



A Story of Self-Empowerment

Written By

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OUT OF THE
MUCK & INTO
THE LOTUS

Out of the Muck and Into the Lotus



***A Personal Journey of
Empowerment***

Katherine Lash

Synopsis

This is a tale of my journey from despair and low self-esteem to empowerment of the soul. My story leads the reader to various countries in Asia to Hawaii and back again to my beloved Sedona, AZ.

Along the way I discover numerous insights and tools for spiritual growth and fulfillment. By working through the dark night of the soul, I gained the jewels that allowed me to grow my business SpiritQuest Sedona Retreats and help others along the way.

These tools include helping clients find purpose, develop self-esteem, let go of the past, embrace self-love, forgive others, sharpen communication, develop trust and much more.



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TO MY TWO DAUGHTERS RAYONNA &
JESSICA AND MY DEAR HUSBAND TROY.
YOU ARE MY GREATEST TEACHERS.
THANKS FOR BELIEVING IN ME.



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The Test

Chapter One



I Was Born into a Mormon family, in Safford, Arizona, 1961. My life has been quite a journey and I would like to share it with you. The lessons have been rich, and the challenges are something that you may find yourself confronting in your own life. Have you ever felt lost? Have you ever experienced depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, major health issues, divorce, or a loss of purpose? Would you love to learn how to overcome these? If so, read on – this book is for you.

When I was young, I was known as “Kathy.” I was only 17 when I felt the urgency of expanding, growing, knowing, and finding a deep connection with Spirit. I had an intense internal drive to follow my own compass. At that tender age, I was exposed to the Socratic method of “questioning everything.” I was very interested in becoming a critical thinker.



That's why I chose to leave all dogmatic beliefs behind and enroll in the Philosophy program at Northern Arizona University.

One of my favorite professors was a gentleman whom I highly admired. I was proud to be invited to gather regularly with other seekers to Dr. Janison's personal library in order to have deep profound philosophical and theological discussions. The conversations were stimulating. At times I believed that by studying Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Kant, Descartes, Hume, Lock, Kierkegaard, Thomas Aquinas, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein, to name a few, I was "getting" somewhere. I was confident that expanding my mind with metaphysical systems would result in a widening and broadening that would allow me to soar! I was out to discover "Truth," I just had to determine who possessed all the truth.



I remember reading George Orwell's book, 1984 and was exposed to the concept of "double think." Double think is the process of indoctrination where a person simultaneously accepts two contradictory beliefs and holds both as being true. This is akin to hypocrisy but sadly, a person capable of "double think" may not even see or know their own hypocrisy. Such a concept could and would undermine truth, and thus undermine Democracy and free speech. I was very young yet wise enough to understand that no matter what, I would stand for truth. I would stand for justice, and for understanding. I really felt that while subjective to some degree, "Truth" would be discovered through integral right action. This story is about that quest for truth. In order to find it, I would have to seek a personal relationship with Spirit and learn to question everything in my life.



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Commonly we tend to believe that all we have to do is discover the right path and then all else will fall into place. Academia is wonderful for expanding the mind and exposing one to a myriad of ideas in order to create a critical thinker. However, what I was about to experience would be one of the greatest teachers in my life. The day finally came when all I thought I understood was called into question. That day, my philosophy professor came into the classroom and relayed to the students that tomorrow there would be a test. Of course, immediately all the pupils inquired as to the correct material to study. They all wanted to be prepared. They all wanted to achieve excellence. They all wanted to get the “A.” However, as hard as they tried, Dr. Janison would not reveal what the test would entail. I was stumped,



and all my classmates were stumped. “Ok then,” I said to myself, “I will have to wing it and hopefully all my studies will be preparation enough.” Unfortunately, NOTHING could have prepared me for what was to come.

Morning rolled around quickly, and before I knew it, it was time to make my way to the University. The day was bright, and the birds were singing as I entered the classroom. The other students were entering one by one filled with confidence for meeting the challenge of the “test.” They sat in their regular chairs, chosen out of comfort and not out of assignment. They felt smug that their young minds were fresh and quick and could handle just about anything. Time ticked by. All students sat patiently waiting for the professor to appear. 15 minutes...30 minutes...50 minutes...what the heck was going on?



Where was Dr. Janison?!!!!And then at that moment the door opened, and a different professor appeared. Stoically he said, “I hate to inform you, but Dr. Janison walked out into the woods last night, built a bonfire, and then shot himself in the head.”

Like a stone thrown at a sheet of glass, I felt my heart shatter. Disbelief was thicker than air in that room and every student was fighting for breath. There was not enough oxygen. I nearly passed out. I felt my whole body break out in perspiration. “This has got to be a joke. This can’t be the test.” Emotions began to pour in: disbelief, anger, sadness, confusion, pain. The door opened and silently each student shuffled out the classroom. “Is there nothing more you can tell us?” I asked. “Why are they not explaining what happened?” This must have been planned, because Dr. Janison was the one who asked us to be prepared



for the “test.” I began to be filled with rage“ How could he do this to us?” I screamed to myself. How dare he play with our emotions like this? What was he feeling to have taken such drastic measures? Is there anything I could have done, or said, or given to let him know how much he was loved? I was beyond hurt. Yet, all the feelings arising were because I loved him. He was my mentor. I idolized him. He was going to lead me to “truth.” He was the one to help me understand the nature of the Universe. Now I was more than confused. Did I do something to contribute to this loss? Could I have done something to stop it? Why didn’t I recognize any signs? What was he trying to teach me? In that one instant my life was changed and would never be the same. Death is final. I learned more about life and about my reality in that one second than I ever had, or ever would



from that point on.

The Human Condition is extremely complex. There are very few answers that can be found in books. Ideas are just ideas unless there is action. Love trumps all. Compassion, empathy, and understanding along with gratitude, kindness, and openness are more meaningful than any thought a man or woman can develop. All metaphysical systems are just that... systems to be explored and appreciated... but these constructs belong to someone else. I knew then that I had to develop my own construct. Without Dr. Janison, I would have to forge my life on my own. This was the answer to the test.

The Hollow Woman

Chapter Two



Several Years Passed, and I found myself married with two small daughters. With a degree in Education and a separate degree in Philosophy, life was amazing, and my teaching career had taken off. I and my husband had built a house on top of a hill overlooking a river. Just below was a huge bamboo grove, and miles of open roadway to ride my bike, or go jogging. I had forgotten about “the test.” I was consumed with children, husband, house, bills, students, family and all the other day to day duties that most people face. The clock had a way of ticking onward, mesmerizing the mind into trusting the coherency of one measure of time against another. Dinner, then sleep, then breakfast, then work, then chores, then dinner, then sleep. Each day led to the next and I felt secure and loved.



I had no way of knowing that the seed of “the test” was with me and that there would be many more tests to come. What I didn’t know was that the journey of my life was not an outward journey but an inward journey. The life I was building on the exterior looked solid, happy, satisfying, fruitful, and full. However, as time marched by, the inward journey began to feel more and more unsolid, unhappy, dissatisfying, pointless, and empty. I began experiencing disillusionment. I read the poem by T.S. Eliot – *The Hollow Men*. Here is a segment of the poem:

The Hollow Men
Mistah Kurtz-he dead
A penny for the Old Guy



I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

I wondered if there was more. A deep inward breath seemed to go nowhere. I felt empty. I felt hollow. I needed more. I needed depth, I needed not to feel hollow. My greatest desire at the time was to grow and expand. I could not tolerate feeling empty. Questions of self-worth and self-confidence began to arise.



I knew there was something more but had no clue where or how to access it. Moreover, I felt guilty that I would feel this way when life had been so good to me. I had a wonderful husband and two wonderful children. How could I not be satisfied? I was ashamed to admit to myself or others the feelings of inadequacy or incompetency. The easier thing to do would be to ignore those feelings, and that I did. I stuffed them deep into the well of my soul, where no one would find them. I carried on as a dutiful mother and wife should. I would endure. I would concur. I would be what everyone else wanted me to be...and as a result: I would become even more hollow.

Suicide of a mentor messes with the mind. This is the person I had told myself I would “be just like.” To be bright, intelligent, powerful, vibrant, charming, funny, and



then DEAD is something that is nearly impossible to grasp. To be on the planet and to trust that time marches the same way for each one of us is foolish. I knew this. Dr. Janison had taught me this. There are no concrete approaches to living, nothing is solid. Life can dissolve at any given moment...and my life was dissolving. Feelings continued to creep in, I needed more...more challenges, more lessons, more growth, more depth. I had to discover who I was and why I was here. No one was going to do that for me. I had looked to Dr. Janison to help me, I married a man 11 years my elder to be my guide, I read copiously to find answers, but the road I was about to take was the path less travelled and the ONLY path that could help me build content... and that path was my own.



What was it in me that sought validation from an outside source. How many women marry their “fathers?” Or how many men marry their “mothers?” I was first born and had always placed a great deal of pressure on myself to be the perfect one. I wanted to know my dad was proud of me. I deeply wanted to experience the complete adoration of my father. And while my husband was a good, kind, honest person, it was very unfair to place these expectations on him, especially since he was NOT my father. Yes, he was my mate and therefore we should have had an egalitarian relationship. We should be on equal ground and support each other fully. Instead, I put my own need for validation at the forefront, which would be a black hole that no one but myself and my dad could fill. That’s why coming into a relationship later in life after we have come to terms with who we are is a good idea. Marrying at age 18 definitely has its challenges.



And the challenge gets bigger as we begin to lose sight of our purpose.

When we forget our purpose, when we need to expand and grow, and when we can't find a way to be the person we were meant to be, we will find a way to make it happen. The more I stuffed my feelings, the sicker I became. All feelings will find a way out. If they are not articulated, the body will release them. Life became mundane and the world felt smaller and smaller. There had to be more. I had to know how to reach my fullest potential. This is when I met Kaya. I was desperate to connect with a wise, charming, centered being. It was a calm day in August, the clouds building on the horizon like billowing froth on ocean waves, preparing for a monsoon rain in the afternoon. I was walking out on a dusty road near my house



where I had walked a thousand times when I saw a young, thin, gorgeous woman in my mind's eye. Our connection was immediate. We spent the afternoon talking and exploring. I shared with Kaya my deepest thoughts and from that point on we became the best of friends.

It was during one of our conversations that I revealed to Kaya my true feelings about what was going on inside and my current situation. Albeit I withheld a lot of information because it was stuck inside me and I felt that it was “ungrateful” for me to have such thoughts arising.

“Kaya, I feel so lost. I feel so empty. I have it all but I feel that I don't have me.”

Kaya tipped her head forward and stared me right in the eyes and said, “You have a mission here. You will change people's lives. You will give many people a reason to live.”



I was taken aback. How could a girl with so many problems...allergies, exhaustion, foggy brain, sleeplessness, anxiety, and low self-esteem help others find their way? I left the conversation feeling that Kaya must have wanted to appease me, but that there was little truth in what she said. How could I be a leader and life-changer if I couldn't even lead or change my own life? I was in the trough of redundancy. I wasn't worthy enough or smart enough or strong enough to make a difference. I was a pretender; I was living life for everyone else. I did not know myself and I desired more. It was that day in October 1998 that everything changed. I would either join Dr. Janison or I would propel myself into a search for the depth of my soul's meaning. Either way, life had to change...and it did.

Alone

Chapter Three



Life Has a Way of moving forward, regardless of how present, and conscious of our lives we are...indeed, it moves forward even if we are completely numb and asleep. One way of dealing with feelings...is to suppress them. This is the easy way, or so it seems. Just suck it up and move on. Help all those around you and ignore yourself. I had been taking the easy way out for many years. But that day in October, my soul could not take it anymore. I was found by my kind husband curled up under a Mesquite tree in fetal position, the life blood gone, the body a medical mess, the emotional body spent, the intellectual body invasive (although fairly incoherent), the spiritual body disconnected. The truth that kept arising in me was that getting married at age 18 and immediately having children...had taken a toll. I needed to feel alive.



I needed to grow and expand. I knew in my heart that in order to do this, I needed to not be married. I had married someone 11 years my senior. In the beginning, my greatest hope was to please my husband. He was a great artist and mentor. In my eyes, he was everything...he was so smart, so creative, so powerful. Likewise, being first born, I had the same desire toward my father, and that desire was to please for strokes on the back, (like the cat I was, being born a Leo and all). However, the validation that the ego sought was always empty because it was misplaced validation...and deep inside I knew it. One day I wrote the following poem:

You are the Sun.
I am your shadow.
When it is high noon,
I am nothing.



Truthfully, I had been feeling like a shadow for too long. Most of my friends were my husband's friends, most of my interests were that of my husband's, my career of teaching was entered by following my husband's footsteps, my art was based on his art. And absolutely my husband was better at everything! I was a "wanna be." I was an impostor. I was a fraud. The only way out was to carve a life for myself where I could grow and expand by overcoming my own trials and tribulations...and my soul told me that I had to do it alone. ALONE. That day under the Mesquite tree I had become a shell of a person. How could I face the truth? How could I break up my family? How could I divorce my husband? It became apparent that there was no choice. This was the path handed to me, and it was like a snowball rolling down a hill....it was



growing large and there was no way to push it back up. I was going to live true to my soul and destroy everything I had built. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King's horses, and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty together again. I finally found the courage to tell my husband that I wanted a divorce. My soul wanted challenges and growth and I was about to get it. At the age of 39 I was about to find myself as free as I ever could imagine. With a divorce pending, I would be able to focus on who I was meant to be, what I was meant to do, what I was meant to learn, how I would show up in the world, explore my gifts, and get to know myself. Little did I know that I was about to "jump off a cliff" of no return. The fall before the gain.



I would soon very much identify with the character of Humpty Dumpty. The child's rhyme is about an egg placed upon a wall, so perfect, so white, so smooth. And the day that Humpty Dumpty fell, was a day of shattering into a million pieces. No one could or would ever put Humpty Dumpty together again, except Humpty himself. And what a journey that would be. I soon found myself ALONE for the first time in my life. At age 39 I was having to face myself finally. It would be a long journey and I was about to embark. ALONE. "Be careful what you ask for," I murmured to myself. In the silence of my new apartment, with my oldest daughter off to college, and my youngest daughter living with my ex-husband, the reality of the situation began to hit home. I was finally ALONE. And weirdly, time itself began to slow down. There was soooo much of it.



So damn much time. Time to think, time to cry, time to hear myself. Before this point, life had been kind to me. My childhood was smooth with loving parents, then marrying at such a young age...I had always been taken care of. I had never had to take care of myself. I had never had to be accountable for my own decisions, and now it was my choice to “fall off the wall.” Even though this had been a very secure wall, safe and strong, it was not one of my own building. And now, I lay there in a million pieces...having shattered the only life I had ever known.

Something happened deep within my psyche. My foundation had been ripped away and there was no one to guide me. There was no one to tell me which way to go. There was no one to lead the way. I had to figure it out for myself...and it was going to be harder than I thought. Not only



was I alone for the first time in my life, but I was afraid. Yes, a deadly grip of fear. The fear of not knowing what to do or where to go, the fear of not knowing my path, not trusting myself, not believing in myself. ALONE in all that fear, and sitting in all that silence, I began to experience a deep anxiety that had been suppressed, rise to the surface of my being. I started to have nightmares. I felt lost, empty, and confused. There were no distractions anymore. I would have to face myself. And I hated it.

I needed Kaya to help me find my way...I had so many questions to ask. But Kaya was far away. She was distant and hard to get ahold of. I felt more alone than ever. At night I would dream of riding a subway and looking for “home.” I looked this way and that. I struggled long and hard. I frantically searched for the comfort



of my husband and my children. I had a sickening feeling inside. It was such work to find my way. I had no one to lean on. In my dream I screamed for help, “Where is my family? Where is my husband? Where is my home?” And then, at the end of the night, just before morning’s light, I would finally arrive at my destination, with the subway door slowly opening. I felt a wave of relief, I had succeeded in reaching the stability of home, finally getting the comfort I needed. But to my horror, as the doors opened, I peered out and saw NOTHING. I had pushed everyone and everything away...all security and comfort and connection...gone. ALONE again.

COMING UNRAVELLED

CHAPTER FOUR



Anxiety Was My Only Friend. I had quit my job, moved to a different town, lived in a modest apartment, and found myself working at a deli for minimum wage. This was a far cry from my salaried career, my beautiful house I had built from scratch with my husband, and a plentiful life full of abundance and security. As customers approached the counter, I would serve them and then find myself in the bathroom breaking down into sobbing tears of hopelessness. Everything was so different from what I had known, and from what I had thought life would be. It felt like instead of living my life, life was having its way with me...like the wind, I was weaving in and out of the fabric of my being. On the edge. And it was near Christmas that the INCIDENT happened. I was gathered with some friends, preparing to enjoy an evening of cheer when suddenly a wave of disillusionment rolled over me. I felt sick.



I felt disconnected. I felt lost. As my friends spoke with me that evening...a strange thing happened, at a certain point, I could see their mouths moving (surely, they were talking) but I could not hear them, and I could no longer connect with them. I felt like I was encapsulated by Plexiglas. I was there and not there at the same time. To my greatest fright and dismay, I was completely cut off from humanity. And in that moment, I fell into a deep depression, an existential break where all knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of life itself came into question. I had ventured off the deep end.

It was then that Kaya appeared out of nowhere. "What's wrong?" asked Kaya, "Can I help you?" I knew I was in trouble. The feelings were so overwhelming that I could barely walk or talk.



I replied, “Kaya, I’m dying.” And at that point, I began to disappear. Kaya helped me into the car, I knew the best place for me at this moment was to be at my parent’s house. And soon, I was laying on a couch, covered with a blanket...truly a shadow in light of the Christmas celebration going on.

I watched, without speaking. Somehow everything began to feel absurd. Faces were laughing, food was being consumed, a small group was playing cards (an especially absurd activity which seemed to be completely pointless). But wait, I loved to play cards, loved to eat, loved to laugh, loved Christmas. What was going on? Suddenly my mind decided that it had a job to do, and that was to figure out all that had happened to me, what I had done, why it had happened, who was to blame, how it could be fixed, what my meaning was, how to move forward, what living was all about.



From that moment on and for the next year, my mind was constantly chattering. I started experiencing PTSD, there was a sense of loss and hopelessness that was beyond my control.

And it got worse, in fact it was so bad that years later my children would tell me that when they would talk to me during that time, they would insert bizarre phrases like, “and then I cut off my leg” right into the conversation just to see if I would notice... which I did not. I didn’t notice because I wasn’t there. My ego state had taken over. The agenda was to use fear and disempowerment to solidify a victim story that I could fall back on in order to make sense of the world. Every day, again and again, I relived the Humpty Dumpty story. I felt like I was not whole. I felt shattered. I had come unraveled...and I didn’t know how to put all those pieces together again. I suppose if I ever had an addictive



personality, this would have been the time I would have turned to drugs, or drinking, or something to “help” me through. But this was out of character for me. So there was no escape. I was reinventing myself and at this point it was an unknown as to whether or not I would survive to accomplish this goal. And besides, the shattering had already happened, so if I were able to “paste” myself together again, all the scars would show. All the wounds would be exposed. I, (as Humpty Dumpty), would never be the innocent, clean, smooth, white, scarless “egg” that I had been before the fall. And if somehow, I were able to manage to repair myself, I started doubting that I could ever love the “broken” person I had become.

THE DRAGON

CHAPTER FIVE



On Top of my Depression, I began experiencing panic attacks in the middle of the night. Blasted out of a deep slumber, I would see myself in a silent scream and absolute panic of pending death. The Dragon was approaching, and I was helpless and paralyzed by fear. I could not breathe, could not scream, could not move a muscle. I was completely defenseless. “Help Me!!!” my mind was screaming. But no one heard, no one came to the rescue, and just before I died, I somehow was able to slow the process...although my body was pumped full of adrenaline. My fight or flight was “stuck” in the “on” mode and I didn’t know how to turn it off. The rest of the night moved forward, but I did not sleep for fear that it would all happen again.

This continued for about 5 years, 5 long and painful years. I was beginning to



become very fragile, and my health was declining. One day I talked with my friend Kaya about the situation. Kaya asked if I had ever experienced a “silent scream” before. “Was there ever a time that you were literally frozen with fear?” asked Kaya. I thought about the feelings that were arising...the horror, the helplessness, the sense of violation...was there ever a time when I felt completely safe and secure only to be jolted out of a sound peaceful sleep into a feeling of pending death? Digging, and from the deepest coffers of my subconscious arose a memory. It was a memory that I was not comfortable with. It was a memory that was not welcomed. It was a memory hidden in the darkness, hidden in the locked caverns of my mind and soul. Nevertheless, it was where the Dragon lived, and one way or another it would continue to rear up until confronted.



The memory was this: at a tender age of 13, I climbed into my bed, just like so many other nights I felt safe and secure. It was time for slumber and in the bedroom across the hall was my mother and father. Next door were my brothers. Life was easy, simple, loving, and pure...until that night. It was 2 in the morning when I awoke to a very large ugly man, reeking of alcohol, laying on top of me, slobbering all over my face. I was absolutely frozen. Was this a nightmare, was I dreaming, what was going on? To my horror, I realized that there was indeed a man in his 40's attacking me in my own bed! My little hands grabbed the covers next to my throat with a death grip, fingernails cutting into the palms of my hands. I tried to scream for help but when I opened my mouth, nothing came out. My vocal cords were frozen with fear. My mouth continued



to open in a scream but absolutely nothing was to be heard. I tried to move my body but encountered the same phenomena. I was suspended in time; I was in freeze mode. I was unable to protect myself. Worse than that, I couldn't even call for help. I was at the complete mercy of the unknown, a deepest violation of trust. Would I be raped; would I be strangled? I began a silent process of saving myself, disconnecting from reality, trying to regain control by not letting my mind believe this was real. I was leaving my body when suddenly my mother entered the doorway, "Kathy, what's going on!?!?! Oh my God, Howard, someone is in here!!!!" she screamed. Faster than lightening my father jolted, just as the man "monster" catapulted off the bed, and I stood cradled at the end of the hallway in my mother's arms watching my father chase a large, grizzled,



drunken and unkempt man down the hall and around the corner. Suddenly I heard a loud BANG that sounded like a gunshot.

“Please God, please I hope my dad has not been shot,” I thought to myself. Then another memory arose...an image that I would never forget. My mother and I watched as Howard returned...walking toward us in slow motion, my father was completely white: his hair, his face, his skin, his clothes were all white...white with fright. My father had not been shot, except for the arrow in his heart, not knowing what had happened to his first-born daughter. The noise had been from the back door glass shattering.

Immediately the police were called and soon I found myself in a squad car which had pulled up in front of my neighbor’s house. Four men stood outside in the dim light caste by the streetlight.



“Kathy, please point to the person who did this to you,” said officer Haynie. I felt a second wave of ice, again frozen in time, suspended in fear...still in shock. I couldn’t see the men because I was curled up in a ball on the passenger side of the vehicle, on the floorboard. The police officer kept asking me to point to the person who had violated my young body. But I couldn’t move. How could I look this person in the eyes? How could those little fingers of mine confront a 40-year-old man who could have cut my throat and snuffed out my life within minutes. It was a lot to ask. But I knew I had to do it.

Shivering, I mustered up the strength to peep my frightened eyes just enough over the dashboard to see. I decided that I would only expose my eyes, and my pointer finger. Timidly, I gestured toward one man. “That one,” I whispered and



quickly dove back into the floorboard blackness of safety. Immediately the police handcuffed the monster. He would end up serving time for his crime. I would end up serving time with panic attacks and an engrained memory of what it is like to “disappear” when I no longer had “control” of a situation.

Kaya gently nudged me, “Hey, are you okay?” I snapped back into my life and Kaya responded. The advice was powerful. “You are a sacred being of the Universe. No matter if you feel hurt, scared, or violated, you are the one in control. You can empower yourself to not be tortured by this memory. In order to truly heal, this memory must be witnessed. A person can never fully heal unless they share their pain with others.”

For a moment, I thought this concept was absurd. Horrid memories must be



buried! Why shine a light into the cave of despair? But I knew that the Dragon who had been visiting me in the middle of the night...for years now, was the Dragon of fright with roots back to that helpless night, and I had become my own worst enemy. The fear was visceral and lived in my body. No amount of “thinking it through” could release me from its grip. I would have to do something about it. Was Kaya right? Would I find a way to free myself from the memory of that silent scream and death grip? Could I break free from the Dragon?

The healing process had begun. I would spend the next two years facing my hidden dragons. My psychiatrist had diagnosed me with PTSD and of course prescribed anti-anxiety drugs. These were helping me “hold steady” but they were not the solution to the problem. I had to embark on a journey of holistic medicine in



order to free the Dragon - not just from my mind, but from my body and soul. A great tool I discovered was EMDR. This modality utilizes rapid, rhythmic eye movements to dampen the power of emotionally charged memories of past traumatic events. A trauma sometimes can cause a disruption of normal adaptive information processing. This results in unprocessed information being difunctionally held in memory networks. The idea behind the therapy is to cause a “distancing” effect that can enable the person to “stand back” and re-evaluate the trauma, and their understanding of it whilst not being overwhelmed by it. Some speak of “dual attention” meaning that a person can heal by having one foot in the past and at the same time having the other in the present. This way there is always a sense of control. I would become the master of my own dragons, learning to face



them while remaining grounded at all times.

Over the course of several years, I encountered various ways of making sense of my world and gaining a personal empowerment. The most important technique was that of utilizing the breath to connect with my “higher self” and to learn how to move out of a thought and into the present moment. I started to understand what it meant to not live in the past and to not worry about the future. There was a jewel that had been missing from my life, and that jewel was to know myself in the present moment and the gratitude that flowed from that state of mind. The key was to notice when the anxiety was rising, and to force myself to not let it take control.

Along with EMDR I learned the 4 Part Kriya Yoga breath for releasing anxiety



along with the Ujjayi breath for accessing a deeper calm. My encounter with Emotional Freedom Technique allowed me to incorporate the “tapping” modality in order to help me complete my own “check ins” which in turn allowed me to be the Master of my own being.

COYOTE MEDICINE

CHAPTER SIX



Things Were Looking Up for me. I was gaining a sense of self and a belief that I had the power to heal. One sunny summer day I was walking on a dusty road near a local lake. The warmth of the sun was nourishing and the quite atmosphere was calming. But as I sauntered down the lane, little did I know that I was not alone. I was not the only being enjoying the sun. I had allowed time in my day for reflection, sun, fun, and play. There was no need to be anywhere else but where I was. Nature couldn't have been more beautiful, and the day couldn't have been more peaceful. Allowing myself to be completely present with the moment resulted in an encounter never before experienced and never again to be known...a once in a lifetime interaction. Out of the bushes and onto the road a furry creature appeared, startling me and stopping me dead in my tracks, a



coyote was no less than three feet from me. I had a choice in that moment to run, or to interact...and for some unknown reason, I chose the latter. I began to sing, and to my astonishment, the Coyote sat down on its haunches and caulked one ear toward me whilst pointing the other ear in the opposite direction. The song was about love, and connection between all things. My voice was soft and melodic. I looked to the sky as if singing to the sun. It was as if I knew something bigger was happening. This was not just a song for Mr. Coyote, this was a song for all creation. Somehow, my voice was weaving me into a network of the web of life, solidifying my place in the Cosmos. Words and sounds were flowing from my being without thought, without motive, without judgement. And Coyote was there to be my witness. The whole encounter lasted about 3 minutes



but felt like a lifetime of singing. Coyote stood up, then circled me, marking each direction with a drop or two of bodily fluids, as if to say, “Your territory is my territory and my territory is yours.”

As quickly as he appeared, Mr. Coyote was gone. I shook my head in disbelief and headed home. This would be something I would journal about. I was very aware that something profound had occurred that day, something that would stay with me a lifetime. Later I would seek out a Hopi friend to gain some insight about the incident. Cheveyo was in his late 70’s. His face was deeply weathered with miles of lines of wisdom. He was a kind man and his name meant “Spirit.” Indeed he had a powerful soul. Sitting upon an old wooden bench in a local park, I explained to Cheveyo my unique encounter. Cheveyo was immediately enthralled in the story. I



related the day, the sun, the walk, the song, the coyote. As I tried to remember the words that melodically poured from my soul, Cheveyo kept his head tilted in my direction as if to say, when animal guides speak, we must always listen. The look on his face was peaceful, with squinted eyes and a pleasant lift to his brown lips, Cheveyo appeared to be deeply amused. After recalling the story, I paused for a moment to invite Cheveyo to give his insight as to the meaning of the whole experience.

“What do you think it was all about?” I inquired.

Cheveyo continued to squint his eyes and nod his head...”That was no Coyote, that was Medicine,” Cheveyo continued, “being a master trickster, Coyote continually falls for his own tricks. If not careful, one could completely sabotage



oneself. Coyote is about the balance of wisdom and play. Coyote medicine invites us to laugh at whatever obstacles come our way. He makes due with what he has and teaches us to drop attachments to the way things used to be and get on with what is here for us today,” Cheveyo’s right eye lifted as if to assess my reaction to his words. “Coyote is a jester challenging the seriousness of life and reminding us that without any grit, there is no gain. Coyote lessons are taught backwards, upside down, and sideways...not always yielding the outcome we expect. By learning how to laugh at unexpected outcomes Coyote teaches there are no mistakes only a variety of experiences and a manifold of possibilities. Coyote is not so much about figuring the “right” answers to life but navigating the variety of choices and surrendering to our own decisions, and



then learning to laugh at ourselves, and learn from our mistakes.”

Suddenly I remembered all the metaphysical systems I had studied and the exhausting search to find the “right answer.” Could it be that EVERY answer was the right answer? Perhaps it’s not so much about the answer but what we do along the way. I had a feeling that even though Cheveyo’s eyes were practically closed, he was keeping a close eye on me. The faint smile never left his face and for a moment I could have sworn that a few of his “wisdom wrinkles” got deeper.

“Do you understand that in this life, it’s not so much about what happens to us, but how we deal with it that matters?” he chuckled. “Maybe one day you will learn from Coyote to love your life: the good, the bad, and even the ugly.” I couldn’t believe my ears. Was this old man telling me to



love my pain? Was he saying that I should appreciate even my deepest dragons? Could it be possible that in order to find joy and peace, the first step is to allow pain and hurt? How could my Universal Song of Connection propel me forward into a new understanding of a foundation that would support me no matter what? If this was true, there was NEVER a need to be afraid because I would always be a part of the beloved creation...and I was an important part. “We come into the world with our individual songs and we must find a way to join the great song of creation,” said Cheveyo as he turned his head toward the shade of a nearby tree. Within the shadows he widened his mysterious brown eyes and looked into my soul. “What is your real name,” his eyes asked, “do you know who you are?”



I was taken aback. “My name is Katherine Ann.”

Again, Cheveyo smiled a very thin smile and nodded a very thin nod.

“The name Katherine means Purity. And the name Ann means Grace. So, you are Pure Grace,” Cheveyo purred to himself.

And it was in that moment that I became who I was, and had always been, “Pure Grace.” But there was so much more to learn. “Just what is meant by the word, Grace,” I asked myself. The answer to this question would become a life-long search. More meaning would emerge each day of my life. Cheveyo chimed in, “May I share a Hopi Elders’ prophecy”? Now my eyes grew large for I knew that what was to come was a precious pearl of wisdom. Cheveyo continued:



“Here is the prophecy”

It is the Eleventh Hour, now you must go
back and tell the people that this is the
Hour. And there are things to be
considered...

Where are you living?

What are you doing?

What are your relationships?

Are you in right relation?

Where is your water?

Know your garden.

It is time to speak your truth.

Create your community.

Be good to each other.

And do not look outside yourself for your
leader.

June 8, 2000

Cheveyo clasped his hands together,
smiled, and said, “This could be a good
time! Let me tell you more he said.



“There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water. And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word ‘struggle’ from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”



Cheveyo chuckled to himself as if the secret of his own people and the Universe had just been revealed...and perhaps it had. I shook my head to indicate to Cheveyo that I was starting to grasp the concept of Grace. “So, to face life with Grace is to remain in the flow of surrender with gratitude,” I smiled a smile full of teeth and looked over the top of my glasses to assess Cheveyo’s reaction. But Cheveyo’s thin eyes seemed to have closed, and his thin smile had relaxed into a straight line of slumber. “Shoot, looks like my dear friend has fallen asleep,” I whispered to myself. I would not get his validation on my definition of Grace, I would have to continue my life path and put the idea to work. Could I live a life of Grace?

DIVING INTO THE QUEST

CHAPTER SEVEN



I Was Gaining My Strength back. I was learning to face my anxiety, to explore the dark areas of my shadow, and now was exploring this newfound concept of surrendering with Grace. But the intense desire for depth was still there. I loved learning about my name, I would ask others to accept me no longer as “Kathy” but as the “Katherine Ann” as that was my birthname. I was named after my father’s grandmother, Katherine Haggard. My mother once said to me that she adored Katherine Haggard because whenever anyone said, “How are you today?” Grandma Haggard would always smile and say, “better.” My mother loved such positivity in the face of the pain, vulnerability, and loneliness of old age.



I decided that I would leave the old “Kathy” behind. I was beginning to understand so much more than “Kathy” ever knew. I was starting to understand that her diagnosis of PTSD followed by prescription meds for anxiety, depression, and a brief possible diagnosis of “Bi-Polar” was really nothing other than an existential spiritual awakening in life. I did not have a mental illness, I had a desire to learn, grow, expand, and reach my potential. The anxiety and depression, (along with the mood swings) was due to the fact that I had very few tools to utilize when I encountered fear, sadness, and traumatic events. My search now was for Tools of Awareness.

This realization helped me understand the meaning of another re-occurring nightmare I was plagued with. I would constantly dream that I was falling in



space, frantically searching for something solid to grab onto. While falling, I would encounter what appeared to be solid rocks, yet when I latched onto them, they would melt in my arms. I had gained enough awareness that I realized that the tools I sought would be the solid forms that would support me for the rest of my life. Yet, I knew in my heart that this road I was on was a long one. It would require a search. It would require diligence. It would require belief in myself and the humility to reach out to others more wise, more brave, more knowledgeable. And this is what I intended to do. Kathy would “die” so that I could be re-born. Dr. Janison’s death would not go in vain. I would LIVE in honor of such a wise man. I would carve meaning out of darkness, and pain, and hurt, and disappointment. I would NOT give up on myself. I would live a life of strength, grace,



and flow. I would keep seeking until I discovered my reason for being. I would embark on a Quest for meaning. But in order to do that, I would have to “completely jump off the cliff.”

July, 2001, I was upstairs in a large old school room in Jerome, Arizona. The wooden floors smelled seasoned, dusty, and I could sense that if they could speak, they would have quite the story to tell. This old school room was on the second floor of what had once been the local high school. It was abandoned except for a few artists who loved the privacy a small town afforded them. I had started a dance troupe of women and adored the views out the panoramic windows that surrounded the room. One day, I found myself alone in the studio with a drum. And although drumming had never been my “thing” I picked up the drum and started



methodically tapping right palm, left palm, right palm, left palm. The cadence turned into a meditation. Time stole away from me, and I began to disappear into a reverie of ancient times. I saw myself in Africa, walking along a dusty road. The sun had already set when out of the dust and into the dusk a Shaman's face appeared. "There's so much more for you to learn," he said. "Lay your body upon the Earth. The Earth will heal you. You must pay attention to the elements. Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Ether: all of these are cleansing agents. As your life continues, there will be times you must bury your woes, there will be times that you will completely burn all contention and strife, there will be times for you to let it go by surrendering to the wind, and always you will be challenged to remain in touch with the liquid, water state of your being. And lastly, you will be



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challenged to love that which is ethereal... the ethers of your soul.” The Shaman picked up a handful of dust and put it in my right hand, he then leaned down and pulled out a pile of ashes from an old pouch and put them into my left hand. Next, he sprinkled water into his cupped fingers and shook them over me...sprinkling me ever so lightly. The Shaman started chanting some foreign language that I recognized but could not repeat. He took out a feathered hand wand and began to smudge me with sage. I could see the wisps of smoke swirl as they disappeared toward the sky. “Never forget that you are your own Shaman.” With these words, the Shaman disappeared and once again I was back in my dance studio, moving my body with the rhythm I had created. I smiled to myself, put down the drum, and locked the door on my way out.



I jostled down the stairs, my mind lost in remembrance of the powerful encounter. Just then, and out of the blue, a man appeared right in front of me. We nearly merged heads, “Oh! Opps, sorry about that. I’m John,” said the man.

I was startled and nodded, still pondering my Shamanic journey. “I’m Katherine,” I replied. And this was the start of a lifelong friendship. Little did I know that the meaning of the name “John” is “Gift from God.” My quest was beginning.

A full year would pass before I had an encounter with John again. And as if no time had passed at all, in July of that year, I would once again meet John on the steps of that old schoolhouse, and he would invite me into his artist studio. John was from California but had been living in Bali, Indonesia for 15 years. John’s face was weathered and reminded me of the



Shaman's face I had seen in my reverie
John was an artist soul at his very heart.
He ate, drank, slept, and lived art. Over
many late nights and several bottles of
wine, John and I realized our soulmate
connection. We laughed, sang, and
created...together. And though John was
in the country for only a short period of
time, it was time enough to ask I if I would
like to join him for a four month trip to
several countries of Asia. In order to do
this, I would have to quit my teaching job,
leave my daughters behind, and trust that
John would be a good travelling
companion. That night, I could barely sleep
as I pondered the adventure that awaited.
This would be a once in a lifetime
opportunity. But would I have the courage
to jump?

I decided to consult Kaya. An evening
conversation explored the yes and the no. I



felt fear arising. This would be too much change. I didn't think I had the courage to do it. Kaya laughed and said, "How could you not do it? This adventure will give you the depth you've been looking for and so much more. Your perspective will grow exponentially. You must be true to yourself first; this is the meaning of being authentic...follow your heart." And with that, Kaya was gone. I still doubted what Kaya had to say but I knew deep in my consciousness, that Kaya was right. I turned off the light remembering the journey that the Shaman had called me to follow. I closed my eyes and felt the soft blanket of night embrace me. Morning broke, and it was clear that the answer was yes. I would accept the invitation. It would be an adventure that would forever impact my life...and the lives of others.

A WAKE UP CALL

CHAPTER EIGHT



Innocence or Awareness...which would you choose? I had never left the country before. I grew up in an upper middle-class family, having all that my heart could ever desire. My childhood had been one of fun, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents...lots of yard games, lots of card games...tons of play. I was raised in a solid, moral atmosphere where my parents and siblings showered me with confidence and love. Any pressure that I felt, was pressure I put upon myself, since I was a first born, Leo with Aries for my rising sign and a Gemini moon. That meant I had tons of fire in my chart. In western astrology, my “planet” was the SUN. And as a little girl, I was known to enter a restaurant with my parents, climb upon a table and begin dancing. I loved to dance. I loved creativity and making people smile. In fact, my



mother relays that I started walking at age 7 months and dancing shortly after that.

I was raised in a Mormon family. This provided me with a solid family unit, and a moral structure to help me stand on a foundation of service, kindness, and love. I adored my parents as they were always helping other people. My childhood provided a healthy construct of reality from which to move forward in life as a responsible adult. However, the dogmatic beliefs and strict confines of the Mormon religion were too narrow to satisfy the curiosity and expansion that my soul yearned for. I had to LIVE MY OWN PATH. I realized at an early age that whilst the church had provided structure, the true meaning of my own life would have to be discovered. And along with this meaning, my own connection with Source (God) was paramount. No church could provide me



with that connection. I would have to develop it. It would not be something someone would tell me, nor would it be found in a book. I would discover it through trial and tribulation. I would have to confront my shadow side, so that I could fully understand my “light.” I would forge my way. In my astrological readings, I was a born leader, a teacher, a mother, and an artist. And as my journey continued, I would come to terms with what each of these meant and why I had to dive deeper into my soul’s relationship with each quality.

The wake-up call came at 7 am reminding me that my plane would be taking off for Indonesia at 11 am. My bags were packed, and spirits were high. I could not wait to land in a foreign country where each of my 7 senses would experience a newness...a raw, unexplored, vast world.



And while my emptiness and insecurity travelled with me, I knew that there was a vastness of exploration and self-growth in front of me. The flight was a 12-hour trek to Japan, then an overnight stay, followed by a 5-hour flight the next morning to Bali. All kinds of thoughts were going through my mind. “What the heck are you doing?” I second guessed myself. “Was it better to stay with the known?” I pondered. “Can I really travel to Japan and then on to Bali, all by myself?” I started to feel the anxiety rise. “Was it foolish to quit my 15-year teaching job to be travelling to some unknown country to meet up with a person I hardly knew?” I felt my heart in my throat. “What if I’m making the wrong choice?” I asked. “What if something happens to me, what if I can’t control the situation, am I strong enough, am I smart enough, am I brave enough?” I felt a slight panic attack coming on. I started



perspiring on my forehead, then my neck, then my arms. My ear's started ringing, and my heart picked up its beat. "Go back! Go back! You are a fool!" my mind yelled. "You have left everything you know: your husband, your family, your job, your religion, your community, your city, your country. And for what you idiot." I felt the tears coming on and forced them back. I remembered the emotional freedom technique and started tapping. "Even though you are afraid, I love and accept you the way you are," I whispered to myself. The tapping continued until the anxiety subsided. I knew that I had already chosen the unknown rather than the security of my innocence. My naivety would soon get its own wake up call. I would have to face the truth of my destiny or forever live in the hypocrisy of my soul.



The plane landed in Bali in the late afternoon. From the moment the doors of the plane opened, everything changed. Upon entering the airport, a waft of newness hit me. Everything was different: the smell, the light, the humidity, the people, the food...all my senses were going off. Life was fresh! I was alive!

When I arrived at Tjampuhan, Ubud I was immediately enchanted with the moist air and vibrant green jungles full of monkeys and mysteries. John lived in a Balinese compound consisting of several houses. I soon discovered the island was a haven for artists and ex-pats. The locals were skilled craftsmen and women. Bali is known in particular for its plethora of talented bead workers and carvers. Bali is a place where almost anything is possible. The next 6 weeks would be full of creation: I started a line of organic silk and cotton



clothing, a personal line of jewelry, and continued my acrylic paintings on canvas. However, sometimes having too many choices can be as challenging as having very few options. I was faced with new questions in life. “Who am I? What do I want? What is my purpose? What is my passion? Do I want to live abroad, or do I want to live in the States? What does it mean to be an American? What does it mean to be alive? What does it ALL mean?” I asked myself. The answers were slow to come and soon I surrendered into allowing the process to unfold and for the answers to arrive...on their own time.

There was so much more to learn...so much more to let go of. The upcoming trip to India would prove to be profound, deconstructing the very framework by which I understood my life, and death. The first stop would be Deli, India.



Then on to Varanasi. Dated to the 11th century B.C., Varanasi is a city in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The city is regarded as a spiritual capital and draws Hindu pilgrims who bathe in the Ganges River's sacred waters and perform funeral rites. Along the city's winding streets are some 2,000 temples, including Kashi Vishwanath, the "Golden Temple," dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva. John escorted me down a series of red steps leading down to the Ganges otherwise known as the Ghats. The city has 88 ghats. Most of the ghats are bathing and puja ceremony ghats, while two ghats are used exclusively as cremation sites. The river's banks were lined with people. Some hoping to be released from the cycles of re-incarnation and to go straight to Nirvana (which in Hindu tradition is the reuniting with Brahman, the universal God or



universal soul.) A soul reaches this state after living many lives in which it climbs up through the caste system.

As I strolled along the river's banks, looking skyward, I noticed someone dressed in white and beckoning me from an upper level. I thought for a moment that he was pointing to me and motioning that he wanted me to climb the stairs and join him. I thought to myself, "Surely he couldn't be gesturing to me. There are so many people here. Why me?" The glare of the sun was in my eyes and as I continued to look upward, I could see tufts of smoke filling the air. I lifted my small delicate pointer finger and placed it on my chest... pointing to myself, as I responded to the invitation. I silently mouthed the words, "Do you mean me?" He nodded and pointed directly at me, then cupping his fingers motioned me once again to join him.



I looked right, then looked to the left, shrugged my shoulders in surrender and ventured up the stairs. As I climbed, I began to see seven piles of wood burning in the shape of “teepees.” Upon reaching the top stair, I glanced into the fire and to my horror and shock, I was so close to a human foot, that I could have grabbed it.

It was then that I realized I was at a cremation site and the seven “teepees” were funeral pyres. The cycle of death and rebirth in Hinduism is referred to as “Samsara.” When Hindus die, they believe their atman is reborn into a different body. Death, according to Hinduism, is a series of changes through which an individual passes. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad describes the passing of a soul:



“When the soul departs from the body, the life-breath follows. When the life-breath departs, all the organs follow. Then the soul becomes endowed with particularized consciousness and goes to the body which is related to that consciousness. It is followed by its knowledge, works, and past experience.... Just as a goldsmith takes a small quantity of gold and fashions another – a newer and better – form, so does the soul throw this body away, or make it unconscious, and make another, a new and better -form suited to the Manes, or the celestial minstrels, or the gods, or Virat, or Hiranyagarbha, or other beings. As it does and acts, so it becomes; and by doing good it becomes; by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil.”



I asked about the fire, as it was glowing an orange, red, then deep blue. “Well, the bodies are wrapped with cloth and fat to increase the temperature for cremation to occur. “This fire has been burning since before Christ,” the man continued, “someone has been tending the fire, in the temple, ongoing for centuries.” The gentleman was small in stature and along with being dressed in white, he wore a turban on his head. His face offered a slight orange tint, having stood so close to the funeral pyres. “Dying may be compared to falling asleep and after-death experiences to dreams. The thoughts and actions of the waking state determines the nature of our dreams. Similarly, after death the soul experiences the results of the thoughts and actions it performed during its life on earth. There is no real break in the spiritual evolution of the soul toward self-



knowledge. A dying man's next life is determined by his last thought in the present life," he said.

The Bhagavad Gita says, "For whatever objects a man thinks of at the final moment, when he leaves the body – that alone does he attain." I glared into the fire and witnessed a marbled-like state of a body...only white bones left, suspended horizontally deep in the orange/blue flame...on the verge of crumbling. And with that thought the gentleman lifted his "staff" and with a quick, and final gesture, he poked one bone causing all to crumble and disappear into the inferno.

I excused myself, overwhelmed by all I had witnessed. I nearly flew down the stairs, unable to remember any step I had taken. I met up with John and was informed that a boat had been reserved for us to venture out onto the river Ganges.



Perhaps it would have better served me to wait a day, in light of what I had just experienced, but the arrangements had already been made and the day was waning. I found myself out on the river. Pilgrims lined the banks, praying and washing dishes. My mind was spinning. Did I really just witness the cremation of 7 people? I had so much to think about and to process. Yet around me in water floated trails of flowers and ashes. “What are those,” I inquired. John volunteered that after bodies are cremated, the ashes are dumped along with flowers and released into the river. I was surrounded with the ashes of bodies.

At that moment I spied a porcelain blue/white baby floating near the boat. “Look at that doll,” I screamed! The boatsman shook his head, “That is not a doll, it’s a baby. Those who do not have



the money are dumped directly into the river.” The boatsman lifted his head and peered directly into my eyes to gage my reaction. I felt a wave of deconstruction hit my mind and my soul. I found myself questioning everything in my life, and in my death. Is it true that we learn about life by dying and we learn about death by living? What was I supposed to learn? What did I need to know? This all was such a wake-up call. I was waking up...but first I needed a good night’s sleep so I could process everything. What does it mean to “wake up”?

THE PEARL INSIDE THE LOTUS

CHAPTER NINE



I Slept for 10 Hours, and when I awoke, I felt like I had been sleeping for days. How precious was life, and at the same time, how insignificant was life? I had so much to think about. The foundation of my “knowing” had been shattered. I needed to know more. I needed to apply what I was learning to my own life. Who was I at my core? I was flesh, I was bone, I was thought, I was beyond thought. I was power and I was emptiness. The duality of existence was beginning to make sense. Perhaps my next stage of my journey would give me more answers. The next stop was Nepal.

The flight from Deli to Nepal was more than manageable. And when I left the plane, I would once again engage in a new and fascinating world. Along a busy



thoroughfare near Kathmandu, a passageway lead into a large, open-air courtyard. In the back corner, there's a modest home, with a red sign outside that simply reads, "Living Goddess." Out of a window peered a young girl. "She's called a Kumari and she is worshipped by Nepali Hindus and Buddhists, who believe she is the reincarnation of the Hindu goddess Durga," said John. There are many rules. For one, there is a special makeup to the young girl's face in intricate designs. The girl isn't allowed to go outside except for festivals. On those occasions, her feet must not touch the ground. That means someone has to carry the 11-year-old goddess. Another major rule: the Kumari is not permitted to speak to anyone besides her family and close friends.

Hundreds of people lined up to offer the Kumari flowers and donations, and to



touch her feet. They began inching toward her to receive her blessing while she applied a bright red dot to each visitor's forehead. My heart was beating wildly in my chest as I ventured forward. The area between the eyebrows, the sixth chakra is known as the 'agna' meaning 'command,' is the seat of concealed wisdom. It is the center point wherein all experience is gathered in total concentration. According to the tantric concept, when during meditation the latent energy ('kundalini') rises from the base of the spine towards the head, this 'agna' is the probable outlet for this potent energy. The red 'kumkum' between the eyebrows is said to retain energy in the human body and control the various levels of concentration. It is also the central point of the base of the creation itself — symbolizing auspiciousness and



good fortune.

Leaning forward, I felt the tender touch of the Kumari and imagined she placed the red 'kumkum' on my forehead. The young but ancient soul stared intently into my eyes as if to say, "Are you waking up?"

"How lucky am I to be touched by a Goddess," I secretly said to myself. However, it was not so much the touch that struck me in that moment, instead it was all the symbolism that was represented by the red dot. Did I have a sixth sense? Was I in command of my "concealed wisdom?" What was meant by "Kundalini rising?" There was so much left to learn. What was meant by the "third eye?" Was there more depth to my soul than I could have ever imagined? How could I connect to my higher self? These were all questions



stirring about in my consciousness. What does it mean to be alive? I needed more. I needed to step out of my conscious small framework and into the vastness of the expansion of the Universe. The very next day presented such an opportunity.

Morning came quickly. John and I would venture to Nepal's own version of the Ghats. Sitting on a small hillside I looked out to several cremation pyres. Among the plumes of smoke rising to the sky, and along a small creek, were several unique looking characters. These men were gray. They had dreadlocks that fell from their heads and gathered like snakes on the ground, some as long as 4 feet. "Who are these men tending the pyres?" I asked.

An answer came quickly, "They are the holy men, the Sadhus. This is a holy person in Hinduism who has renounced the worldly life. They are sometimes



alternatively referred to as jogi. Literally, it means one who practices a “sadhana” or follows a path of spiritual discipline,” said John, “and they are covered with the ashes of the dead.” I was aghast! I wondered why these men would choose such a path. I realized in that instant that we ALL CHOOSE our paths. The Universe allows co-creation with the Divine. So in a sense, we are part of the Divine and we are responsible for the decisions we make. We are responsible for the life we create. At the same time, compared to the Universe, we are smaller than a grain of sand (relatively speaking). This is the Duality of Life: to be all powerful, and to be completely helpless. This is the Human Condition...to know when to be powerful and to know when to surrender into humility. Life is the journey and not the



destination. In each given moment, we ARE at the destination. The destination is always here for us. The destination is to be at one with ourselves and Spirit. The destination is a surrender into the peace of being. Death is a normal process of life. Because of our realization of death, we realize how precious life is. These insights felt good, and I started to feel that deep within I understood the process of my life, and any life for that matter. Within a few days I would be travelling to Tibet by plane. I wondered what pearls of wisdom would be discovered there.

The flight was short. I looked out my window and at 30,000 feet I saw the top of Mount Everest. Soon I would be arriving in Lhasa which is the capital. The Tibetan Plateau is on the northern side of the Himalayas and is nicknamed “the Roof of the World” because of its towering peaks.



Upon a hilltop is the Potala Palace, which once housed the Dalai Lama, and Jokhang Temple, Tibet's spiritual heart, revered for its golden statue of the young Buddha. Now occupied by the Chinese, I wondered what my journey would hold as John and I did not join a tourist group (as required) but instead would trek to any place we desired, free and unencumbered. I wanted an authentic experience and laughed to myself as I checked into an "original style" room which instead of a bathroom, the room had a chamber pot that had to be cleaned and rinsed after relieving oneself. That night we ventured out to a local eatery and joined a group of guys who were preparing for a trek into the Himalayas. The meal was one of Yak Momo's. The Yak is a bovine cousin of a cow with horns and long hair. It grazes across the grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau. Yak



Momo's are pieces of deep-fried Yak. The evening passed quickly as stories were shared about wild treks into wild country.

The next day would consist of visiting the Potala, the highest and most ancient palace in the world with thirteen stories of buildings, containing over 1,000 rooms, 10,000 shrines and about 200,000 statues. Tibet has been occupied and ruled by China since 1951 in “a calculated and systematic strategy aimed at the destruction of the national and cultural identities,” according to the 14th Dalai Lama. This has often been described by the Tibetan people as “a cultural genocide.”

As I approach the Temple, I witnessed several Buddhist prayer wheels which contained an inscription: Om Mani Padme Hum which means “the pearl inside the Lotus.” The encyclopedia Britannica



describes the history of Tibet as such:

Tibet's incorporation into the People's Republic of China began in 1950 and has remained a highly charged and controversial issue, both within Tibet and worldwide. Many Tibetans (especially those outside China) consider China's action to be an invasion of a sovereign country, and the continued Chinese presence in Tibet is deemed an occupation by a foreign power. The Chinese, on the other hand, believe that Tibet has been a rightful part of China for centuries and that they liberated Tibet from a repressive regime in which much of the population lived in serfdom. There is truth in both assertions, although public opinion outside China (especially in the West) has tended



to take the side of Tibet as an independent (or at least highly autonomous) entity. There is no question, though, that the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual and temporal leader, has become one of the world's most recognizable and highly regarded individuals.

Now that the Buddhists have been exiled from the Temple, and because many Tibetans left the country, I understood what the prayer meant: through all trial and tribulation, continue to find the pearl inside the Lotus. The Lotus flower is regarded in many different cultures, especially in eastern religions, as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth. **Its characteristics are a perfect analogy for the human condition: even when its roots are in the dirtiest waters, the Lotus produces the most beautiful flower. I began to realize that “the pearl”**



was my own life. My life was wrapped in the spiritual path of the Lotus. I would rise out of the “muck” and blossom with the fullness and spectacular beauty of a Lotus flower. I began to embrace the fact that my life was meaningful and that I “mattered.” For the first time, and at age 39, I was starting to discover that I had a purpose, and it was an important one. I watched as locals gathered at the temple, strapping their ankles together and prostrating themselves 108 times, with 108 prayers... some had apparent calluses on the forehead where many continuous years of praying would show itself. I was deeply moved and purchased my first Mala. A Mala also known as prayer beads is a string of beads that was traditionally used to count how many times a mantra is recited or how many breaths are taken during meditation. ... Buddhist and Hindu



malas typically have 108 beads and a guru bead (otherwise known as a head bead). With each bead, I would breathe out, and then breathe in. Thus, the beads would help me stay present and stay connected with myself and my breath.

I was learning the basic tenants of Buddhism, in particular the Four Noble Truths: they are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering. More simply put, suffering exists; it has a cause; it has an end; and it has a cause to bring about its end. By themselves, the truths don't seem like much. But beneath the truths are countless layers of teachings on the nature of existence, the self, life, and death, not to mention suffering. It is said that wisdom and compassion are two keys of Buddhism. Having the willingness



to bear the pain of others and being sympathetic is to possess compassion or “Metta.” Metta is to be free of discrimination toward all beings. The second key is Wisdom or “Anatman.” Adhering to and activating these two keys in my life, I learned, would allow me to deal with my own suffering in a more productive way.

Another important concept I learned was that of “Shenpa” and “Shenluk.” Shenpa is a Tibetan word related to the concept of “being hooked.” When something triggers us, we might have a reaction...and if we allow this reaction to occur, we become attached to negative feelings, thoughts, and emotions. These are ways we torture ourselves. Think of a piece of Velcro. Imagine if with every negative interaction we allowed ourselves to attach (like a piece of Velcro). Some



people remain velcroed for a lifetime. That tight feeling has the power to hook us into self-denigration, blame, anger, jealousy and other emotions which lead to words and actions that end up poisoning us. Conversely, comes in the concept of Shenluk. It is a Tibetan word meaning “non-attachment.” The first step is to recognize the “itch.” We can learn to experience the uneasiness and the urge fully, and to interrupt the momentum that usually follows. We do this by not following after the thoughts and learning to come back to the present moment. We learn to stay with the uneasiness, the tightening, the itch of Shenpa. When we sit still with our desire to scratch, we learn to stop the chain reaction of habitual patterns that otherwise will rule our lives. This is how we weaken the patterns that keep us hooked into discomfort that we mistake as comfort.



I smiled at the thought that I had learned a secret to dealing with the pain and suffering of my own life. Someday I would teach these concepts to others. I grabbed my beads and muttered under my breath: Om Mani Padme Hum.

ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

CHAPTER TEN



Four months out of the country is a powerful experience. I had witnessed some disparaging things, from beggars with Leprosy grabbing my arm as I rode in a rickshaw in India, to dogs walking around in Nepal with their entrails hanging out. My nativity began to turn into “eyes wide open.” The world was a different place than I had imagined. Yet, my desire to “know” was stronger than my desire to remain “happily ignorant.” Some people say that innocence is bliss. I suppose for some people this is true, but not for a person who longs for depth and for knowledge. With each heart-breaking encounter, my compassion toward humanity began to grow. Late in the evening upon my return to the states I touched base with Kaya. “You know what it is you have to do,” said Kaya in a soft tone. “Spirit has presented you with all these situations so that you



can move further into your purpose and passion as a spiritual teacher,” Kaya continued. Now I knew that being a teacher was “in my blood.” I had taught high school students for over 15 years. I understood this to be true, what I didn’t fully grasp was that I had a mission to serve and teach others how to follow their spiritual paths. So my response to Kaya’s comments was not surprising.

“I don’t know if I am wise enough, good enough, worthy enough to be a spiritual teacher,” I challenged Kaya.

“Girlfriend, you need to learn to trust yourself!” Kaya exerted.

But I knew there was so much more to learn. And though I had come a long way, a new spot on the planet was calling me. I returned to the States and said goodbye to my dear friend John. I had learned so much. Now I would embark on my own.



Having grown up in the Southwest, I had grown a deep love for the desert. Sedona, Arizona was surrounded with red towering buttes and sandstone walls of rock with Juniper trees blessing the hillsides. Yet, at this point in my life, I knew that the water element of the ocean was calling me. When I returned to Sedona, I had opened a small day spa. However, I knew in my heart that it wouldn't be long before I would embark on a move to Hawaii. Even though I didn't know anyone on Maui, I would soon find myself renting out a house and shipping everything I had over to the island.

Hawaii is a place where (upon arriving) the locals will say to you, "How long have you been here?" They smile and wait for the answer as if they were privy to some joke that you missed out on. If you say that you have only been there a few months,



their grin will get wider. That's because they know that the Hawaiian Islands are known to either "embrace you or spit you out." I was uncertain what it all meant but one thing I knew for sure, I was destined to be there at that time.

Maui was loving, moist, feminine, and free from stagnation. The ocean breeze continually moved the air while the waves ebbed and flowed. To me it was a paradise. I recalled a trip to Kauai in my 30's where I and a group of my dance troupe members from Jerome had spent two days hiking the Na Pali Coast to our deep jungle destination of Kalalau. A faint memory once again became very vivid. Toward the end of my first marriage, I travelled to Kauai where I spent two weeks in the jungle living off the land. If God lives anywhere on earth, I believed that place would have to be Kalalau.



During the month of November, the only way in is to hike as the boat ride that time of year is very dangerous due to the turbulent currents. The hike consists of river crossings and 60-foot precipice cliffs where one slip would surely result in death. With large backpacks the four wild women ventured deeper until a blissful camp emerged. Watercress grew in the streams. Coconut, banana, and mango was plentiful in the trees. And wild goats roamed the countryside. This was a jungle without snakes and very inviting to remove shoes and clothes. Kalalau was a picture-perfect paradise. I climbed trees, waded creeks, relaxed next to a fire, and spent a lot of time reflecting on my life. One night a “white rainbow” appeared and moved elegantly in an arch between land and ocean, as if to say that we must stand firm on the ground but always bridge the gap



and stay in the fow. I shared this amazement with Kaya.

“Kat, that was a moonbow,” purred Kaya. You have now been gifted with the ability for the moon to speak to you. The Universe is powerful and ever pervasive. Always listen to messages that arise by the light of the moon.”

I was fascinated with this information and vowed to always pay attention to the elements of air, water, fire, earth, ether. All five elements are the most cleansing elements on earth. The power of each to transform is worthy of note. All five elements are essential for sustaining life on the planet. All beings cannot live without them. Each element clears, claims, and creates new life by breaking down the old and an alchemical shift takes place to help birth something new. Ether can be translated as “Spirit.”



Upon returning to “civilization” from the jungles of Kauai, I sought out Hawaiian Kahuna Auntie Nahi in an effort to learn more about the Ether element of Spirit. Auntie Nahi was a substantial woman with wide eyes and an ability to make a person feel seen and heard. Auntie stared intently as I opened my heart and revealed various aspects of my life journey. Auntie respectfully interrupted and asked the simple question, “Do you know Ho’oponopono?” I was taken aback. I had never heard of Ho’oponopono. Auntie continued, “Ho’oponopono means to make straight that which is crooked. It is an ancient Hawaiian practice of healing through forgiveness. There is a powerful story of Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len, a spiritual expert who practiced the ancient ritual of Ho’oponopono by looking through the files of mental patients at a hospital and



repeating the mantra: I love you. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you."

Auntie Nahi was alluding to a story of a therapist who healed mental patients by simply repeating four simple statements. What makes this story so interesting is that Dr. Len didn't ask patients to repeat the mantra themselves, instead he believed that we all share a connection to each other and thus (like the butterfly effect) one small gesture in one place and time can result in a shift that is felt in another place or time. Dr. Len chose to act on the one thing he could control, himself. And results were manifested: patients were taken off their medication, some who had been shackled were set free, others began to regroup and heal. Each of us has the power to heal ourselves and to offer long distance healing to others. Nahi looked deep into my soul, "I want you to know that



forgiveness begins with yourself. It's the idea of accepting who you are and letting go of the wish your past had been different. It is only then that you can begin to help others."

I was shocked to hear this definition of forgiveness. It was something completely new to me. I humbly tipped my head toward Nahi and asked, "You mean true forgiveness starts with accepting and loving my own life?" This seemed so alien to the old concept of letting someone you care about know that you no longer hold a grudge against them. I always thought that forgiveness was for the person who had been wronged by the other. But with this concept is the idea, "I'll forgive but never forget." So forgiveness still has attachments. But with Auntie Nahi's definition, once we accept our past and let



it go, we can start from a place of non-attachment (and victimization). This non-attachment then allows freedom and healing energy to move through the ethers to reach all beings. Intention and acceptance play an important role. Such perspective frees the individual and allows one to learn from their mistakes or hardships. Life becomes a series of teaching moments...albeit some of those moments might feel insurmountable. Yet through forgiveness, all beings can move forward and bless their pasts. It is then, and only then that the person on the other end will receive the forgiveness, thus setting both persons free. Auntie Nahi invited me to lie on her table and proceeded to repeat over and over again, "I love you, I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you. I love you, I'm sorry, please



forgive me, thank you. I love you, I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you. I love you, I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you.

I began to feel weights being lifted from my body. Each phrase stripped off a layer of long held beliefs and resentments. Each phrase turned into a blessing for my precious life: the good, the bad, and the ugly. I was surrendering my control and accepting my path just as it was and is. Freedom began to emerge. At the end of the session, Auntie Nahi reached into her bag and pulled out a piece of coral. "Katherine, I am being asked to create a bridge between Hawaii and Sedona. Here is a precious piece of the island for you to take home and put on your altar." I was taken aback as I knew that ancient custom disallows the taking of any natural items from the island.



“It’s okay, the bridge will serve all those who come to see you in that the aloha will reach into their hearts and awaken their spirits. This path is a road less travelled, but it is a path to healing,” Nahi said.

RETURN TO LOVE

CHAPTER ELEVEN



Morning broke and I found myself embarking on a short trip to the island of Maui. The trip to Kauai had been transformative and empowering. Three of my friends returned home while I heeded the call of Ho'omana. "Mana" meaning life force and "Ho'o" meaning to make. I was in the process of discovering and aligning my lifeforce. To ancient Hawaiians this is called, "Huna." In Huna, there are 7 principles: The first is Ike (the world is as you perceive it), the second is Kala (there are no limits, just freedom), the third is Makia (energy flows where attention goes), the fourth is Manawa (now is the season and power), the fifth is Aloha (love and charity), the sixth is Mana (all power comes from within), and lastly is Pono (goodness and proper procedure).

The first step would be to visit an



acupuncturist that had been recommended along my journey. Joining me would be my friend Zia. The trip was a short one, up a winding driveway to an organic farm and a house overlooking the ocean. TJ, the acupuncturist, greeted me out front. Immediately he reached out and grabbed my hands, placing his thumbs on the pulse of my wrists. TJ muttered something under his breath, “anger,” he said. I was aghast to hear this utterance as I prided myself on how I NEVER embraced anger. In my mind, I questioned whether or not only one session of acupuncture could accomplish anything at all. With a confident smile, TJ lead Zia and me to a little hut located at the back of the property next to a small deep, dark, pond covered in Lily pads. I was instructed to lie down on a table. My feet were facing the pond (just outside the door). Above my head and to the right



there was a small open window. I could feel a faint breeze. TJ began to insert the acupuncture needles. Each needle was carefully placed (and stung a bit as he twisted each instrument into the flesh). I decided I was willing to bear the pain if indeed the flow of chi would help me release all. About 14 needles were inserted and an eye pad placed on my eyes, at which time TJ would turn his attention to Zia. “Just relax and allow yourself to drift to any zones calling to you,” said TJ with compassion. I drifted and became less aware of voices and activity in the room.

As I lay there, suddenly I felt a weight on my abdomen, like someone had placed a book upon me. “This is odd,” I said to myself, “I wonder why TJ would place a book on my stomach.” Yet, I had already determined that I would surrender into this treatment, so I relaxed once again.



However, then followed another book, and another, and another, until finally I lifted one corner of the eye pad to take a peek as to what was happening. To my surprise, there were no books and TJ was nowhere to be seen. I once again surrendered to the session, returning the eye pad to its respective place on my face. That's when it happened! The weight continued to grow until a huge upheaval of emotion burst forth. I could not hold it back. It was a lifetime of pain, perhaps many lifetimes of pain. More importantly it was **ANGER...** and I could not suppress it. It literally exploded from my body. I burst out in tears. The release was beyond what was humanly possible (or so I thought), and the only way I could bear it was to give it to the natural elements. As I wailed, there arose a breeze that traveled in through the



window, across my body, clearing and releasing the pain, out my feet and into the deep dark pond outside. When the session was over, I was so weak I could not walk. TJ and Zia supported me from both sides and walked me out into the sunshine and into the small organic garden where I was laid to rest and recover. Time passed ever so slowly, and at the same time, at the speed of light. I found myself with my body sprawled in the organic soil, dust to dust...in an hour I would emerge 20 pounds lighter, and 50 times brighter. This session had been life changing.

The next morning, I was called deep into a bamboo forest, the place I had been instructed to visit based on Auntie Nahi's directives. The road toward Hana was along the coast, green and full of narrow turns. Along the way, a road cut up to the right and twisted its way inland.



I parked and began to walk along a trail, over a bridge, and into the deep blue & green light of a dense bamboo forest. The path took me to a Buddhist healing center. The atmosphere was austere, quiet, peaceful, and secluded. I tapped on the door, contrite in spirit, and humbled at what I had already encountered. Slowly the door cracked open to reveal a woman who could have been anywhere from aged 50 to 80. Her face was filled with wisdom and compassion. I seemed to be immersed in a world where time no longer existed. Her smile revealed a few missing teeth, but the gleam in her eye spoke of youth and vitality. “Come on in my dear,” she cooed like a bird. “Welcome to our healing center.” I was ushered to small room where I was instructed to lie down. I would experience a biofeedback session. Small electrodes were attached to my body while



the other end of the nods was attached to a computer. “This will be interesting,” I thought. And indeed, the interest took me on a journey where time held no relevance. I disappeared into a void. At first the darkness caused fear to arise, followed by curiosity, followed by a willingness to travel. I found myself in Lao Valley, a lush and wet jungle near Wailuku. I was inspired by the natural rock formation called the 'Lao Needle', where steep cliffs and rivers create a primordial cradle of natural bliss. This sacred land provided a place to lay upon the earth and release. Mist rolled about and the jungle became ever more vibrant and alive. I closed my eyes and let the earth carry my willing spirit to distant and magical places. All my senses were activated. Every drop of water dangling from leaf or limb seemed to take on a life of its own and through its



amplification became a lens whereby I could peer into the mystical power of the Universe. Through mysticism, one can experience God, spiritual truth, and ultimate reality. My intuition, a subjective point of view, began to activate. I felt a mystical connection as if it were an umbilical cord extending from my belly into the earth, and out through the other side, reaching far into the Cosmos. I heard Kaya whisper, “Step with humility, ease, and grace. Always recognize your intuitive ability to connect directly to the Divine. Trust that you are deserving and worthy. Access to spiritual truth is always available.”

Kaya’s words rang in my ears, yet I questioned the words, “spiritual truth.” What did it mean to gain spiritual truth? Is truth objective or subjective? During this reverie, I dove deep into the mystic. I



began to reach clarity that I was, at any given time, both absolutely alone in my experience, and yet absolutely one with all beings, all knowing, all embraced in love and Divine connection. This was the grand Dichotomy: living in the apparent contradiction and accepting it.

We are here to gain our own truth, we create relevance, we create meaning. This is the human condition. It is our duty and obligation for without it - a life without meaning, is a life not worth living. The powerful part is that as we are all an extension of each other, we can then share this information and help others create their meaning. This can also be the most destructive part because if we do not discover our own truth, and if we do not find a healthy and happy way to live, we will share our destructiveness and



dysfunction with others. Children are not always able to make the distinction. We owe it to our children to pass on a kind and loving connection and interaction with all that is.

In ancient Greece, there were two ways of acquiring knowledge: mythos and logos. Mythos is to reach an understanding through stories having significant truth or meaning. The power of mythos is to share a cultural perspective through fable, legend, or myth. Logos is the logical and rational analysis of phenomena in order to create meaning and understanding of the world around us. Basically, there are four avenues of knowing: intuition, art (symbolism), story, and logical analysis. I began to realize that one way was not superior to another and indeed all four avenues were needed to understand reality. We need to share our intuition with



others, we need to share our stories and artful creations with others, we need to use our minds to analyze data. If we lose touch with any one of the four ways of understanding, we will experience a deficient and degraded perspective on what is real. Our existence will not be whole, full, and rich. It will become a narrow point of view, a myopic way of moving through life.

My experience continued as I remained caressed by the wet jungle of Maui. Insights of my earlier years studying metaphysics with Dr. Janison rolled in like a looming storm that had been waiting to drench me. I considered the wisdom of the ancient Greeks. I was intrigued with the concept of Hubris. Having Hubris is having an exaggerated sense of self-worth. The Greeks considered too much Hubris to be a character flaw that would incur the wrath



of the gods. Overconfidence may lead one to overstep human limitations and may result in an experience in life that would bring humility back into balance. Facing our mortality is the first step in regaining a sense of humility. Everything that one is or one has will eventually be stripped away, thus leaving us vulnerable and naked - naked to the truth, the truth that all there is in the end is love. The Greeks recognized four types of love: Eros, Storge, Philia, and Agape. Eros is about romantic love, Storge is about child love, Philia is about family love, and Agape is about God's divine love and love toward all humanity. Then there is Philautia, or self-love. Without these, life becomes meaningless. These are the driving forces of the Universe to experience true happiness and satisfaction. Everything else is only surface level happiness...and will eventually fall



away. Love will constantly abide if one is a lover, that is, if one has the capacity to activate love. Each day is a renewed opportunity to love. Love in the past is remembered, and love in the future is hoped for, but love in the present is the fullness of life. Even if it requires a letting go and a forgiving. Below hurt, pain, grief, resentment, guilt, anger, and sadness, is LOVE. All these emotions beg for love to reside in their place. The deepest desire is love. Where we get stuck is the inability to let go and the attachment to the shadow side of the soul. It is through our connection with God that we melt and diffuse the shadow emotions. Our determination to “take the highest road” is all that is required to step once again into compassion and inner peace. All there is, is love. Love is all there is. All there is, is love. Love is all there is.



I felt a welling up in my chest, I felt a pulling toward consciousness. I opened my eyes and was shocked to discover that it was dark outside. Still on a table with electrodes attached to me, I realized that I had no clue as to how much time had passed while on the table. It felt like only a moment had passed, and at the same time it seemed that I had travelled a lifetime or two. I slowly sat up and disconnected the nodes from my body. Once off the table I sought out the kind Buddhist lady who had initially helped me to the table. “Hello, is anyone there?” I called out. A few minutes later the woman appeared with a pleasing smile on her lips.

“Sweet Katherine, you were on this table for over 8 hours. It’s dark outside. How are you feeling? What did you discover about yourself? Our computer software shows extreme anxiety, heart



rate, pulse, etc. when you arrived. Now your body seems to be in a place of calm relaxation. Where did you go?” she cooed.

I grinned and with complete surrender I answered her question, “I returned to love.”

THE TUMOR

CHAPTER TWELVE



The trek home from Hawaii was simple, a five-hour flight. Suspended in the air, I knew that something had occurred during my time in Hawaii that had forever changed me. I had learned some powerful and insightful wisdom that gave me a reason for living and an understanding of some fundamental concepts of the Universe that I could and would use to help others. I was finally gaining an understanding of my purpose and passion. Now all I needed to do was find a way to open the door to the next phase and to activate my gifts. The journey seemed long and full, little did I know that overcoming anxiety, depression, self-loathing, insecurity, was only the start. There were more challenging trials on the horizon.



Sitting at a coffee shop, I encountered a gentleman who carried what appeared to be a calm, humble energy. We struck up a conversation about the Meyers Briggs personality types. The gentleman introduced himself as Levi (short for Leviathan). “I am an INFJ,” he shared. “What are you”?

I was curious as to my personality type because I had never taken the test. Levi called up a website and I dove into the extensive quiz only to discover the I too was an INFJ. Both Levi and I were surprised and elated that we had this in common. What are the characteristics of INFJ? INFJs are harmony seekers, devoted helpers, and supportive companions. They believe in a moral code that puts people first and are always looking for a deeper meaning or purpose in life. They must see the greater good in a



plan or project to really get invested in it. But once they find it, they are innovative thinkers who focus on a better future. Only 2.3% of the population are INFJ. According to personalitypage.com this is what they have to say about this personality type:

INFJs are gentle, caring, complex and highly intuitive individuals. Artistic and creative, they live in a world of hidden meanings and possibilities. Only one percent of the population has an INFJ Personality Type, making it the most rare of all the types.

INFJs place great importance on having things orderly and systematic in their outer world. They put a lot of energy into identifying the best system for getting things done, and constantly define and re-define the priorities in their lives. On the other hand, INFJs operate within



themselves on an intuitive basis which is entirely spontaneous. They know things intuitively, without being able to pinpoint why, and without detailed knowledge of the subject at hand. They are usually right, and they usually know it. Consequently, INFJs put a tremendous amount of faith into their instincts and intuitions. This is something of a conflict between the inner and outer worlds, and may result in the INFJ not being as organized as other Judging types tend to be. Or we may see some signs of disarray in an otherwise orderly tendency, such as a consistently messy desk.

INFJs have uncanny insight into people and situations. They get "feelings" about things and intuitively understand them. As an extreme example, some INFJs report experiences of a psychic nature, such as getting strong feelings about there being a



problem with a loved one, and discovering later that they were in a car accident. This is the sort of thing that other types may scorn and scoff at, and the INFJ themselves does not really understand their intuition at a level which can be verbalized.

Consequently, most INFJs are protective of their inner selves, sharing only what they choose to share when they choose to share it. They are deep, complex individuals, who are quite private and typically difficult to understand. INFJs hold back part of themselves, and can be secretive.

But the INFJ is as genuinely warm as they are complex. INFJs hold a special place in the heart of people who they are close to, who are able to see their special gifts and depth of caring. INFJs are concerned for people's feelings, and try to be gentle to avoid hurting anyone. They



are very sensitive to conflict, and cannot tolerate it very well. Situations which are charged with conflict may drive the normally peaceful INFJ into a state of agitation or charged anger. They may tend to internalize conflict into their bodies, and experience health problems when under a lot of stress.

Having this personality type in common was the start of a relationship that began to bloom and flourish. Levi had encountered the Meyers Briggs at a retreat he had previously attended. I revealed that I had connected with a corporate retreat company while in Hawaii and had been trained in online sales. What a perfect time to launch a personal retreat company to serve the public and activate gifts and insights that had been gained along the way.



Levi had a business degree and enthusiastically agreed. Not everyone can “jump off the cliff” as I did and travel the world to gain insights and purge unwanted belief systems. Plus, both of us lived in Sedona, Arizona. This was the perfect place for a company all about self-growth, expansion of awareness, core values of the heart, love of self & humanity, and connection to the Divine. Levi was on board. That evening the two of us pulled out an old sketch pad and started to brainstorm. I believed that the word “Spirit” should be in the name. After all, the purpose was to empower all people to embrace their spiritual selves and develop a deeper relationship to the higher powers that be. But that road is not always easy, and insight cannot be gained without trials in life, i.e. suffering. Not to mention that one must have a desire to reach higher



states of consciousness. No one can give another that desire. It must come from within. This search for meaning is a “quest” and quests are not always easy...but definitely necessary.

And just like that, the business name “SpiritQuest Sedona Retreats” was born. “The journey will be a quest for Spirit.” A revolutionary company was birthed. This would be a place where people of all faiths, colors, and creeds gather to work on themselves in order to find the peace and happiness they desire. Both Levi and I were living true to our INFJ properties. We immediately got busy creating the website, sessions, protocol, and philosophy of the company. Things were falling into place at a comfortable pace.

Yet, underneath it all, I felt an uneasiness about something. Something seemed to be off in my body. I was



experiencing electrical jolts on my right side from the back of my spine (near the bra strap) around the ribs and ending near the diaphragm.

There was a nagging and extreme discomfort near T7 on my spine. The pain was increasing. I was also experiencing a range of symptoms such as brain fog, insomnia, fatigue, and neurological symptoms. Over the next couple of years, my health declined. At age 45, I wrote a will. I had embarked on the typical road of western medicine and found a system that was nothing but a run-around. Doctors threw antibiotics at me, and ran a few tests here, and a few tests there, which all turned up “normal.” I was finally told that it was “all in my head.” At that point, doctors referred me to a psychiatrist who (of course) prescribed anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic medicines.



I knew myself well enough to know that these medicines were just making the situation worse and had terrible side effects. Following my instincts, I had a hair test collected and it was determined that I was high in Mercury. I had over 14 amalgam fillings in my mouth. I also had a gold capped root canal that had been in my mouth since I was 22 years old. Every time I flossed near that tooth there was a rank smell. I had already been to a couple of root canal specialists who took special x-rays of that tooth. Each time I was told that the tooth looked good and to leave it alone. Yet, something kept telling me that that root canal was poisoning me.

Funny how western medicine often misses the mark. In order to afford the removal of 14 amalgam fillings and the pulling of my “perfect” poisonous root canal tooth, I headed to a holistic dentist in



Algodones, Mexico. These trips were long and tedious. But every time I doubted myself, I recalled a website where I saw images of mercury vapor emanating from teeth when rubbed with the eraser of a pencil, long after they had been removed from the patient's mouth. And due to my constant grinding of my teeth, it was clear that this may have been where the poisoning originated and that it must be dealt with. I was also aware that for 10 years I inhaled nose drops containing a preservative Thimerosal, which contains mercury. Yet, I knew that sometimes it may be worse to stir things up when it comes to removal. Removal can make some people very sick, especially if it isn't done correctly. Luckily, my dentist used a mouth dam and drilled using water (to avoid exposure to fumes). The process was extensive, long, hard, and overwhelming.



Regardless, I was determined to get my health back And I was making great progress. The last venture was extraction of my “perfect gold crown” which covered a root canal tooth. The day this occurred, I asked the dentist to save the tooth for me so I could see it. And indeed, what I discovered was ghastly and horrific! The tooth looked like a piece of charcoal; it was black with 3 corroded metal posts that were white on the tips where the posts had broken off. When I picked the tooth up for close examination, I took a whiff and was immediately sorry that I had done so as the tooth emitted a decaying and rotten odor. I was taken aback at the idea of housing a rotting tooth in my mouth for over 20 years. No wonder I was sick! Modern dentistry had failed me, these dentists were the ones who were responsible for the poison. They were the cause, and then they failed



to discover the “problem” due to their myopic view that what they were doing was in the best interest of their patients. Don’t get me wrong, I appreciate having teeth in my mouth which I can use to eat my food. And I understand that their practices at that time were truly believed to be the best choice for patients. Yet, thank goodness that dentistry is evolving, and amalgams are no longer being used, and root canals have a different process than in the early 80’s. Nevertheless, this experience taught me that in terms of our own bodies, we are our own best advocates and as Socrates said, “we must question everything.” Later in my life while dealing with my mom’s cancer, I would utilize this lesson in hopes of helping save my mother’s life. For now, I was on a mission to save my own life. The last step was to chelate with DMSA every 4 hours for two years.



Slowly, my health began to return. Yet, the pain near T7 on my spine continued to plague me. I decided that I needed a massage and was told that the massage therapist thought I had a rib out. It was recommended that I see a chiropractor. An appointment was made...but I had an intuition that I needed an X-Ray first. This was out of the ordinary considering that I had never received an X-Ray in my life. But the chiropractor agreed and soon a test was lined up. And that's when the sky came tumbling down. One month later, after the test, I got a call from my chiropractor telling me that he couldn't see me because I had an 8-centimeter tumor hanging off a nerve on my spine and it was pushing on my heart and lung. Eight centimeters is the size of a grapefruit! He told me to rush to the emergency room. However, the emergency room doctor lined



up an appointment with a neurologist for further examination. Within a few weeks, I found myself sitting in an office in Flagstaff, visiting a doctor who told me that this tumor had probably been growing of over 10 years (literally almost to the day of my divorce). In my mind it felt as if all the emotional pain and grief of losing my family unit and failing in my marriage had been encapsulated in this tumor. If my body had not contained it, I felt as if the grief and loss would have killed me. I asked the doctor's opinion on this and he simply looked me in the eyes and laughed. Feeling utterly dismissed, I listened as this doctor introduced me to a Thoracic surgeon. Both the surgeon and the neurologist were VERY excited as this would be the first such case they had ever encountered. I would be their guineapig! The plan was to cut me from the back of



my ribcage, around the right side, all the way to the front where they would cut one of the two main muscle groups, remove a rib, collapse the lung, and dive in to cut the tumor off the spine. They explained that it was a dangerous operation and that there was risk with cutting on the spine. One wrong move and I could be paralyzed. This news was shocking to me and I literally ran to the door, drove straight home, and found Doctor Dickman at Barrows Neurological Center in Phoenix. Doctor Dickman had completed 9 such operations and taught other Thoracic surgeons how to do this operation. In contrast to the other doctors, Doctor Dickman explained that he would make three incisions near my ribs on my right side. He would collapse a lung, and insert a camera in one slit, a scalpel in the other, and a cauterizer in the third to stop bleeding. This sounded like a much better



option than what I had heard from the doctors in Flagstaff.

There was one catch, however, due to the location they would not be able to biopsy the tumor. And, the possibility existed that if it was cancerous, cutting it open would cause the cancer to spread. Was it worth the risk? This question haunted me, but in the end, I knew that I could not live with the pain and with the pressure on my heart, lung, and spine. It had to be removed, and I had to let go of the grief and loss. The tumor was the final remnant of the symptoms caused by the divorce. It was time to let go of everything. Thus, a date was set.

In the meantime, the retreat company was up and running. The office received a phone call from a woman who wanted to gift her husband with a retreat for his birthday. "He's a born-again Christian," she



said several times on the phone. The third time she said it, I started forming an opinion of the man in my mind. I thought to myself, “You know, these retreats are holistic and “out of the box” therefore it might not perfectly fit with the intentions and perspectives of this man.”

I prepared for a client who might be very rigid and who might not be open to different ways of looking at his life and the world. It was precisely this stereotype that caused me to be pleasantly surprised when I met Ken. Entering through the door was a mountain of a man, black with dreadlocks, yet kind-hearted as a child. Clearly, I could drop the stereotype I had formed. I was wrong and my interactions with him would change everything. The first session was out on the red rocks of Sedona. Ken and I ventured out under a vast sky to a breath-taking location. The



ceremony was about to begin. As usual, I started with a prayer. Ken and I joined hands, and I began to pray. Suddenly our hands started vibrating. At that moment, Ken began speaking his indigenous African language. I burst into tears. I had only revealed the news of my tumor to my children. And now all my fears and insecurities of not knowing whether it was benign or not came flowing forth.

“I know,” said Ken, “that’s why I came.”

I was shocked. “Wait a minute,” I exclaimed, “this retreat is for you, not me.”

“We’ll see about that,” Ken said with a soft smile.

Ken’s retreat unfolded as normal, having 3-4 sessions per day with powerful guides and transformative healers. On the third day, I took Ken to a private and exclusive spot, deep into a canyon. As we conversed, I realized that Ken was fresh to



Christ Consciousness and held a unique perspective. There was no dogma, there was no program, there was no literal interpretation. Ken was intrigued by the message “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” He was fresh to the concepts of forgiveness and surrender. He loved the verse John 4:16 “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ... God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” When Ken shared this information, I happened to be sitting in front of him and had not revealed where the tumor resided in my body. To my surprise, Ken reached down and placed one hand on my back, the other hand near my collar bone and began to pray over me once again. Everything started vibrating. I



thought to myself, “How in the world did he know where my tumor was?” For a moment, all faded away and the sense of time dissolved. Out in a red rock canyon, under a clear vast sky, surrounded by Juniper trees, water, Sycamore trees, deer, coyotes, mountain lions, ravens, and native ruins, sat two strangers whose paths were meant to cross: Ken weeping due to processing the death of his son who died on the day I was born, and me weeping as a release of processing the possibility of my own death. Spirit was moving through the ethers and into his hands, through my heart and lungs, and into the tumor itself...breaking down the last remnants of grief. Ken had transformed me. I had transformed Ken. Together we wept over life, and over death. We wept for the preciousness of birth, and the vulnerability of life.



Together we released control and accepted our paths just the way the path was unfolding. Together, and without saying a word, we felt the power of our own precious lives. We felt the power of loving. Ken and I sat out on that rock, under a desert sky and began to laugh. God's will shall be done, and so be it. Nothing would ever be the same from that moment forth. Ken's boy had transferred his life-force into me and my tumor would be found to be benign. Oh the power of prayer!

SHIFT TO EMPOWERMENT CHAPTER THIRTEEN



The business was growing, and so was my relationship with Levi...growing in the wrong direction. In 2014 Levi and I drifted apart and he decided to leave and sell the business to me. I found myself as a lone woman entrepreneur. Single handedly could I develop and grow my own company? Had my personal journey taught me enough to grow this company? Could I handle the shift and would I be strong enough, and smart enough to take on the responsibility of owning a business all my myself? I sat in deep contemplation. I prayed long and hard. I took the opportunity very seriously. And pleasantly the answers I discovered included a resounding YES! The Universe was calling me to step up and create the personal vision for a company whose



vision statement would be a driving force in my own life, and in the lives of others. The vision was one of empowerment. It was a mission to bring people to their own truth. It was a mission about helping people (most of whom were women) believe in themselves and embrace their own paths. It was a purpose to serve others and to hold the space where others could birth a new concept of themselves.

Most importantly I learned that “sanity” requires that we be of sound mind. It requires healthy thoughts that are logical and grounded. When we are swept into no man’s land through anxiety, we begin to approach the precipice to no return. It’s dangerous ground. Thus, my company developed a culture of appreciation and balanced living. Avoiding the dangerous void by doing the following:



1.	Notice when you are worrying and be kind and compassionate to yourself.
2.	Focus on what's in your control.
3.	Refocus on the present moment.
4.	Engage in activities that you find meaningful and enjoyable.
5.	Notice and limit your worry triggers.
6.	Practice gratitude.

As long as I kept this practice in place, I found that my belief in myself and my ability to manifest and contribute in a positive way began to multiply exponentially. Beauty begets beauty. Love begets love. Hope begets hope. I was learning that what I give is what I get. My goal was clear. Fill the world with love, peace, kindness, hope, compassion, and connection and my reality would be filled with the same. I would be in alignment with my purpose and passion more than ever before. I no longer was seeking the dream;



I was living it. Within 2 years, I grew the company to a million dollar venture!

I wanted to scream to the rooftops that I had found my connection and Source. I thought about Kaya and her travels with me. I reflected on her wisdom and her insights. My expanding awareness was met with glee as I heard her calling to me. Realizing that she was and never had been very far from my consciousness. In fact, the realization was that Kaya was and always had been my deepest voice, my higher self. Kaya was Katherine. Katherine was Kaya. The two gave birth to a venture for self-healing. All I had to do was trust myself. The name of the company was SpiritQuest Sedona Retreats. But what was being offered to the world was so much more than a retreat. It was to facilitate the quest of another. To encourage others to move out



of the muck and into the Lotus.

We all know what the muck is but how many of us truly understand the symbology of the lotus? The lotus flower is a famous symbol in Hinduism. In general, lotus flowers represent spiritual enlightenment, growth, purity, and birth. Whereas Buddhist schools teach that each stage of the lotus flower's growth is significant to the paths of enlightenment. It's believed that when a lotus bud is fully opened, the person has been fully enlightened. When it's partially open with the center hidden, it means there is a possibility of enlightenment that is still beyond reach. When the bud is closed, it signifies the time before the person is enlightened. The mud in which the lotus plant's roots also has symbolic value in Buddhist teachings. It represents human life and its many imperfections as people yearn to become



free from their daily burdens.

The duality of life must embrace both the shadow side and the light. For balance and peace, we must have both the muck and the lotus. Indeed, the lotus is not fully appreciated without the muck. The human condition cannot be escaped. The quest for all human beings on the planet is one of overcoming adversity and finding the sacred connection within us. “Hallowed be thy name.” To hallow something is to regard it as holy, to keep it as sacred. A world without anything regarded as sacred is a world filled with emptiness: a world without hope. I began to realize that the first step was to regard myself as sacred, and then to be “enlightened” with the understanding that all beings, and all Nature, is sacred. Moreover, all the Universe is sacred. The immaculate self is born when one embraces the knowing that



the most merciful Divine Source is available to each and every one of us. As long as we embrace our personal quest to live the fullest potential that our lives offer us.

I smiled, contemplating that I had finally moved out the of muck and into the lotus.

