from online retailers worldwide.



MOTHERHOOD REWILDED

A LASTING LEGACY

by Dr. Kristy M. Vanacore



Standing at the kitchen sink mindlessly washing the 89th dish of the day while dinner is cooking, there is a brief reprieve. A vision of wild dreams; the feelings of the gnawing rumblings of a ravenous soul; the intoxicating aroma of potent purpose and potential percolating under the surface and... bam, it's shattered by a crying kid and a burning casserole. Dutifully returning to responsibilities; the dream is banished until the next stolen moment. At the end of the day when collapsing in a state of delirious exhaustion, tomorrow is dreaded, knowing it will be Groundhog Day.

Mothers call this living because we've been told this is the only way.

What if it's not?

In the same way that conservationists work to restore domesticated ecosystems and animals to their natural untamed healthy states without human intrusion, so, too, can mothers be rewilded from a state of being shackled by fear, siphoned of life force, verging on extinction,

to reclaim their natural wild and sovereign states.

Humans as a collective are experiencing evolutionary mismatch as the demands of our modern lifestyle are at odds with our inherent genetic programming. We eat, move, play, sleep, and learn under drastically different conditions than our ancestors did—the way we were built to live. Parenting is no different as modern moms are tamed and removed from natural ways of being. This is precisely why an extraordinary number of women are disoriented, disconnected, devoid of purpose, diseased, and their children are collateral damage.

Women have been domesticated with conditioned beliefs that motherhood will complete them, yet the overwhelming majority of mothers have never felt more fractionated. Modern mothers are energetically depleted, emotionally numb, physically stagnant, psychologically confused, and spiritually asleep. They are simultaneously overwhelmed and underwhelmed, and the guilt of this truth consumes them. Remaining stuck in the mythical motherhood fantasy leaves women consistently

falling short and feeling shameful, and at times, suicidal.

It's time to debunk the antiquated myth that contemporary women could be completely satisfied and fulfilled in their roles as mothers. It is this myth that creates shame when mothers are naturally desiring more, or for those women who cannot conceive children for one reason or another. Motivated by deep insecurity, women are desperate to find the meaning they lack in their lives. The truth is that although children may offer meaningful connections in the life of a woman, they do not give her meaning. A woman's identity—whether she has conceived children or not—has little to do with her children.

This may be a radical idea for some to fathom. After all, women have been conditioned for generations to adopt the role of selfless martyrs who would burn at the stake for their children. Though women are the natural creators and direct channels to Spirit as a bridge between worlds, imbued with the capacity to usher a soul into this world, doing so does not have to come at a personal price.

Women no longer derive satisfaction from their inherited abilities and gifts. Mothers are barraged with mixed messages about their responsibilities. Stay home with your baby as long as you can, but get back to work immediately; wake up early to get the house clean before work, but sleep when the baby sleeps; breastfeed for as long as you can, pump at work, but don't let "them" think you need any special treatment; be present for your kids and never miss a school event, but don't ask for too much time off from work; be the work hustler, the home manager, the kids' chauffeur, the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, the Pinterest crafter, the PTA president, the soccer mom, oh and don't forget the sexy wife.

This pressure makes it almost impossible to derive any joy and satisfaction from parenting, let alone life. This modern world has not created a safe space for women to develop a healthy expression of femininity. Softness, grace, compassion, contemplation and introspection, prayer and meditation, nurturance, healing, intuition, and creativity are not valued during these times. Valuation of a women's worth



and contribution is now measured by career advancement; financial independence; incessant striving, thinking, and analyzing; moving hard and fast; washboard abs; and copious amounts of wine to offset the emotional breakdowns.

What's more, is that women are parenting alone without the collective wisdom and support of past generations. Yet biologically we are not programmed to do it alone. Humans are a species that evolved to live in packs or communities. We are meant

to learn from elders, our nervous systems co-regulate with others, yet we are so estranged from our roots that we try to function in isolation. Lack of kin connections is a significant predictor of health issues.

Though reclaiming the "it takes a village" mentality is critical, a woman must also cultivate a deep relationship with herself. Nowadays women rigidly believe the myth that kids should be the center of their worlds. However, motherhood offers women an opportunity to rebirth themselves.

Motherhood ReWilded

Rediscovering solace in solitude, curiously exploring the inner landscape, listening to desires and needs, and pursuing passions and interests with as much fervor as she cheers on her kid from the stands, will allow a woman to become reacquainted with her true self while offering an authentic and fulfilled mother to her children.

Women have also become estranged from their own emotions. Conditioned to believe that they must portray a calm, collected demeanor at all times, women suppress, deny, avoid, and ignore, creating energetic blockages, nervous system imbalances, and inadequate modeling of emotional development for their kids.

If children do not witness their mothers emoting true feelings, honoring their natural rhythms and cycles, navigating challenging circumstances, practicing non-reactivity, and cultivating self-compassion; they will be inept to do the same. When children witness their parents' genuine humanness, they recognize that they, too, have permission to be themselves.



Modern domestication sets up mothers to fail by suppressing the very things that make them human—primal instincts, innate wisdom and intuition, and unbounded joy and curiosity. Women are taught to rely on external navigation systems, while our inherently razor-sharp instincts are dulled. Our natural essence is tamed, or worse, shut down. Like a wild

animal captured and civilized, the soul will always long to be free. If children do not see us blazing our own trails, they will never learn how to do it for themselves. At a time when a generation of children are labeled helpless, hopeless, screen-addicted robots on autopilot swallowing boatloads of psychotropic drugs—it is imperative mothers model an alternative.

Now more than ever, kids need to challenge what is fed to them, ask questions with an open mind and heart, and rebel against anything that threatens to control and stifle their life force. Mothers can model what it means for kids to experience the uninhibited joy that comes with the fullness of their soul's expression. How healthy and evolved we are as women, is what gets engendered in our children. This cannot be taught with words alone; the lessons must be embodied daily. We can only take our kids as far as we have gone, or are willing to go, ourselves. Children must witness a mother's rewilding to feel confident in theirs.

It's time we rewild the concept of motherhood by encouraging

women to trade domestication for wild so they may return to their roots, rekindle their instincts, and reclaim their sovereignty. This is the path of true health and wellness, and a mother's legacy for her children.

***Dr. Kristy Vanacore** is a spiritual visionary and modern-day medicine woman who weaves ancient wisdom with modern science to empower families to thrive. A prominent trailblazer in the field of holistic psychology for over two decades, Kristy has revolutionized the mental wellness and personal development industries with her innovative offerings. Kristy is the author of *ReWilding: A Woman's Quest to Remember Her Roots, Rekindle Her Instincts, and Reclaim Her Sovereignty*. kristyvanacore.com*





Write for Good

by Laura Staley

Several years ago, driving to the grocery store, my daughter sat in the back seat. Her gentle young girls voice got my attention.

“Mom, have you been listening to me or listening to the thoughts in your head?” She gently asked.

“Oh, yeah. I was listening to the thoughts in my head. I failed to hear anything you just said, and I want to hear what you said. I apologize. Would you mind starting from the beginning?”

Then with my presence, I listened to all she happily wanted to share with me.

Have the voices in your head talked louder than the person speaking to you?

In different situations, you might notice someone says or does something, and then an internal criticizer grabs the megaphone in your mind.

Sometimes like firefighters, these voices swarm into the house of your mind with hoses and axes, breaking down doors, attempting to contain the backdraft. Now, you find yourself distracted by the roar of the fire and the rush of these firefighters. A fiercely critical voice berates what you thought the person said, what the person is wearing, and what this individual just did with their facial expressions. Your internal voice fills with self-righteousness about your point of view, all to protect you from your own fiery backdraft.

Did you know that most of the angsty voices in your mind, were created to protect you from feeling pain in your own heart?

Opening the door to the heat, the backdraft of hurts in your heart, and the different sensations in your body become courageous internal work to access your own

unresolved emotional pain. In the inhales and the exhales you can notice the sensations in your body. Maybe your stomach feels queasy. You might be clenching your tush and toes. You might observe you do not even feel your legs. You can only sense your arms and shoulders. Experiencing your heart and body through interoception can open doors to deeper layers of healing and compassionate presence with yourself and others.

Can you begin to feel your whole body when you listen to other people?

Learning to listen well may include sensing your feet, the soft texture of the socks on your feet, and how cold, warm, or sweaty your feet are. Embodied listening means dropping into an awareness of your body which can quiet the mind as you have given yourself a different task.

Placing your tongue on the roof of your mouth, parting your lips slightly, softening your eyes, and bending your knees, if you

happen to be standing, allow you to access the pause, a space of neutrality in your body. Breathing and listening from this embodied place broaden your capacity to pay attention.

“Between stimulus and response, there is space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

—Viktor Frankl

You can begin to create an embodied space for yourself and other people.

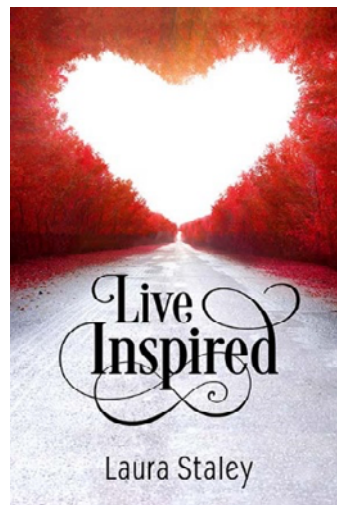
When was the last time someone listened to you with rapt attention as though you were the only person in their world? How did you know in your soul that the person heard you? What did this experience feel like?

I imagine these individuals, who did the listening, offered an embodied presence of stillness, rapt attention, and gentleness in their ability to hear and hold space for you. To be given this incredible gift, to receive it in your

heart, and then practice being an embodied listener can become a wonderful gift you can share easily and generously with others in your life.

Listening with your whole self in suspended time and vast space can become emancipation for your being, a most tender love offering in a noisy, fiery world.

*The founder of Cherish Your World, **Laura Staley** passionately supports people thriving by guiding them to a holistic transformation of space, heart, and life. Laura is the published author of four books including [Live Inspired](#) which reveals the brave and deep work of self-discovery and her book of short writings and poetry [Abundant Heart](#).*



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**No sun outlasts its sunset, but
will rise again and bring the dawn.**

— Maya Angelou



EXCERPT FROM

THE OTHER GODDESS

MARY MAGDALENE AND THE GODDESSES
OF EROS AND SECRET KNOWLEDGE

DR. JOANNA KUJAWA

DISCOVERING EROS

When I was in my late teens and living in communist Poland, I observed my girlfriends offering their virginity to their boyfriends on their 18th birthday, then witnessed them marching to the altar three months later because, of course, they had fallen pregnant. In those days nearly everyone considered this normal. But for me the idea of being stuck early in life in marriage and motherhood

before I could even explore who I was and what other paths I might walk seemed a worse fate than death itself.

I was looking for other examples of what a woman was or could be, but the Communist posters of well-muscled worker women driving tractors or waving red flags didn't appeal to me. My family was intensely Catholic and I often went to one of the beautiful baroque churches in my hometown where

I found in the soft and opulent naves images of the two Catholic goddesses, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

I had already begun to feel the surge of Eros in all its promise and delight, so I was not keen on imitating the example of the virgin mother. I was more intrigued by the portrayal of Mary Magdalene, who was prominent in Jesus' story yet somehow rejected and pushed to the side. I asked myself, was it because she was not a virgin? Could it be that her life was much more interesting and her wisdom much deeper than what I had learned in religion classes? Only later in life did I realize that her presence in Christianity—notable as it was, though suppressed at the same time—wasn't that different to the presence of Eros in our lives. I saw that Mary Magdalene represented the possible unification of Eros and spirit, which Christianity struggled to accept.

It took quite a feat of imagination to construe myself differently from what I saw around me. I found consolation in studying the myths of ancient goddesses, unaware that later in life I would find a source of great wisdom there.

At first, I was fascinated by three Greek goddesses whose stories I read before going to bed. These were Athena, Aphrodite and Artemis. I admired Athena because, like her, I loved knowledge, though I thought her cold and remote. Aphrodite's sensual touch was attractive to me, while Artemis added a sense of adventure and independence to the two other goddesses.

A bit later, I explored more magically assertive goddesses such as Circe and the Hindu erotic super-heroines Radha, Sundari and Kali. I didn't know back then about Inanna or Isis and showed no interest in them until many years later. So, while I watched my girlfriends rushing to the altar, I buried myself in books. In the meantime, I was playing with Eros in my imagination. I wondered what it might be like to be with a tall, handsome Viking. Being a playful being, Eros likes to be engaged with, even if only in the mind.

At some point I met a Swedish businessman who, out of the blue,

showed up in my hometown and I, knowing nothing about sensual seduction, took to playing with his imagination. It was the time of Elton John's song *Nikita*, and I was not that different from her—a blonde, dreamy girl walking among Eastern European tanks during a time of martial law. My seduction of this foreign *imaginal* worked well enough for him to jump through the hoops of the Communist bureaucratic nightmare to invite me to Sweden, based on nothing more than the short, platonic encounter shared in my hometown. The affair did not last, as the reality of living in a Swedish suburb taught us he was no Viking and I was not a Nikita.

For a while, I thought this to be the end of my dream of Eros. I returned to Poland to continue my studies of ancient goddesses until, a few months later, I had another opportunity to escape the Communist grayness, this time to Paris at a girlfriend's invitation. I left Poland with nothing but a borrowed suitcase and ten American dollars. Once in Paris,

I recovered from that ill-fated Swedish affair quickly. My erotic imagination moved swiftly from the Viking archetype to a French libertine archetype, as I explored the allure of Frenchmen. This might seem a rather flamboyant introduction to exploration of the mysterious avenues of Eros, though with Eros nothing is ever what it seems. Eros is as different from sexuality as eroticism is from sex, so Eva Pierrakos tells us in her book *The Pathwork of Self-Transformation*. The French know this well and for that reason prefer to refer to the beautiful attraction that is the play of Eros as *erotique*, rather than sexual. Sexual force without the erotic element, Pierrakos says, is very animalistic, enjoyable only for a period of time and ultimately 'utterly selfish' and meaningless spiritually.

Eros, on the other hand, which lives mostly in our imagination, manifests as a desire to know and experience the other. It can manifest as a strong attraction, but this is a different level of attraction. While sexual attraction can create

an intense yet temporary chemistry between two people, erotic attraction is more focused on the powerful desire to connect with another, to truly and completely know them. This knowing includes sexual union but goes beyond it. Eros, or erotic connection rather than chemistry, serves to create a bridge between our being and the being of the other on whom our erotic desire is fixed.

Let me give you an example. In an instance of pure sexual attraction, we may experience great sexual pleasure but have no desire to truly know the person. Often we may experience the strange feeling that despite the great sex, we have little to say to each other. In this respect, even great sex without a deeper connection is largely meaningless and leaves us empty, despite being physically satisfied.

Erotic desire is more fulfilling because of the presence of a deeper connection. For the same reason, our sexual experiences when Eros is present are also much deeper and more satisfying. We feel that not only do we know

the other person better, but also that we have somehow come to know ourselves in the process. This leaves us mysteriously connected and bedazzled by the experience because it allows us to touch our souls and feel a deep if fleeting connection with another person.

This is a gift that should not be rejected. Pierrakos calls this 'the quest for the other soul,' as the sexual encounter in this case is merely a conduit to the experience of a profound connection and knowing of the soul of another. You may not know anything about the mundane aspects of this other person's life, but you get to know them at a much deeper level, a level people who have known that person for years may never know. This is the power of Eros.

Yet even Eros, as we well know, wears itself out. Eros loves to be playful. Eros loves to be beautiful at all times. Eros loves the new. Eros becomes bored if it isn't constantly curious about the other. Eros moves on. All the greatest romances of this world are based on Eros and die because of Eros.

This is why Pierrakos says romantic love is only the final point for those who refuse to evolve spiritually and move beyond it. I must admit that without knowing the possibility of something higher, it's true that romantic love seems like the best of all possible deals, because what usually comes after it is marriage—and few of us know how to sustain Eros in marriage. Alternatively, like all great romances, romantic love usually comes to an abrupt end. Fortunately, this is not all we have available to us. Apart from sexual attraction or the adventurousness of Eros, we also have love. Love, Pierrakos tells us, is a 'permanent state of the soul.' What is this permanent state of the soul and how we can achieve it? This is the difficult part. We need to be willing to do two things: to grow spiritually, which requires us to constantly work on ourselves, and at the same time stay open to Eros. This also means not being afraid to completely expose ourselves to another, including our soul, our darkness, and our ugly parts.

Do you have the desire, the stamina and the courage to do this?

Let me refer you to Pierrakos again: 'When you find the other soul and meet it, you fulfill your destiny.'

Do you dare? Are you prepared to risk all for this 'complete mutual revelation of one soul to another?' Because this is what it takes.

For this revelation to be possible, we need to constantly grow and move to a higher possibility with ourselves and with our partner. This requires facing the shadowy parts of ourselves and healing them. Pierrakos teaches us that truly soulful love is not possible without this. We need to grow. We need to attain our highest possibility. Then, as the great tenth-century Tantric philosopher Abhinavagupta once said, 'You will walk upon this earth as gods.'

In Paris I learned that not even Eros, without a desire for spiritual growth, can hold a relationship for long. Eros needs to be lived. Without this, life is only a set of mundane responsibilities. But Eros also needs to be entertained at the highest possible level and used to open up the new field of divine play, our own highest possibility.

After publishing one article on Eros and spirit, I received many personal confessions of erotic-spiritual experiences from readers. They contained experiences through Eros of the mystical that happened outside the mundane reality of relationships. One woman shared a beautiful story of an erotic encounter that turned out to be a moment of self-realization for both parties and yet was outside the understanding of what's normally called 'a relationship.' Like many mystical experiences, this one was both life-shattering and transformative, so that it pierced through the walls of the lovers' perceptions.

Suddenly a new door of perception opened for them and a new, much more beautiful holistic and divine vision of all creation was available to them. Their lovemaking experience took them out of their bodies and was later described by this reader as a form of grace and benediction. The shattering part of the experience was also the realization that they could not be together, as they were otherwise attached to other people. In a strange and

beautiful way, several decades later they met again when the woman was finishing her studies to become a civil celebrant. She was asked to perform her first funeral rites over the body of a man whose body had been shipped to her location, for reasons unknown to her. The body turned out to be that of her former lover with whom she had shared the mystical experience triggered by Eros.

Another reader, male this time, recalled a mystical experience of an erotic but not sexual type when he felt the presence of a young Indian woman with long, flowing hair—first within his own being, then outside himself breathing at his neck with her hand gently resting on his heart. He felt a form of erotic sensation that shook his entire being. He recognized her as Devi ('the goddess' in Sanskrit) herself who had come to him in this erotic and beautiful form. For days he walked the streets weeping with joy, aware that this extremely personal and erotic episode was also mystical in nature and had connected him to the feminine in its divine form.

My own and others' experiences have convinced me that to entertain Eros at the highest possible level, we need to know what shapes the perceptions of Eros in our psyche – and that is why we need to explore the goddesses of Eros.

• APHRODITE

The first goddess that we need to explore is Aphrodite, the Ancient Greek goddess of beauty, love, passion and pleasure. The stories of her birth vary, including the one told in Homer's *The Illiad*, which describes her as the daughter of Zeus and Dione, an *Oceanid* or ocean nymph. The most popular myth comes from Hesiod's eighth-century BCE poem *The Theogony*, in which he describes the origins of gods and goddesses. My preference is for Hesiod's version simply because it's more beautiful.

Hesiod describes Aphrodite as born from the sea foam near the island of Cyprus, where the Titan Cronus killed his father Uranus and threw his father's genitals

into the sea. The story mythically connects Aphrodite's status as the goddess of beauty with erotic love by mixing sea foam with sperm. This is also the most popular image of Aphrodite in Sandro Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus*. Venus was Aphrodite's name during the Roman Empire when Rome conquered Greece and adopted its goddesses and gods. Astrologically, Aphrodite is represented by the planet Venus. She is often symbolized by a dolphin, rose, swan or shell.

There is a certain charm and sensuality in the stories of Aphrodite, which are an unending stream of doomed romances. This is probably why we so easily identify with her or, at least, love to adore her. She arouses us and her romantic adventures provide a background for our own failed loves and romances. For example, she was forced by Zeus to marry the ugly Hephaistos, yet at the same time carried on sexy affairs with the handsome and manly Aries, God of War, and many others. Despite being a goddess of beauty, pleasure and love, it

was still not within her powers to choose her own husband and she was often humiliated in her romantic adventures.

It was not always so. I was surprised to discover that Aphrodite was just another version of an earlier goddess from Sumer known as Inanna, or as the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Like Inanna and Hathor before her, Aphrodite was once also known as the goddess of war and was a force to be reckoned with. Then something happened to her and she lost her power.

While researching this book, I found a wonderful essay by Susan Hawthorne, 'The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite' in *Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture*. Hawthorne traces the original archetype of Aphrodite as the goddess of love and beauty, whose power even Zeus was afraid of, but who was gradually disempowered. The stories of the all-powerful Aphrodite were, no doubt, told and written by someone else. From a position of power, she moved to one of ridicule, trapped

by her own desires and in need of and begging Zeus for help! In modern terms, she became the Marilyn Monroe of Olympus—beautiful, yet disempowered and demeaned.

'The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite' is one of the hymns presumably written by Homer around the eighth century BCE. Hawthorne examines its 293 lines and discovers that, originally, Aphrodite was described as 'all-powerful.' She is Aphrodite the Golden who 'stirs up' sweet longing both in gods and humans, including Zeus himself, whom 'she deceives at her pleasure.' At a certain point, the fates are reversed and Zeus somehow manages to make Aphrodite fall in love with a mortal man, Anchises from Troy. She falls in love and desires Anchises so deeply that she pretends to be a mortal woman just so she can share the pleasure of lovemaking with him. As a result of this romance, the hymn tells us, her human lover gains power and status, whereas she is disgraced as a goddess who has fallen for a mortal. The

THE OTHER GODDESS

goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and desire falls victim to her own powers—or her misused and manipulated powers. What was once her strength has now become her downfall.

In one way, we can agree with Hawthorne's interpretation of the hymn to Aphrodite. It's no secret, and painfully obvious to any woman, that feminine sensuality and sexuality have been hijacked, along with the whole idea of the goddess. What it means to be a sensually empowered woman has been defined for us by a generation of patriarchs who have oppressed humanity for too long. By humanity, I mean both women and men.

In more modern times, this idea has been defined by the media and Hollywood in a most devious way. Then, of course, comes the fashion industry, which again defines women and their beauty in extremely limiting ways that damage lives and people's self-image, and which drain the joy of life away or even stymie the possibility of being a beautiful and sensually empowered woman.

The entertainment and fashion industries have examples of Aphrodite-like women who have fallen from their places of power. These women, although adored for their beauty, were also ridiculed and humiliated at times. Marilyn Monroe was the classic example of an Aphrodite-woman; so were, less tragically, Elizabeth Taylor and many others.

On a more mundane level, I observed this 'fall' the most brutal way when, as a 21-year-old woman, I heard two older men talking about an older woman who had just come into the store they were in. They both had known her in the past as a great beauty and no doubt had desired her back then. They pointed at her and with malicious smiles exchanged comments about her age and how 'nothing was left of the whore's looks anymore.' I doubt the woman was ever a 'whore,' and the epithet probably came from their once-frustrated and unfulfilled desire for her. I was stunned not only by the vulgar brutality of their words, but also by how they were completely

missing her current beauty. The woman was radiant and graceful in an almost ephemeral way, and her only fault was not being young. Yet this was enough to berate her as ‘fallen.’

We can also take a more universal approach toward the idea of the ‘fall of Aphrodite’ the poignant story of a common sense of disempowerment that both women and men experience when falling in love and falling into desire. According to the tradition of esoteric Hinduism, we become ‘deluded by our own power.’ Instead of being in charge of our gifts, including the gift of love and desire, we ‘fall in love’ instead of ‘being in love.’ This is what I learned from one Parthasarathy, a spiritual master from India whom I met while lecturing for Monash University in Malaysia. He said, ‘Do not fall in love; rise in love.’ This is a simple and life-changing shift in thinking about being in love—and yet I have many examples, as does everyone else, of how this is the most difficult thing to do and the most deceitful. How often

have we entered into a romantic relationship feeling the irresistible power of Eros and attraction only to end up crying and feeling humiliated, left to ponder our ‘mistakes.’

Perhaps staying in power is not the lesson of Eros and love. Perhaps the whole lesson is to surrender power? But surrender to what? Certainly not to another person—that, we know, is a mistake. But to what? Perhaps to the loveliness of Eros itself? Perhaps to the loveliness of the ‘sweet longing’ of which the hymn to Aphrodite speaks? More often than not, we fall in love with this feeling, with the loveliness of the surrender in love. The ‘falling’ has its own rewards, but it certainly also has its consequences.

• RADHA

When we speak of the loveliness of Eros, we can’t forget the goddess Radha, who in my opinion is a spiritualized version of Aphrodite. The goddesses of ancient Greece are like Hollywood stars, while

the Hindu goddesses have a connection to the divine realm, and their actions are focused on the domain of the Self, on spiritual improvement, on achieving oneness with the divine—although this does not mean they don't have frivolous moments or never misuse their powers. In popular Hindu mythology, Radha was a milkmaid who fell in love with Lord Krishna. Although she was the wife of another man, she became Lord Krishna's consort. In 12th-century poems by the poet Jayadeva, Radha is represented as the goddess of love and devotion. Radha's longing and devotion for the beloved are her main attributes.

Unlike Aphrodite, Radha was never powerful on her own terms. Quite the opposite, her power derives from her love and devotion for her beloved. She is the ultimate expression of what in Hinduism is called a *bhakta*, or a person who devotionally worships a personal god or goddess. The power of a *bhakta* comes from this devotion, from complete absorption with the beloved, and

isn't that different from the loving devotion and merging described by the Sufi poet Rumi, with whom most Westerners are familiar.

In Hindu mythology, Radha never lost her power because she never sought it. Her devotion is her power. Her devotion is eventually transformed into divine love. Her love spiritualizes her. She represents the love and bliss of being within proximity of the divine, which leads her to being one with the divine. Through this proximity, she herself becomes divine.

Both Aphrodite and Radha are beloved goddesses because we identify with their love struggles. Ah! The misery and ecstasy of romantic love! They do not stop themselves when the arrow of Eros arrives. Aphrodite might become frustrated when this happens to her, as she is used to being in charge, but Radha just goes for it. She longs for the romantic high. She longs for the erotic high that comes with this. She spends days dreaming of her beloved, real or imaginary, and

truly and unconditionally believes that finding her beloved, being with her beloved, is the most important thing in her life. Radha loves the bliss of romantic love without bounds.

On a more personal level, Radha represents that part in ourselves that's our longing for love, especially for romantic love. She longs for her soulmate; and if she doesn't have one, she longs to have a soulmate. She is the part of us that loves being in love.

At one level, she can also represent our addiction to romance, and she may become bored after the romantic interlude passes and the more mundane realities of the relationship kick in. Instead of facing these realities, Radha may choose to move to another romantic high—and when that passes, to another one. She is that friend who marries at least four times or who never marries because marriage is too 'mundane' for her (or him). On another level, she might be the genuine longing for a 'true' love', a deep sense of connection and

intimacy through a romantic relationship. She dreams of a romantic 'soulmateship' at the deepest level.

I experienced that feeling after my divorce from an abusive and short-lived marriage that forced me to redefine what I really wanted to give in a relationship and what it was that I really valued in masculinity. I have always been attracted to male energy and received the same response from masculine energy in my life. This relationship was based on a strong and intense attraction. Although that particular marriage was a bad experience, I didn't want to give up on the loveliness and sexiness of the merging of the feminine and masculine in my life. I was very honest with myself at that point.

However, I noticed that again and again I associated masculinity with an alpha-type personality that's often aggressive and, on closer inspection, in some men a sign of insecurity. It became clear to me that I did not want that in my life anymore. So I began redefining what was really attractive to me.

This was not a rational process, a strategy, a list of things I like in men. It was a much more intuitive process.

To start with, I gave myself a lot of space and time away from men. I moved in with two other women and didn't date anyone for some time. Before and after work, I meditated a lot. In quiet moments, I surrendered to the longing for a loving relationship, allowing my imagination to flood me with images from my subconscious without any intellectual judgement. For example, I remembered how years earlier I had cut out a picture of a man from the men's magazine section of the Canadian *Maclean's* news magazine. I even remembered the name of the article, 'The Portrait of a Casanova.'

'That's interesting,' I thought at the time. Then I let myself wonder what it was about the man that I found so attractive. This man was a bit of a rebel in his profession, a psychoanalyst who questioned Freud and definitely his own person. He loved women,

perhaps too much, but that was a thing of the past and now he was happily married to a woman who had also had an interesting past. Most of all, I was attracted to his intelligent face, a certain *je ne sais qua* about his smile, which was half-indulgent and half-amused, and to his unquestionable masculine charm, which I found irresistible. About nine months later, I met my partner of many years now who pretty much covers all the qualities I had found so irresistible in the man from 'The Portrait of a Casanova,' including his male charm and handsomeness.

What I am trying to say here is that I surrendered unconditionally to my longing and was brutally honest with myself. I didn't pretend that I wanted a 'family man' or whatever my friends told me I should be looking for. I let myself long for my idea of a new man and indulged in that longing.

This does not mean that playing Radha always brings us what we want. A Radha-person may experience a continuous feeling

of longing, the object of which may not even be identifiable, and where this feeling is a sense of something absolutely essential that's missing in our lives. It's important to remember that this longing can be sublime, as long as it doesn't lead to depression, a constant nostalgia or even whining. Ideally, it can be transformed into a merging with the transcendental, with the divine heart itself. In the Catholic tradition Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Spanish saint, and in the Hindu tradition Anandamayi Ma, a 20th-century saint, probably fall into this category.

On a more practical level, this longing can also be transmuted into identification with a higher goal or a good cause of some kind, such as the feeling of being protective toward animals, trees, children, or some humanitarian goal of another kind. From my spiritual mentor, I have learned that all feelings are a permeation of divine love. Even the 'lowest' or most 'negativity' feelings (such as sadness, anger or frustration) are just a form of divine love that

has forgotten its true purpose and source.

However, as an archetype, Radha has her longing rewarded one way or another. She eventually merges with the beloved or internalizes the beloved and transforms herself because of the love and devotion, fulfilled or not, that she feels. Ultimately, her longing is her method and her liberation.

• EROS AS A ROMANTIC TRAP: THE EXPERIENCE OF APHRODITE AND RADHA

The erotic trap happens whenever we become addicted to Eros. This can happen in two ways. Once Eros withers, we either move on from one relationship to another with the hope that the new beginning, the new person, can bring the sweet and exciting feeling of Eros back, or we hold onto the person with whom Eros entered our lives in a strong and powerful way.

Either way is a trap. In the first case, we move forever from one

partner to another in our search for Eros, which meets us only briefly—and the more we move on, the less Eros cares to manifest for us. In the second scenario, we become a romantic slave to another in the false belief that this other will bring us the sweet experience of Eros, which is both deeply erotic and spiritual. In both cases, we forget that the experience of Eros is within us—that we are the constant factor, not the other person. But in not knowing it is we who trigger the experience of Eros within us, we falsely believe it comes from them. We become a willing addict, a willing slave.

In my life, I have fallen into that trap once. Instead of theorizing about it, I will describe how it felt, as I have written it and published it in many stories. Once upon a time, as a woman in her mid-30s, I met a man who triggered the experience of my own Eros. I was a Radha because I was delighted in the suspended state of consciousness that overrides

all boundaries and judgements, in the seductive promise of an erotic high and the mysterious longing that fired up my soul. But I was also an Aphrodite, deluded by her own power. I walked into the trap of Eros believing I could control not only Eros itself, but also the outcome of the romance. I believed I could control the powerful attraction and not respond to it again after the first encounter. ‘One night,’ I thought, ‘that’s it.’ That night lasted seven years.

I could have walked away, but I didn’t. Willingly, impatiently, hungrily, I fell into his body. I fell into the sweetest darkness of desire. Devouring and predatory, sweet death by desire—no one should underestimate its power.

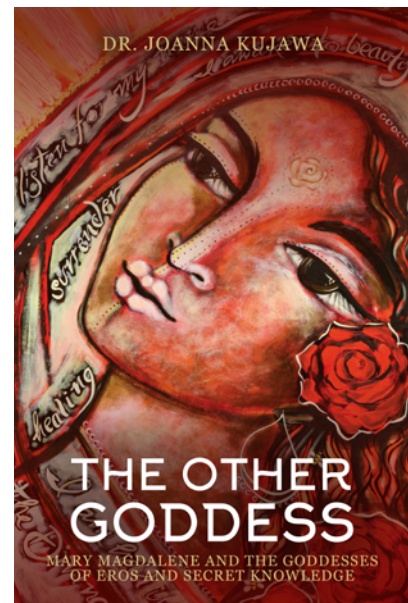
Desire is not just lust. It is a profound awakening to the longings hidden in our soul. It defies all obstacles, all prohibitions. It’s a mysterious force more delicious than anything society can offer as a bribe to stay away. It rules our whole being. We are captive and want to stay so.

Even lust is a slave to desire. We lust more because we desire even more, because we want to quench the desire, because it gets us closer to the desire, because we can feel the desire at its peak and hope it will last forever—that we will live forever wanting more of the same sweetness, the same pain. We hope the insane longing will keep the desire eating at us like a strange, painful ecstasy that has to be satisfied but never will be. But we do not believe it. We think we will have this one night, and that the next day we will leave it behind and do what we have always done—travel, study, write. Just this one night of surrender to desire, we think. But we do not know what this means, except that it looks us in our eyes and asks, *Do you dare to play with me?*

This is the trap of Eros, seductive in its beauty and dangerous in its power.

END OF EXCERPT

Dr Joanna Kujawa is an author, scholar, spiritual detective, and author of her bestselling book [*The Other Goddess: Mary Magdalene and the Goddesses of Eros and Secret Knowledge*](#). As an active academic for over 20 years, she uses her scholarly training to investigate topics other academics often pass over, such as: *Can spirituality and sexuality be experienced as one? Who was the real Mary Magdalene? Is there a lineage of Goddesses now resurfacing in our collective experience of spirituality?* joannakujawa.com



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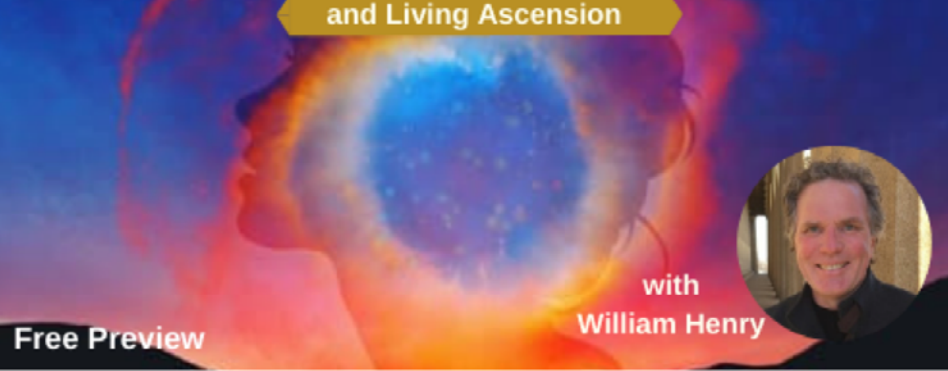
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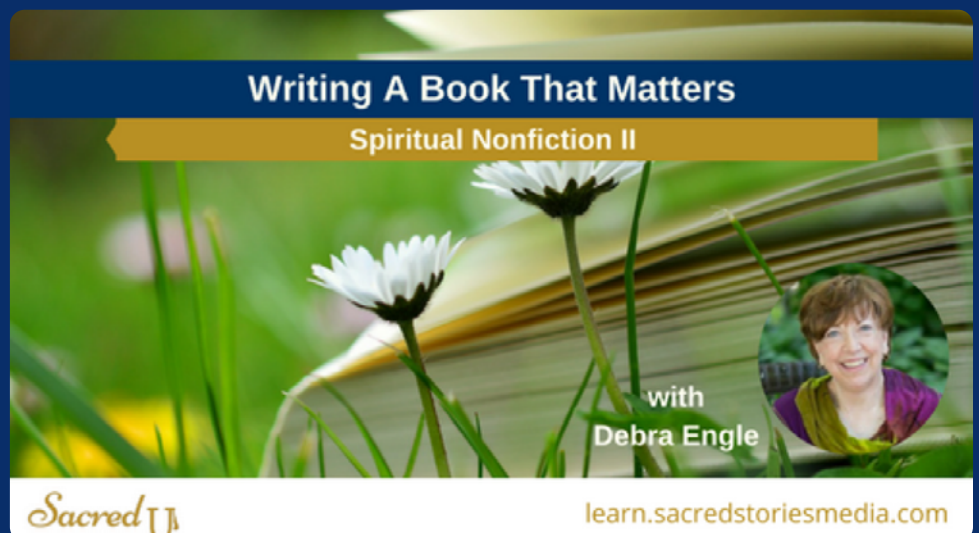
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