

SAMPLE PAGES

Embrace
Your
Divine Flow
Evolvements
for Healing

STORIES



"Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, movement therapists, artists, soul session teachers, and musician healers make a unique contribution to the literature of peace, love, and healing."—Mark Anthony, *JD Psychic Explorer*, author of *The Afterlife Frequency*

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EMBRACE YOUR DIVINE FLOW

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FOREWORD

THE POWER OF PARABLE

Elizabeth Rockenbach



OPENING PRAYER

We are free as Fire is free. We flow as Water flows.
Our bodies vibrate with the Earth and
we breathe the same sacred Air.
We are not bound by past experiences,
our habitual patterns, or an unknown future.
We walk together, free of all that would limit us.
We were created unbound and live in
a state of pure spiritual freedom.
The abundance of Spirit flows in and through us.
We are channels for self-love,
self-acceptance, and self-forgiveness.
This is the Power of Parable
The Power of Evolvment.

PARABLE IS A RIVER flowing beneath our human experience. Making sense of the world through parables, or ‘evolvments’, is as timeless as human language. These story evolvments are rooted in oral traditions, the written word, hand gestures and facial expressions, movement, and visual representations. They explore different ways humans make meaning in our lives across generations. Some authors work through creation stories, while others tell tales of our demise. Scaffolding these written pieces are the gorgeous and expressive paintings of Helena Hadala.

Embrace Your Divine Flow is more than a book of powerful stories and pictures. The authors and editors have created exercises so that the reader may apply the lessons in their own lives. It is through lived experience that we connect ourselves to community, art, and spirituality. A multitude of approaches are represented here including Mindfulness, emotional exploration through the senses, Buddhist *Chod* practice of overcoming the ego, storytelling, prayers of gratitude, poetry, visual art, sound and vibrational healing.

I felt called to write this foreword because of an energetic connection to the title and intention of the work *Embrace Your Divine Flow*. The opportunity arose at a time when I was making another big change in my life, having relocated to a small remote town in New Mexico, and it had everything to do with Divine flow!

My ancestors were farmers, but I had never been on an actual farm until I took an apprenticeship on a market vegetable farm as a young adult. It was the ideal place for me to put my hands in the earth and watch as seeds sprouted into plants, and plants bore fruit. After a few years of intensive physical labour my back became unable to support me in this work any longer. I turned to natural ways to heal my spine. Thus began the journey I have been on for twenty years of healing the mind and body.

I studied energy healing at the Barbara Brennan School of Healing. The school's founder, and my brilliant teacher, Barbara Brennan, developed a healing science that supports us as human beings to heal our emotional and spiritual wounds and to manifest the life that we want. Barbara Brennan was a scientist as well as a mystic. She grounded her studies of the human energy field with her background in physics and believed that in unlocking our emotional wounds, we would find our greatest gifts.

I opened to the reality that all physical disease is a manifestation of a complex matrix of our emotions, thoughts and beliefs, experiences, and relationship to the whole universe and all its elements. My physical injuries healed. I connect to these following evolvment parables and exercises because the artist and authors

not only accept this truth of our Divine nature, but also offer a range of ways to work with this kind of practical magic.

Eventually, I began to feel the call of nature again. I needed to get out of the city and firmly replant myself on the earth. Divine guidance led me to an internet search of a tiny town just outside the vast magnificent Gila Wilderness. Here I found the most unusual posting. Instead of the typical list of square footage, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and other amenities, this post was written in a narrative format. It told of magic, fairies, of a creek that flows among a high desert terrain, and a charming little house that sits among the sunflowers.

I spoke to my niece, who, at the time, was spending long afternoons with me. “This is my house!” I showed her the beauty that was calling to me, and from that moment on, I referred to it only as “My Sunflower Home.” Two years later, I am living here, in my sunflower house amongst the mountains and juniper.



I FIND A LOT OF RESONANCE with Rich Thérroux’s “Let the World Catch Up” where the narrator has a knack for making wishes come true. In his story he sees through pictures, as the wish granters do not speak, but they do see. As long as the narrator believes what he is saying, it is so.

For me, there is immense healing through exploring and regulating my energy field. Much like Marty and Jake find in Lorene Shyba’s, “Aurora Borealis,” light and colour are essential elements in the healing process. Our auric fields contain all of the colours of the spectrum, and in this healing evolvment, the siblings find their essential nature in the Aurora Borealis with the support of a wise woman healer and guide.

The human experience is at times painful, difficult to understand, and baffling. A saving grace in these moments of suffering is the surrender to a Divine flow. We long to connect to a greater force than ourselves, whether that be Love, community, the elements, God, *Newet’sine*, Source, or Nature. We discover ourselves

and an elegant meaning to life through Art and Expression. These authors have poured their understanding of the Force of their art into their stories that they have shared here.

Our own personal timelines may seem haphazard as we live our lives moment to moment. Revelations come, we live through their magic, and we return time and again to a feeling that living can put us in real danger. As in Mar'ce Merrell's "Water Calls, Water Holds," sometimes we have to enter an unsteady vessel and live through the fear with only our brave hearts to sustain us. She guides us through her practice of 'feeding your demons', employing stillness, imagination, sketching, and movement to overcome the ego.

All healing is embodied. Our human vessels give us the ability to evolve and transform. Sensation and the present moment are keystones to Valerie Campbell's "Moving her Poetic Body," where breath and the spiritual tradition of *Anam Cara* moves the narrator's body and pen to create poetry. In her workshop exercises, Campbell explores the unconscious through authentic movement and a writing practice.

Another balm for our soul in challenging times are sacred places. Yellow Horn and Yakeleya explore this terrain in their stories. Iikiinayoonaa Marlene Yellow Horn offers us a traditional Napii story in "Sacred Places" that is part of the Blackfoot creation myth. She discovers the only real quality that matters in a tale is Truth. Community unites us.

Raymond Yakeleya's "The Mountain, the Wind, and the Wildflowers," takes us on a trek to find the essence of *Newet'sine* the Creator in nature that is all around us—in the places that we cannot see, like the wind and beauty that is knowable to the eye, such as beautiful wildflowers.

As healing has become a way of being in my life, I have aligned with a group of the most open-hearted and open-minded people I have known. We have formed Universal Healing, an online forum for group energy healing, from a spiritual download that a dear colleague had in service of global healing. We experience the joy of making healing accessible to everyone, anywhere on the

planet. A revelation we have with each healing is sacred alignment and community. It feels like, as a soloist, I have become a member of a divine orchestra. Instead of working alone, we join in concert with each other and with our clients and their spiritual support, such as ancestors and divine guides. There are no bounds to this venture, and I am ever grateful to live at this edge of evolving.

Group work allows the healing field to be magnified by the collective energy. It is why monks meditate together. This is, in my opinion, what brought these authors and artist together in this Divine embrace awaiting you. Individuals long for community to express and hold the power of Life and Story. Here, the invitation to you is to practice the wisdom that is called forth through story. Please join with us to embrace the evolution of humanity.

Spirit has guided me back to the earth, to my own little place in the mountains of New Mexico, where I fell in love with rainbows, sublime skies, and the alluring smell of juniper. Here, I have fertile land around me to inspire my dream of healing our planet.

We hope these stories and exercises guide you to ask these questions. What is your relationship to Nature? What is your Art? What is your unique Medicine? How does the Divine flow through you?

— *Elizabeth Rockenbach*
Co-Founder Universal-Healing.org

Elizabeth facilitates a client's intrinsic and natural ability to heal body, mind, and spirit. She works one on one, in group settings, workshops, classes, and through writing. In addition to her niece, Leah, mentioned in this foreword, Elizabeth adores her nephew Eli, especially while playing Mad Libs together. She recalls often his wisdom, when, at an early age he asked: "How will you know how someone feels unless you ask them?"

CONFLUENCE

Images and Haiku by

Helena Hadala RCA



TRANSFORMATION

CONFLUENCE

Images and Haiku by

Helena Hadala RCA

THE 18 SELECTED IMAGES illustrated in this book are part of a larger body of work entitled *Confluence*. This series, comprised of 36 visual images, was inspired by the poetry of Taoist author Deng Ming-Dao and was originally created for our collaborative, interdisciplinary project *Walking River*. For my contribution to *Walking River*, I created visual images to convey the connotation of each poem in an intuitive manner. My objective was to visually reflect rather than describe the meaning of the words, allowing for contemplation of the poetry to become visible and take on tangible form.

Deng Ming-Dao writes in his book *Everyday Tao*, “Tao is everywhere. It is literally the movement of all life. It is endless and flows in all directions. Since Tao is the total ongoing process of the universe, it makes sense to go along with it. If we swim in a river, we should make use of its current.”

The images reflect the Taoist view that we are all following a spiritual path. They were initially created in my studio using mixed media elements such as gouache, watercolour, and crayon and then integrated with an image-editing program.

In *Embrace Your Divine Flow*, the Confluence images provide a supplementary pictorial component to the book. To continue with the notion of confluence, I have included my poetic response to complement each image in the form of haiku. The editors have thematically paired the images with the authors’ stories to complement each of the chapters.

Hidden threads unravel
Circles around coalesce
The dance goes on

Outside looking in
Waiting by the water's edge
Balanced counterpoise



PATIENCE



PASSAGE

Outside boundaries
A restful sanctuary
All illusions fade

Whispers of silence
Unravel mysteries
Listen with intent



BOUNDARIES



DELIGHT

ONE

WATER CALLS, WATER HOLDS

Mar'ce Merrell



*Water calls
three beings in an open vessel,
In and on and through an unknown expanse.
Water holds.*

TARA STEPS into the bow of the canoe: First, paddle across the gunnels, left foot in, weight shift left, butt towards seat. Second, right foot up and over and down. Third, butt in seat, brace paddle.

Despite Tara's careful movement and Sean steadying the stern, the canoe shuffles side-to-side. Unstable. Athena, the black retriever puppy jumps into her spot in the middle. Wobbling canoe, now, like a pendulum striking another pendulum.

"Athena, sit. Sit. Sit. Sit." Sean commands.

Athena senses dismay in the rain, the wind gusts, the thunder, and in Tara's fear. Tara, eyes closed, imagines a sunny sky calm day. She focuses her thoughts. *I am okay. We are okay. We are okay. I am okay.*

She opens her eyes to this: grey skies, falling rain, lightning striking in the west. Her gut numbs, hands tingle and sweat, her heart races. The canoe slips and shifts. She feels Sean step into the stern. Feels the push of his paddle moving them away from shore. She lifts her paddle into the air, extends her bottom hand,

drops the blade in the water, pushes with her top hand, guides the paddle back and back, until the motion is complete, turns her hand to lessen the resistance of the exit, swings the paddle back to starting position. A few long strokes flow them into deeper water, choppiest water. Southeasterly gusts hit them from the side.

They paddle away from Portage des Morts.



Waves rise higher and higher, crest, and break into white-caps. Crashing waves wake all the slumbering beings below: fish, plant, sand, rock. And a presence notices. Remembers. Needs to have a conversation.

The presence gathers itself from the bottom of the lake, from the essence of all the waking beings.

This gathering of aliveness slides through gaps in the Precambrian rocks, the oldest exposed rocks on the planet, in residence since before the dinosaurs, before the first bushes or trees, before the first one-celled creatures.

The presence gathers itself. Billions and billions of spirits unite, unseen.



Tara wants to be brave.

She remembers her nightmares — so many nights of panic, of feeling the canoe flipping. She remembers the feeling of tossing in waves of restlessness, of falling out of bed, of waking up drenched in sweat, of gasping for breath. Still in the space between dream-time and now-time, curled up in fetal position on the floor beside the bed, she remembers the push and pull of water, the crash, the sound of something breaking. She remembers the flailing, the sucking in of deep breath. The submersion. Again. Again. These words come to her: You cannot save anyone.

She doesn't believe these words.

She has saved many people. Kindness saves. She is kind. For this reason, she doesn't tell Sean about her nightmares. She tells him about her dreams of her mother comforting her.

"Do you think the dead can talk to you?" She asks Sean.

His answer: "I think your mind can create whatever it needs in order to survive."

Tara's never considered her nightmares might be preparing her for what is to come. Until today.



"Fear is the mind-killer," Sean quotes from *Dune* when they paddle choppy water, "Fear is that little-death that brings total obliteration." Sean isn't afraid of the canoe tipping. He secretly fears his own death.

Sean carries his secrets deep. Given up by his mother a few months after he was born, most of his relationships end with him realizing he's trapped someone into a corner and he has to walk away to let them free. Only one has ended badly enough to haunt him.

His adopted mother died. He doesn't remember how, exactly, but he remembers his frustration, his use of force on a dark night, in a rented cottage far away from observers. Everyone blames her death on a man who'd been passing through. A man who disappeared.

After his adopted mother's death, the high school counselor referred Sean to a psychiatrist to help him with poor concentration in his classes, declining attendance. The counsellor, a woman who looked and talked like his mother (kindly and slowly and with eyes that did not look away), told him the psychiatrist would help him bridge the gap between the life he had with his mother and the life he would now have. "A promising life." The woman fingered a gold necklace with linked letters forming the phrase: *I choose joy*.

“Wounds,” the psychiatrist advised him, “must be allowed to heal. In order to heal, you must be willing to be vulnerable, to let your wounds be seen.”

“I just need some drugs to help me sleep,” Sean told the man with the goatee and the round glasses and piercing eyes. Since then, he’s spent most of his life in the bush, on a ski slope, in a canoe. His few friends, so in awe of his skill in keeping himself and everyone else alive, accept his gruffness.

The secret underneath all the secrets, the wound at the bottom of the well?

Sean hoped only for one thing. To be loved. Divinely. Completely.



Tara and Sean met at a wedding. Friends of friends invited them. A summer night under the glow of Orion and the haze of the Milky Way, the air stood still, gathered heat with each slow song, each crooned ballad.

The two of them stuck to opposite sides of the dance floor until the DJ played “Dancing With Myself” by Billy Idol. Sean led the way. The sole dancer, he sprung up and down, pogo stick-style, waving his arms, flinging his hair, calling in the wind.

As the breeze grew, Tara felt herself being sucked into a vortex of twirl and boogie and the two of them created circles moving in opposite directions, a circle inside a circle, as if building a tornado. When they crashed into each other, they fell in a heap of laughter.

Later, they watched Orion cross the sky. He talked about risking his life in snow, water, trees, and air. She talked about heartbreak, forgiveness, and love. Both motherless, both wanting love to grow fast and forever, they moved in together, bought a canoe, and adopted a puppy.



Athena, the puppy named after a goddess of protection, understands love as face licking, dancing between her people, and falling asleep to sweet lullabies and soft caresses. In her dreams, she is a dark shadow plunging in water, slipping on ice, bounding over boulders, sluicing through sand, galloping in long grasses, circling out and back to find Tara and Sean waiting.

The team of three is on day five of their ten-day journey through the Canadian Shield, on rivers and through lakes they've never paddled. Their choice is neither usual nor unusual. Their motivation is to stay together, no matter the grief they've been facing.

Sean is lead navigator and protector. His mind focuses on assessing danger and planning ahead. Tara offers pinches of dried sage from the prairies of Calgary, here and there, as if to say, thank you, we will tread softly. Athena regards all moments as adventures. Her acute sensory abilities reveal a deep rumbling sound, the changing smells of the lake: more fishy, more earthy, more animal.

Athena lays her head down on the bottom of the canoe, closes her eyes, tries to block out the sounds, the smells, the wind. She remembers her life before birth, tucked in her mother's womb with eight others, moving with her mother's quick and slow movements, feeling her mother's heartbeat.



The gathering continues metres and metres below the lake's surface. Memories and memories of memories assemble in layers, begin to find a form. The gathering is answering the calls from Sean, from Tara, from Athena.



Tara nearly drowned at least four times in this life, the second time happened when she was nine. She remembers eyes wide

open, looking up through the water at the sky. She remembers gulping air before going down in big waves. She remembers being carried and jostled by water and being shoved, violently pushed, towards shore. (That time she was cut and bruised.) She remembers wondering how she survived and why. Now, she wonders what she is meant to do in this life. Why is she here?

Sean guards the gates of his memories with planning and assessment, with more and more movement. When he is still, he is vulnerable. When he is vulnerable, he, too, feels the mind-killer: fear. He practices his reaction time even as he paddles, shortening his strokes, switching sides to redirect the canoe. He wants Tara to focus on his skill at keeping them on course. All she has to do is paddle. And if they tip? Stay with the canoe. The canoe is their mother, Sean has told Tara over and over, we stay with the canoe, we protect the canoe. He's not worried about the waves. He's paddled much worse. Maybe they'll practice rescue scenarios later today. Maybe he'll show her how to use the knives he's attached to their life jackets, just in case they capsize, just in case they get tangled up in their ropes. All she needs is confident memories.

Athena, thirteen months old in human measurement of time, accumulates memories faster and faster each day she lives. When she smells rabbit poop, all the times she's loved the taste of rabbit poop arrive and converge in a singular ravenous moment. The taste of grass and root filtered through a bunny's belly? Undeniably exquisite. And swimming? She learned a few weeks ago her power to use her webbed feet, the sleek line of her body and tail to keep her afloat, the way her head and snout can remain above water. Land and water. To her they are equally joyous.



The wind surges and gusts. Waves on the water build higher, break and break in rapid and unexpected patterns.

“Woo-hoo!” Sean yells. “Time to kneel.”

Tara and Sean kneel on the bottom of the canoe and lean into the oncoming wind, attempt to narrow the gap between canoe and water. They can't hold the line though, with such inconsistent wind.

Athena whimpers. Fear from the front of the canoe, from Tara, feels like waves colliding. Sean steers them into the waves at a slight angle. The canoe crests, nose high in the air, and crashes into the gap between the waves. At the top of a wave, Tara's paddle can't reach for the next pool to push into, to lever them forward. At the bottom, the canoe takes on big splashes of water.

“Paddle, Tara! Paddle!” Sean shouts. His knees slip in the water pooling in the stern of the canoe. Gust after gust after gust assails them.

Now, he struggles to keep them on course. The trim of the canoe is off for the wind they're in. Tara's too small to keep the nose down. He thought she had enough experience to handle a big-ish crossing like this. How could he have misjudged her? What disaster will he have to get them out of? Why isn't she listening?

A memory rises of him in a plane years ago, a woman, nearly twice his weight seated in front of him. When she reclined her seat, her weight came at him with so much force it snapped his tray table. A full cup of hot coffee plunged into his lap. She didn't care, not in the least. He swallowed furious anger.

When the plane landed, he stood before she could, pulled his backpack from the stowage above her and 'accidentally' swung his heavy backpack into her head. He clocked her, like a punch to the face. Nearby passengers gasped but she didn't react. Instead, she looked at him. Grey, stormy, unyielding eyes. He wanted to punch her. He wanted her to look down. He wanted her to know his needs were important.

Now he is in a canoe, paddling in manageable waves and failing because he's trusted Tara when he shouldn't have. He

can't focus on what he's doing because she's a mess in the front of the canoe. Paddling sometimes, not paddling others.

"Tara! Listen! Listen to me!!" He yells. "Paddle!!"

Tara digs into the water. Digs and digs. Short strokes. She is nearly rowing with her paddle—full body forward, grab the water, pull it back. This is my nightmare. We're gonna tip. We are about to tip. We will tip.

Athena sits up, shifts from side to side in the canoe. The vessel slips dangerously in and out of Sean's control. Now, he yells at the puppy.

"Athena, sit! Sit! Lay down!"

Tara can't see what Sean sees. Sean can't see what Tara sees. Athena closes her eyes. The gathering beneath them is growing louder.



Old stories of large swimming creatures—lake monsters with heads the size of horses, sleek bodies, and strange tails arise around campfires all through northern Ontario. So much water, so many lakes, so many unknown creatures. Nearly thirty pictographs of canoe and moose, beaver, and bear remain on boulders high enough to reach while standing in a canoe.

Lives have changed on this water. Some have given everything away. Some have taken everything.

So many breaths. Each breath, a moment. Each moment, an event.

The presence is aware of all the breaths. The presence shapes into form based on the desire, the need. The shape of a moose head appears and along with it, the keen sense of hearing and smelling, and then the lake trout lends its skin and gills, for smooth passage, and the beaver's broad tail follows, a useful tool in battle or aid. The form grows with each breath of Tara, Sean, and Athena.



Tara struggles. Her shoulders burn. Switching sides offers only a few seconds of relief. Her wrists ache. The only way she can keep paddling is to breathe in, breathe out slow and hold the empty-air-in-her-lungs feeling until she can't any longer. Her neck is knotted so tight she's afraid she might rip the muscles if she turns to look at Sean behind her. Her eyes half-close.

We're going to die. We're going to die.

She paddles hard. Slacks off. Paddles hard. Inside her mind, she experiences zero safety; the warning system is past yellow and amber. Red flashes cloud her vision. The canoe moves erratically with the uneven paddling.

"Paddle! Paddle! Paddle!"

She looks around. Theirs is the only canoe on the water.

Lightning flashes closer and closer.

Someone save us. Please save us.

In the nightmare she's had, over and over, she can't save anyone, not even herself.

"Tara, focus!" Sean yells. "Listen to me!"

"Athena, sit!"

"Paddle! Tara!"

"Athena, sit!"

His voice tells her they're in the worst trouble. Deep trouble. Now, the sound of him forcing Athena to sit twists in her gut. This is the kind of trouble you don't recover from. The kind you run from. The kind that dooms you.

Sean's thoughts and Tara's thoughts converge: *Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.*



It happens now. It happens now.

Tara feels the giving-up-feeling begin. She sets her paddle down across the gunnels, checks to make sure her life jacket is secure. She has emergency survival gear in the pockets, a knife attached to the front. The sky is dark with clouds. Thunder grum-

bles. Lightning flashes on the horizon. She squints. The white and red pine and the cedars bend with the wind, trying to hold on without breaking. The soundtrack of her mind quiets.

The water will be warm.

A rogue wave comes towards them from far down the lake. They both see the wave building, gathering, gathering, gathering. The wave races towards them. Time speeds up.

Riding on the top of the building wave, Tara notices antlers, a rack of moose antlers, attached to a massive moose head. A moose? A massive moose?

“Back paddle! Back paddle!” Sean yells.

She turns her head to try to understand what he means. Pain shoots from her right ear down into her shoulder. Sean reaches back with his paddle, stabs the water, pushes with all of his muscles to move the canoe back. Can he stop time? Can he avoid what is about to happen? His movements are all over the place. She’s never seen him this panicked. The face of a man who realizes...

Athena barks. Athena barks and barks.

Tara looks forward.

The moose head rises to the top of the wave in front of them. A tsunami wave. So poor is the vision of a moose that only when they are a few metres away can they see the ones they are about to clock with their massive antlers.

She holds her paddle in the air, level with the horizon, the universal sign for STOP. The lake monster (moose/lake trout/beaver) attempts to change direction, but its momentum carries it too fast, and its size is so immense. The water swells. Tara looks into one of the moose’s eyes and the moose jerks its head to look at her with the other eye.

Tara feels the monster’s breath in an arc of gentle warmth. She knows just before it’s too-late what they must do to avoid being sunk or squashed.

“Jump!” She yells. “Sean, Athena, jump!!!”

“Stay with the canoe!” Sean yells.

Athena jumps. Tara jumps.

Tara keeps her eyes open, inhales a full breath before she hits the water. The crash into the water is clean, but even with a life jacket on, she is pulled down and down.

She focuses her mind: Athena. Athena. Athena. She calls and calls with her mind. Sean. Sean. Sean.

The water is calm underneath the waves. And clear. She looks up. A massive shape creates a shadow above her.

She has a memory of her mother reaching into the water when she was drowning, her mother's hands cradling her neck, lifting her from the water. Her mother. Her mother. Her mother.

Now, small bubbles float from her nostrils during a slow exhale. Her lungs empty. In the gap of no-breath, she closes her eyes, allows her arms to open out wide as if she were a startled baby. She relaxes. Her right hand touches, something. She grips Athena's harness. They begin the journey upward.



“No!” Sean fights to stay with the canoe—tries to direct the nose to take the wave at an angle, but the wave moves suddenly, unexpectedly. The wave crashes down in the middle of the canoe, but it isn't just water that lands. No. A head and antlers of a moose crack the centre of the canoe. Sean falls forward, his head presses against an enormous nostril. When the lake monster inhales, it sucks in Sean's ear.

No way. No way am I going to die. No way.

With the propulsion of the lake monster's out breath, Sean reaches up and grabs on to one side of the moose's antlers, antlers spanning at least five metres—the entire length of the canoe. Words from memory come to him: *Fear is the mind-killer. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me.* He reaches for the knife attached to the outside of his life jacket and struggles to free it from the sheath.

The crack in the canoe gives way and the two halves separate. Soon he will be pulled under.

Sean's left arm grips the moose antler. His right hand holds the knife. He pulls and pulls to get himself closer to the moose's eye. A knife to the eye will change everything. Sean's will is so keen, so focused. His body is alive with the will to survive, every cell buzzes. His eye comes even with the lake monster. He feels the brush of long moose eyelashes against his cheek, smells the decomposition of billions of organisms. He pulls his right arm back, holds the knife in a stabbing position.

Words from memory come to him: *I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.*

Reflected in the moose's eye, he sees his own face, wide-eyed with fear and tense with anger, reflected in an iris of calm. I will turn the inner eye to see its path. He lets go of the knife, grabs one last breath, holds it.

The lake monster dives, dragging still-clinging Sean to the lake bottom.



The lake trout body brushes Tara and Athena, both of them submerged but rising towards the surface. The lake monster's beaver tail undulates underneath them, creates an upward flow, helps them along.

Tara surfaces first. Athena just after. Canoe parts float off in the distance. The food barrel bobs among the waves. The bright orange pack with the sleeping bags and tent inside rises and falls.



Pre-Cambrian rocks, the oldest rocks on the planet, wait in a circle in the bottom of the lake.

Sean holds his breath as he falls. He holds on, too, to a story of Tara's hand reaching his, of Athena's body swimming close enough he can grab her harness and she can pull him to the surface. He calls without words.

Tara. Tara. Athena. Athena.



Sean remembers the day they picked Athena up from a farm in Saskatchewan, took her from her mother and her siblings, the kind family who cared for her, the only family she'd known.

Athena sat on Tara's lap in the passenger seat while Sean drove with one hand resting on the puppy's soft black fur and the other on the steering wheel.

"We love you, Athena. We're going to take care of you," Tara said, laying her hand on top of Sean's. He startled at the current of electricity through his skin. "We love you, Athena. We're going to take care of you."

They arrived home after midnight. Sean pulled out the sleeping bags and pillows and lay down with Tara on the living room floor while Athena walked, leapt, stumbled, and wriggled over them, through her new world. She licked both their faces, and they laughed and giggled. More. More. More.

"She's kissing us. She loves us." Tara's smile was euphoria, the best drug Sean had ever done.

I did this. I said yes to Tara. I said yes to Athena.

When Athena falls asleep between them, her nose in the space between their faces, Sean lifts himself up on one elbow and stretches over her to kiss Tara.

"I love you," she says.

"I feel it." He surprises himself with his honesty. He is close to saying: *I love you, too*. The electricity feeling grows and grows.

Soon, Tara is asleep, too, but he stays up, watches his girls fall asleep. He rests his hand half on Athena, half on Tara. Each breath deepens the current inside him, each moment lengthens with peace. His sleep, when it comes, is glorious.

His memory releases him. He lets go.

His falling stops. His floating begins.



Tara bobs in her life jacket. She leans forward, tries to see into the water, but she is light and the floatation in her jacket is strong. She's holding onto the floating canoe pack with one hand, Athena with the other. They scan the horizon. No lake monster.

She needs to focus. Let fear pass through.

She breathes in deep and lets out a long exhale. Three times. Her legs relax. Her feet dangle. Then, she feels the pull, a gentle tug, the calling of the Pre-Cambrian Rocks. She breathes slow and steady. The wind dies down. The sun comes out.

Sean isn't floating. He isn't waving from the water or the shore. Athena swims wide circles around Tara, plunges her head into the water, comes up for a breath, swims circles again.

So much is uncertain, but in the light, now, and with the wind gone, so much seems possible, too.

How much time do you have before you die?

Tara unzips her life jacket and begins to sink. She spreads her arms in wide circles. Kicks slowly.

You cannot save anyone.

The one thing she learned in swimming lessons, the one thing she did better and longer than any other student was treading water.

You must honour every being.

"Athena, I'm going to find Sean."

Tara attaches her life jacket to the canoe pack.

She dives down to find Sean.



Sean's body floats in between the surface and the bottom of the lake. He perceives shadows above and darkness below his body, though his chin touches his chest. His limbs hang limp. His feet and hands and lips buzz; all of the cells vibrate against each other with the last of his breath.

It's pleasant at first, knowing what he knows, feeling what he feels and, then, beautiful. He has mattered. He has been matter.

Sean! Sean!

He hears Tara's voice.

He has a choice. He can see his jelly-fish hanging body. What strong arms and legs. What incredible definition in his jaw. He laughs. What a great head of hair. He remembers his adopted mother. How she loved his hair. How she loved him. He found nature after her death. He found Tara after nature. And, now, finally, he's found himself. How much he's missed.

How much he didn't realize. Incredible Tara. Look at her. Who she is. Who she might become. Look at her. A fierce searching face.

He feels love. Now, all of her love. And, his.

He can go back. He can call out to her. He's been so lucky.

His whole life has happened for this one moment. A monster, transformed. No fear.

Thank you, Tara. Thank you.

He feels the last of his cells vibrate, the particles of who he has been begin to merge with the water, sink down towards the ancient ones, the rocks below. His body begins to float up.



Athena finds Sean's body first. Tara helps swim him to shore.

Back home, grief overtakes their lives. Athena sleeps next to Tara, her front paws hugging her and her licking tongue kissing her when she wakes from a nightmare of a lake monster. During

the day, Tara draws moose/trout/beaver figures on scraps of paper. She writes letters to Sean, asks for his help to know what to do now.

She begins to remember his laughter more vividly. Her drawings of lake monsters become popular among her friends. She creates a mural of a moose/trout/beaver on her garage door. A local magazine wants to profile her as an artist. Not long after, she takes Athena to a big lake. They rent a canoe and paddle out on a sunny day. They play.

They go out again the next week and the next, until one summer they paddle for weeks at a time in the wilderness through storm and sun, in honour of the direct experience of being alive.



Mar'ce Merrell is a writer. She is also a canoeist. Neither beginner nor expert, she survives long trips in the wilderness. She relies on her paddling partner when she's distracted by falling in love with the outside world. She jumped into Ghost Lake on Thanksgiving Day and swam to the shore. Her son challenged the whole family. Everyone agreed.

EXERCISES, CHAPTER ONE



1. **SURRENDER.** “Water Calls, Water Holds” is paired with the artwork *Surrender* by Helena Hadala, on page 19. In the story, Tara faces her fears and transforms. Be like Tara, face your fears. Challenge yourself by deliberately surrendering yourself into an uncomfortable situation, while remaining calm, controlled, quiet, focused, and confident. Start with two minutes then increase time as preferred. It can be any situation no matter how seemingly trivial or small. It can even be in the format of visualization. Enter with the ultimate power of protection to learn through dedication and discipline. Always choose a safe situation.

2. **MORTALITY.** The story reflects on life, death, and universal human experience of mortality. Tara finds a way to honour Sean’s memory by remembering his laugh. Have you lost someone you wish to honour? Can you remember their laugh? What other memory or gift did they give that you cherish?

3. **GATEWAYS.** A spiritual gateway is a way to access an enlightened sense of meaning, purpose, and connection. The author acknowledges a sacred space of life before birth, ‘tucked in a mother’s womb, feeling the mother’s heartbeat,’ albeit through an imagined experience of her canine companion. Do you hold a view of life before birth as a sacred gateway? How might it hold a special connection to the divine or higher consciousness?

For further study:

Chödrön, Pema. *How We Live Is How We Die*. Shambhala Publications, 2022.

Blackie, Sharon. *Foxfire, Wolfskin and Other Stories of Shapeshifting Women*. September Publishing, 2019.

TWO

SPIRITS OF THE DEPARTED

Antoine Mountain



FOR HIS *SAH BAH SHO*

Times like this, always feel like a mist

AT TIMES like this, the old Dene granny had to really watch what she was doing. Sharp skinning knife in hand, she busied herself before the real cold set in. She sat to the late fall fleshing the heavy, dark brown, almost black, beaver hide her man brought in.

Tired from being close to the cold water he lay, resting in back of their bush tent, sound asleep, making low, growling noises now and again, her hungry animal and protector.

She was practically sitting right outside on her entrance log. The wall tent kept the inside warm and cozy, but here only a thin blue tarp on supporting poles kept the winds from breezing right on in. Though she could plainly see frost on the poles, its plastic did help to reflect some good heat.

Agnes's real company was the wood stove right behind her, almost touching, throwing its steady spruce heat into her aching back. She never complained about it, but all the wood hauling just like a man, before she was married, made that part of her ache, even in rest.

In its way, this was the best part of her day, alone, the grandchildren just out of muffled earshot, out there in the trees somewhere, probably chasing squirrels.

The more of this bush tea she drank, a mix of brittle *ledi mah-gih*, Labrador tea, and Red Rose, the more it brought back memories of a lost daughter, Yah Sileh. When just a teen she was lost to them, to these high country streams they always returned to.

“Even a dream is better than nothing,” the old man always grumpily said. But leaving it at that was not enough for the aging matriarch. Sometimes the rest of their clan came along, but lately more to just help set up camp and leave some of the dogs for protection. There were any number of bears still roaming around for a good last bite of fish or whatever else left unattended.

The days were getting shorter, in a few months to only a few hours to do all of the day’s work. This world then turned to all black and white. Now ol’ Agnes’s uncertain thoughts turned to her own mother and grandmother. She had seen them countless times, doing exactly as she now did and showing her all the parts she really had to watch out for, to get the darkest of hides from what she got.

“I want his busy hands, even tired, to do all the things needing doing around here. Wood has to be cut for every day we are here, for the entire winter this time.”

She thought of the way he got up so early she hadn’t even settled down to her sewing yet. The only sign of her man having been there was a half-empty tin cup of his strong tea. He even liked it cold, too, like the coming winters.

“All this really brings him to life, and here I am feeling so sad!”

Over the hours she now spent simply working steadily towards his *sah bah sho*, winter beaver mitts, the old Dene woman found herself kind of caught between the generations.

True, her granddaughter would pick up these skills, in a few years, which was heartening. For now, the two youngsters came back to warm their hands by the fire and have some frozen bannock and a sip of her tea.

As an Elder, Agnes was set in her ways and liked to just keep to the basics. Another knife stood ready, stuck right into the wood.

This she thought of her anger over her daughter's untimely passing. An old lard-can spittoon caught whatever snuff she was fond of chewing, spitting out some unpleasant thoughts, now crowding in. On the far end of her log her favoured small axe, wedged, for use later, for the stretching frame.

"I'll have to ask the old man to do that when he gets up," she nodded. "But better take the axe in first, warm it up."

Brusque though her manner, the aging woman had been taught to keep her 'visitors' in mind. Spirits of the past and those 'other' presences always around these favoured of Place, found ways to make themselves felt, known. These ancestors wanted to make sure this was a camp with no idlers, ones who kept them in mind by tidying around.

This one now, was not far, practically to foot. Yah Sileh, her lost daughter's insistent self, first as fresh-fallen snow, then attached to camp support poles ... ever nearing ... even resting.

Now back to the last of this fleshing, Agnes moodily thought, Even though you try your best, Life has its way of cutting you short, taking something else away, leaving you like this. Yah Sileh would've been right here, sitting beside me on this entrance log, joking about who knows what!

Then again, there's these mitts to do. That old man is getting on in years, like me, but we still have to think ahead, what we need." With that she reached for her tea, putting her knife, file, hide and her petty worries away, to stretch later, on its sapling spruce beaver hide frame.

If a bear can do it, wander off with a full stomach
and just sleep this weather away,
so can I let the freezing mists put 'em
away someplace safe.

Soon I'll be to the fun part, she thought. Put some colours around the trim, fringes, and a long-woven yarn strings. Better use the brightest colours, so he won't lose 'em in the snow.

BETTER WITH A KISS

Each time we descend to a new low, someone comes along,
one way or another, to make it all better with a kiss.

In the wind, as time, passing, sometimes at rest, healing ...

Yet, looking back, as a hunter will, for future use,
it stays with you,
this imprinted dream.

Marked as beginning, in high mountain stream.

Water sprites, tricksters in our borrowed hats,
Rooted to such folly,
Tied, 'tween grinned purpose.

Pools along the way, feelings, lasting memories. Even those
deepest, devastation then, with time and Life, defined of face,
go to misting,

Joining
The Holy Ones.

This, to truly mark any sojourn, its presence awakened.
Others, even to the smallest of brooks, to the tea in your hands,
of song and calm relate.

As you sit to ponder, the tale goes on, this moving
spectacle, gathered of such depths.

Yearning,
Slowly ebbing on ...
To Mother Ocean.

Ever mindful
To Thee
Growing,

... for these stories
In the telling.

HIS SHIELD

LIKE A SKITTISH PONY in her father's herd, Autumn Leaf found herself jumping at every strange sound. *Gone are the days*, she thought, *when the world I knew was as solid as the ones before.*

Now on a high hill a little removed from her People's camp, she felt the weight of the war shield she carried, a wayward autumn breeze catching at its rounded shape, swinging it away from her tattered dress.

The dishevelled way her blowing hair kind of matted in patches told of her present state, that of mourning, crying for a lost someone.

Her man, Green Tree, was one of the more outstanding of the tribe's warriors, having earned every white tail feather now fluttering along the edges of the shield. In his honour, she carried it along on her daily wanderings in the late-fall hills, hoping for a sign from his departed Spirit for what to do with it.

Of course, she so wanted to keep it, or at least hand it off to someone new, but this was what her Uncle Bear Doctor instructed her to do: find some high-up place, quiet, for it to put at rest her departed man's Spirit.

As men would, little more was ever said about the shield itself, although it was certainly central to her man's life. So high was its value that two fine ponies were exchanged to the Pipe Carrier, who fashioned it from the tough buffalo hump hide passed along to him.

Yet she gladly accepted these duties, even wandering aimlessly alone in high country, where any enemy might spot her. *There is enough reckless bravery to go around amongst the warriors*, she thought, as her endless search continued. The irritating scratch of thistles and thorns on her legs reminded her of this present ordeal. The implement of war moved in her firm grip as a penitent but, yet, wayward son, seeming, yes, to set her free of his memory, but bonded to habit.

Things must be looking up too, she thought, for every once in a while, she would catch the distinct drift of scent from Sweetgrass, even here in the sandy highlands.

Her grandmother had told her that Mother Earth had her ways of reaching out from the Great Mystery to reassure her children in moments of doubt. Autumn Leaf really needed these reminders to somehow return her to the Circle. These last days of late summer felt as if she was already aged beyond her late twenties, like one of those elderlies who can't seem to know what to do, nor even where they are. Even a close relative got the blank look.

Just now, she really had to reach to remember the melodic flute tunes he would play for her, way back when they were both newly in love's playful hold.

Too, she hoped for even
a bit of female rain,
... a light water shawl
waiting for the sun

These parched hills felt as she did—all out of play.

She longed for the days her grandmother fondly recalled when as a young girl, she would just run and romp through fields of spring flowers, shouting and singing for joy!

Now her People wandered, as she now did, these foreign hills south of their northern home.

More, Autumn Leaf could better relate to the great but old stump she came upon—it once threw a majestic shade for all who sought its cooling comfort.

Just needing a bit of rest, she lazily flopped into its tired arms ...

Distant mountain peaks reached out
Beyond the miles it would take
To Know them

Now at least comforted by smaller memories, she recalled how her man would sometimes toss and turn in their night robes, even mumbling incoherently about a lightning-struck tree...

Could this omen have somehow led to his untimely death?

With Shield now rested between her and Tree, she could feel a growing hum in the small of her back, in a way so much like Drum, sounding in His memory—drumming the coming storm...

Now starting—faint rumblings,
like a deep Voice.
Thunder slowly, insistent,
made its way through valleys...
Of this, her tree
Catching its echo

Passed through aching ribs, to a waiting heart, into Voice, Autumn Leaf now hummed...

His Shield, she thought,
not only keeps, but sings,
Of things past,
yes,
But, too, to Be...

As if in answer, the winds from afar brought the light mists Autumn Leaf craved, even as a salve for her aches.

Now weary of bone, yet light in heart, she carefully placed the shield in the sheltered hold of the ancient stump, along with some mountain tobacco, gratefully turning to the arms of village and family hearth.

Too, the distinct sound near her light-footed pace, a sharp snap. Now fully out of the months-long mourning

reverie, this reminded her of the turtles she had heard of, to the North and West, and the thought:

This Land, so powerful it has now
Loosed its hold on me ...
Playful minnows of mist
Mingled with newer Life within



Antoine Mountain is from the Radelie Koe/Fort Good Hope area of the Dene Nation in Northwest Territories. He is a Dene artist, painter, and activist who focuses on depicting the Dene way of life, his love for the land, and the spiritualism of his faith. He is the author of From Bear Rock Mountain : The Life and Times of a Dene Residential School Survivor and Child of Morning Star: Embers of an Ancient Dawn.

EXERCISES, CHAPTER TWO



1. **PASSAGE.** “Spirits of the Departed” stories are paired with the artwork *Passage* by Helena Hadala, on page 9. Throughout life, there is a continual passage or ‘evolution’; ongoing growth, progress, and transformation over time. This implies change and attainment of knowledge through choices that come with free will. Have faith in your decided passage and free will. It requires open-mindedness and respect for others’ beliefs and practices, even those that are new to us. Within Antoine’s Dene Nation stories what are some traditions or beliefs that you are interested in discovering more about?

2. **DRUMMING.** Explore rhythms and timings of drumming, even if it is two pieces of wood or wooden spoons on another piece of wood. Keep the body quiet except the hands and arms. Focus on the striking material. Do not think of anything. This can gently or assertively allow you to release emotions and express yourself in a nonverbal way.

3. **RESTING, HEALING.** In the wind, as time passes, sometimes at rest, healing Sit still in nature as time passes, with eyes closed, listen. Then stand and be still—look and listen as time passes, with your focus resting on a different thing each time. This might be an animal, a plant, or a mountain, or an insect. Stand or sit and be still with a loved one, or loved animal, with closed eyes, then open your eyes. Listen, look, rest, and heal. Combine methods two minutes, once each day.

For further study:

Storm, Hyemeyohsts. *Seven Arrows*. Harper Perennial, 1991.

Matthiessen, Peter. *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. Penguin Books, 1992.

THREE

NENET'S BROKEN HEART
AND HOW IT WAS HEALED

Islene Runningdeer



A PRAYER FOR SAMHAIN

*I pray with my grief, with my sorrow, with my heart
shattered open into a million fragments, as if the first
primordial burst of creation is still reverberating inside.*

—Seren Swannesha Bertrand

IT IS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. Nenet is asleep having fitful dreams, when the messenger raps heavily on the door. “Nenet, Nenet, wake up! Hanon’s baby is coming. The women are gathering. We must hurry!”

She knows she must move and respond, but her body is sluggish. She forces herself to come to consciousness. It is her job, and life goes on.

It is 1990 BCE, Dendera, Egypt. Nenet is 23 years old, a Shemayet Musician Healer and Singer. She and her swnw physician father care for the sick, and pregnant, and dying in their community. She loves her work, singing and praying at the bedsides of her beloved neighbours and others. But for weeks now, her heart has not been in it.

Her heart is somewhere else, hiding in a dark cave, full of heavy grief with the recent death of her Ama, the grandmother

who raised her—the dear woman who had stepped in closer, after Nenet’s mother died in childbirth, when Nenet was but a small child. Ama filled her heart with so much love, so much strength; her mind with so much knowledge. And now, Nenet’s heart, her centre, feels empty and heavy beyond repair.

Nenet’s ministrations to the sick are weaker now, without fervent colour and power, as they once were. She has lost her desire to eat, walks about as though in a dream, no longer senses the beautiful things around her which used to give her pleasure. At the bedsides of her patients, she loses her concentration, struggles to breathe and sing, even trembles while she shakes the sistrum. “What am I to do?” She worries and wonders. “I feel as if I’ve died with Ama. Oh, goddesses of life and health and strength, please send help. I am in despair.”

In a dark cloud of sorrow, she rises, dons her warmest linen cloak and sandals, and heads out into the chilly night with her sistrum and harp to do her duty. The way is as dark as her own heaviness, a sliver of a new crescent moon barely lighting her way. She raises her torch with one arm, carrying her instruments in a satchel made of woven flax with the other, carefully watching her swift footing on the cobbled streets. As she nears Hanon’s small house, the light brightens ahead, with oil lamps in all the windows, as all are awake inside and busy helping the young mother bring her child into the world.

Suddenly, like a flash, a creature nearly trips her as it darts across her path, makes a sharp turn and follows her to the doorstep. In her rush to get to Hanon, she barely notices that it is a black cat. She is annoyed by being thrown off balance, but thinks, “Perhaps I will need the spirit of a cat to help me get through this night.” As she closes the door behind her, Black Cat sits outside by the threshold, taking the pose of a patient sentinel. The cat is nearly invisible in the dark night. But, there is a shimmering presence about her that glows. She is serene, with eyes alert, as the hours pass. Nothing will make her move from her post.

In her hurry to get to the task at hand, Nenet did not yet realize that special help had just come her way. Nenet's people believe that cats embody the divine spirits of gods and goddesses they revere. They bring practical protection to a household as hunters of dangerous prey, snakes, rats, and scorpions. As well, they offer other protection and aids related to illness, both physical and emotional. She had prayed to the gods for help, and finally it was delivered. The magic of Black Cat had just appeared.



Hours later, just as the sun was rising above the far desert horizon and after Hanon's infant was safely delivered into the world, Nenet packs her instruments and steps out onto the street. Black Cat is still quietly waiting by the threshold and meows in greeting. Tired from the night's work, Nenet nods in her direction and heads home. Black Cat follows her all the way, and it is only then that Nenet gently shoos her away and tells her to go home. "Your keeper must be wondering where you are," she says. Nenet closes the door behind her, drops her cloak and bag to the floor, steps out of her sandals, and sleeps. She dreams of Ama.

Ama appears as her younger, healthy self—the woman Nenet remembers when she was a small child. Her sweet, benevolent smile and outstretched arms express the great love she feels for Nenet. When Ama speaks, it is only in vibrating tones, but somehow the meaning is clear. "Have patience, my child," she conveys, "For help is at your doorstep. I am well in my new soulful state, and you will be well again soon too. I will always and forever be with you, my dear one. Look for the signs."

Nenet wakes the next morning, not quite remembering her dream, but sensing the energy about her has shifted. Black Cat again appears while Nenet is on her healing rounds. "Hello, Black Cat. It's nice to see you again," says Nenet. Once more, the cat follows her to her patient's home and waits steadfastly for Nenet to reappear. She again follows her home, asking to be let in. But

Nenet says, “Go home, Black Cat, someone is waiting for you there.”

For three more days, Nenet and this mysterious creature have the same encounter. When Black Cat meows more boldly to be let into Nenet’s house, she is finally allowed entrance. It dawns on Nenet that this cat may indeed be an important sign, sent to her from the benevolent goddesses—a friendly companion whose direction she should follow. A foggy memory of Ama telling her to look for the signs crosses her mind.

For that brief moment, she recognizes that perhaps an iota of her power remains, if she is able to see a sign placed in her path. She hopes so. This is the first time since Ama left her that Nenet has hoped for anything.

After cat and woman are well fed and watered, they both head for bed, together. In her loneliness, which often rises in the silence of the night, Nenet gladly allows the cat to snuggle close to her and lay part of her body on her breast. As she is thinking about Ama and how she always kissed her goodnight, Black Cat begins to purr. Loudly. Continuously. Unceasingly. The warm vibration of the animal is so soothing that Nenet soon falls asleep and dreams again of her grandmother. In vibrating tones, Ama assures Nenet, “Let Black Cat soothe your aching heart. My own spirit will abide as the cat’s spirit for a time of deep healing. Know that I will be at your side as you sleep each night, with the purring sounds of Black Cat injecting your wounded heart with new love, new strength.”



And so it went on, the nightly ministrations of Ama, working in tandem with the sounds of Black Cat. Each night, Nenet retired to her simple bed, a wooden frame set low to the ground upon which spanned a reed- and straw-filled mat. As she lowered her head to the headrest, Black Cat gently hopped to her side. As they both settled in for the night, Nenet stretched out on her

back. Like a well orchestrated ritual, the cat's paws gently and firmly massaged various points on Nenet's torso, all the while circling to mark a comfortable resting place. The creature then lowered herself, pressing her warm body and soft fur against Nenet's chest, followed by the easy, deliberate, and intoxicating vibrations of a deep purr. Before long, their breathing rhythms matched; cat and woman became one. Healing energy flowed into Nenet's chest cavity and heart: quieting, warming, comforting and strengthening. Eyelids heavy, her body's limbs surrendering heavily and willingly into the mat, her breath's *ritardando*, all led her into a blissful peace. The tone and pitch of Black Cat's purr filled her inner ear, and Nenet opened her mouth releasing her own purring sound. She toned with the cat in unison, they interwove their voices, and then Nenet broke away on her own chant:

AAA ... EEE ... III ... OOO ... UUU ...

These are the sacred syllables of power. Black Cat maintains her purring drone, supporting the rising and falling of Nenet's sweet voice. Neither cat nor woman is aware of this happening, their consciousnesses floating through sleep. Healing occurs. Each night, for many, many nights, this ritual of deep healing is reenacted.



For twelve moons, Black Cat and the spirit of Ama follow Nenet as she goes about her days. The citizens of Dendera have become accustomed to seeing this Shemayet walking the streets, closely followed by a sleek Black Cat never more than a footfall away. Wherever Cat is sitting sentinel at a front door, passersby know that Nenet is inside ministering to someone who needs her special help. Father swnw enjoys having the cat on their rounds, and then later on at home, realizing that

she provides companionship for a beloved daughter who has suffered a great loss. Nenet's nightly chant, as the household sleeps, is lovely beyond description. He also sees that Nenet seems to be coming out of her despair, is engaging more with her younger sister, sometimes even playing with her and laughing. He is so relieved.

As they work together with patients, he smiles as Nenet's clear strong voice inserts itself more and more into their ministrations. And of course he sees it in the improving spirits and bodies of those who receive her blessed music and sound. The goddesses have surely answered his prayers for help, he thinks. Little does he know that it is Ama, working through Black Cat's spirit, who has bolstered this miraculous healing for Nenet. That special knowledge is only for Nenet herself, who gives great thanks every day for the return of her powers and the love of her grandmother.

Early one morning, Nenet wakes to the early light and shrill cry of a falcon, perched on the wall just outside her window. Never has the god Horus presented himself so closely to her, and she acknowledges it as a powerful sign. She recalls her many dreams of Ama, and enters a strange state of floating awareness, so clear and radiant she wonders if she has died. She sees Horus vividly opening his wide wings to her, beaming his *wedjat* eye in her direction, the strongest amulet of wellbeing, healing, and protection. It fills her with a tingling energy she has never known. Horus is replaced by a hazy vision of Ama, again smiling with outstretched arms, slowly backing away into a golden aura of light, reassuring her that her love is forever, and she is not to be afraid.

The falcon cry sharply wakens her from this strange and wondrous reverie, and Nenet finds herself lying on her mat, her slim body covered with a fine mist of dewy perspiration. As she slowly recovers her wakeful consciousness, she reaches for Black Cat. She extends her arm further, only to find emptiness. Abruptly, she sits up and sees that Black Cat is no longer with

her. “Do not be afraid. I will be with you always,” Ama tones within her mind.

Nenet slows her breath, tones her gratitude, and rises. “Oh, my dear friend is gone,” she laments. To be sure, she surveys the mud brick house, wanders through the small rooms on the lower floor, then climbs the outer steps to the open roof where she finds only her father and sister, preparing breakfast. “Have you seen Black Cat?” she asks. They shake their heads, and she knows that her beloved spirit friend has finally departed.

As she sits with her family, in preparation for the day of work, her heart is full. She is healed. The morning sun’s rays beam down upon her and her loved ones, benevolently showering them with protection and strength. She clearly senses Ama and her own dear mother present, sharing this close moment with the family. And she knows, without a doubt, that Black Cat has travelled on, to bring healing energies to another grieving soul. Thanks be to the gods and goddesses, thanks be to Horus, thanks be to Ama, thanks be to Black Cat.



Islene Runningdeer is a musician, therapist, educator, and writer. Her work blends her lifelong interest in music of all kinds, psychology, physical health, and spirituality. For more than forty years she has used music as a medicine to teach students about creative freedom and health, to aid and comfort patients and families during the dying process, and to draw people with severe dementia out of their isolation and confusion. She is author of the books Musical Encounters with Dying: Stories and Lessons and The Musician Healer: Transforming Art Into Medicine. Islene lives in Tunbridge, Vermont with her cat Perrine.

EXERCISES, CHAPTER THREE



1. **SOUND.** “Nenet’s Broken Heart” is paired with the artwork *Sound* by Helena Hadala, on page 17. Sound healing frequencies resonate and harmonize with our bodies. Some frequencies can be heard, while others that are not audible are still present and capable of healing. Try placing water in a Tibetan singing bowl or a crystal wine glass and resonate the vessel to make a sound. Watch as the sound frequency moves the water in smooth, rhythmic waves. Set a goal of positivity or pure love without conditions, and feel those frequencies surround you.
2. **THE MOON.** The crescent moon lights Nenet’s way as she hurries through the streets to the home of the mother giving birth. A New Moon marks a new beginning. A Full Moon marks a completion. This cycle appears in many Wisdom Teachings, including the I Ching and other Taoist writings. As an exercise, look up to the sky and watch the moon phases. Whether or not you live by the sea, know where you are in the changing tides. At the next New Moon, begin something that requires time for completion. Watch how the moon’s expanding light energy helps the moon itself grow toward completion.
3. **RELAXATION.** Connect with an animal companion by laying your hands on a safe cat or dog. For about two minutes, feel their chest and throat. Stay still, don’t think, just feel their life and vibration. Keep your hands still and close your eyes.

For further study:

Goldman, Jonathan and Andi Goldman. *The Humming Effect*. Healing Arts Press, 2017, Rochester, VT.

McKusick, Eileen Day. *Tuning the Biofield: Healing with Vibrational Sound Therapy*. Healing Arts Press, 2014.

FOUR

MOTHER SON

Julian Hobson



THE LIGHT streams streak; razor lights strike my face. I perceive shapes behind closed eyes as the beautiful star rises up over the horizon and is refracted through the ocean's medium. Gentle warmth caresses my skin. I was unaware that such emotion is possible, but I am made aware. Alone in the peace, but not alone, not lonely.

I feel and hear the creaking of timbers dancing with the waves that gently lap the hull. I keep my eyes closed and breathe slowly and to full capacitance. I time my breath with the natural, creaking phenomena and my senses continue to perceive this cycle. I want this experience to continue; I prefer this reward of silence, save for nature — my immersion in the natural realm where no ego exists.

I continue until I hear the first voices. I open my eyes slowly without moving a muscle in my body, completely still, like a lioness before she pounces. I am alert. I am back with the ego; theirs, mine. The eternal infinite experience is over, for now. It is time to learn. Learning through pain and suffering, finding wisdom and knowledge, and then finding further ways to evolve myself, which is integrated in permanence with my tissue. Every time I close my eyes. I know this, I feel this.

I signal to the bosun. He acknowledges and barks commands to all concerned. It is dawn: we are approaching our objective. England expects that every man do his duty. Duty

has been drummed into me ever since I set sail from the other Spice Island, my home, Point, Po'm.P., the gated, walled, densely populated and architecturally crowded space that guards the Harbour of Pompey and Portsea. This is a den of iniquity, inhabited by everything and everyone who ever had a hand in manipulation, chaos, and base survival. The concentrated mass of souls that inhabited purgatory, now in human, material form. The gate to enter Point from the civilian sector could have read on its signage, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

I close my eyes and remember everything in a moment, faster than the speed of thought; its expanse is all there for me, instantly. I have learned time is a perception that can be utilized. My memories of my mother who loved me more than words can say. My father who kept us alive, surviving, making sure we could eat and feel safe. I understood even then that his intention, although honourable and loving, could never affect our, my, true path of fate, sorrow, and presence. I was always going to be right here, with my eyes closed, remembering, no matter how strong or well-intentioned he was, or how loving she was. And I can control this moment to receive it all because it is within me.

I have learned aboard this ship that time does not have to be within me; it is truly external to me. Infinity, divinity, eternity, all possibility, all probability and free will are within me, and I can surrender to all of it. They are my river, my power, in essence and in summation they are my divine flow, flowing through me.

I receive all of it up here, alone, every time I come to this crow's nest lookout platform, high on the main mast. Every time I close my eyes, I open my heart and receive. I always choose peace within me. I always choose peace for others within me. I survive to serve myself and others, within me.

I do my duty for England but it is not within me, it is my lesson, so I can perform with light, within myself. My free will is how I guide myself through the divine flow. I make choices that are symbiotic with who I really am. My challenges, my lessons, the rapids, the boulders, the log jams I navigate. But I surrender

to the force pushing behind me, I use its power and choose the path delicately with my free will and save much energy.



I open my eyes after what appears to be a blink. The bosun calls up to me to change the order of the flags, the ‘signals’ to read the name of the ship, *HMS Psyche*, and “England expects that every man will do his duty.” I do this quickly and efficiently. They trust me, he trusts me. That is why I am up here. I navigated this position wisely. I am low profile.

We are part of the small fleet about to catch the Dutch on the Cape, by surprise. The great principle of war is ‘surprise’. Notwithstanding I am not surprised by anything. I see how engaged and intelligent Rear Admiral Popham is; I observe him with neutrality. I surrender to his existence, but dissimilar to his surrender to Lord Horatio Nelson’s existence, now, and when he was alive

Only a few months after the national mourning of England’s hero and the start of my press-ganged contract, here stands Popham, representing the Empire ready to ‘take’ and gain honour, award, fame, and fortune. He must survive to gain this, and I know it will be temporary. He may not know, or care. So, yes, intelligent, but wisdom and evolvment is another matter. Like Spice Island, wisdom transcends class, race, gender, culture, religion, nationality, and skin colour.

We are in sight of the enemy, the Dutch. The Cape is also our enemy; we were lucky. We navigate and use the force of sea, and wind, and sun. We are still alive. Whatever happens today, I know I will be and I am loved. It is all within me. I fill myself with love. I surround myself with love. I am with the love. I am ready and I am not afraid.

I do not want to fight. I do not want to kill my enemy or anyone. I know, I understand like any marine, any sailor, any serviceman; they want to go home to love, they want to survive.

Even my enemy thinks like this. But we will fight. We will kill. We may not go home, but we will all return to pure love at some point. I will remain neutral and still fight. I accept my fate and know my actions. It is already decided, my destiny. I am only responsible for my navigation within the true force. I accept. Or maybe I will just stay up here in this crow's nest forever. I can choose because I know there are many options. There are infinite options. With so many options, so many outcomes I am motivated to survive, to guide, to galvanize, to teach, to learn, to love, to heal, and to evolve.

Although I still feel the stars radiating power, this combines with the sensation of cold. Cold from the sea, the air, the timbers, the rope, the sail. Cold rejuvenates, refreshes me, heals me, strengthens me. All of me, my mind, my soul, my body. It checks my ego. It gives me this moment with clarity. It helps me achieve, it assists me and I cooperate with it.

The first salvo is initiated port side from twelve of our twenty-four long-range cannons. My eyes are fully opened. I arrive back to my body fully integrated in every tissue, every fibre, every muscle, every strand of my DNA. Mind, body, and spirit are one. I am ready. I am always ready.

I am to stay up here in the crow's nest in case new signals are required. There is a numbering system for each flag, and I remember the order perfectly without thinking. I get to see a bird's-eye view of the activity, unlike those on deck. I only understand our view, our part; I do not have the Admiral's plan. I do not need it. But still, I have my perspective, as we all do.

I know the Admiral's plan is more complex than the view I have. Our cargo may reach its destination. I hope the spices evoke that sprinkling of magic resonating in delightful stimulation that opens the secret code of the pineal gland, falling into infinite wisdom. Taste me. Taste us. Feel everything.

The Dutch do not have time to respond effectively. I see them scurrying chaotically at the harbour, on their undermanned ships and on the coastal fortifications. Other salvos are simul-

taneously fired from our sister ships, over the top of our invading marines, covertly inserted overnight. The white-skinned, green-uniformed, fair-haired Dutch soldiers and Indigenous collaborators are no match for our surprise—a well organized, and red invading force. I realize I need a piss. I am not losing control of my body; I just need the head. I am human. I see orange flags fall and then raise in our possession.

My ego kicks in and I feel pride. For a moment, I remember I could have been one of them but engineered and navigated a different path—a path that I thought and felt was best for me. I realize that in this moment, again, I am always going to be right here. The perfect place, the perfect choice, the perfect colour, the perfect evolution. I smile, almost not a smile, but a smile none the less. My body is in alignment once again with peace as my ego is tamed. I return to neutrality and survival.

There is resistance, a small pocket. Below me on our ship I hear the sound of cracking timbers, then the sound of the firing of the cannon that arrives, delayed from a Dutch vessel using its cannonades. They are so close I see the VOC coat of arms overlaid on a blue, red, and white horizontal flag. The mizzenmast is hit; it comes crashing into my mast and I lose control of my piss, and hold onto the broken footing now leaning well out over the water.

Our flagship, The Diadem, to the Dutch rear, opens fire on the Dutch vessel, and the barque quickly jibe turns and runs with its higher velocity. But it doesn't get far before it is disabled. It feels good. We are being protected. We are lucky he likes the spice: we are not supposed to be here. Black Market.

A second barrage of close-range fire hits our hull and releases our cargo to the air. In a jolt, I am with barrels of spices falling to the bottom of the ocean. I am underwater, still in my footings, I see, I hear, I feel, I smell, I taste. I am not alone; I am love. I keep descending into the depths, I feel the pressure increase. I try to pull away from the mast. I am free but still descend like a rock. My negative buoyancy is past the point of return. The

small pocket of air now in my lungs is forced out and replaced with cold water. Peace is all around. Warmth, love, support. I am home. I choose my colour. Almost not a choice, but a choice none the less, and I know it will be more than the incredible world. It will be the infinity of divinity. It is.

In this moment, my spirit begins to separate from my body. My spirit to the soul is the aurora borealis to the sun, an envoy, the snowflakes from a cloud. I have the pleasure experiencing the two states of existence, understanding immediately how essential my life is in the human form. I cannot evolve from human form, from the human heart unless my soul feels the human and heart's presence. Therefore I must experience the body. This is my River.

In this peace, a memory emerges of love, and fun, and laughter where the air is filled with the fragrance of nutmeg, clove and mace. The tangy taste and smell of the spices all around me can be seen floating as specks surround my body and I am taken, without time, back to mother on Spice Island. We sit together at home, packaging spices, ready for storage. All fear, trepidation, anxiety is absent.

My senses are only here with my mother. All I feel is love and laughter by the fire in a loving home. Only love matters, love that does not try, it flows with great force but is peaceful and unstoppable, like the change of the tide in the harbour entrance. It is timeless, boundless. I see the specs of spices in the air all around me as I sit with mother. I take in the fragrance with a smile. The love remains and I am calm. I can sense the spices even stronger now. It is beautiful and stifling at the same time.

My integration with the body, my DNA and every molecule that carries my soul to enlighten it, is unique to me in every way, so I can experience this journey perfectly. My first-rate frigate was built to divine bespoke order. It gave me all the energy, all the power, all the sextants I needed to carry me here, exactly here at this time and this place.

I am grateful. I accept. I surrender. I understand it's another

piece of my evolution. It's not a step. It's all around me 360 degrees, but it is multi dimensional. How many degrees? 720? 1440? Oh! I see. Infinite degrees. Infinite discs around the sphere. It never stops. Evolution never stops. Divinity is infinite for eternity. Of course! Wait, I already know that. I am being reminded. Evolution is infinite, and I see, that is okay, it is not exhausting, it is exhilarating, it carries on. Energy is never destroyed it is just reformed. That is okay. I am neutral. This is perfect. No ego. Acceptance? Not even that, it is way beyond acceptance. Acceptance would indicate a conditional choice. This is not required. Words do not do this justice. In a speed of presence faster than thought, all understanding and what was explanation exists for perusal, for flow.



I am still partially connected to my body; I still feel it in my heart. I view the mast, my body, the trapped barrels of spice that followed me from their storage in the hull, now held down by timbers. Some start to rise from the depths to the surface, slowly at first.

I observe and am aware of everything, including the 794 bodies close to me, lifeless, dressed in Royal Marine red coats, most still holding rifles ready for action. These must have been the reconnaissance regiment that never made it when they attempted landing at midnight. I remember the commotion; it was close to our ship.

I see now their colours, not their uniform, their spheres. Not all, just some; the others must have left already. There are beautiful frequencies all around, full of love. The spheres are assisting, nurturing, guiding, cradling, loving. Unconditional love is everywhere. I feel forgiveness all around for themselves, it is for myself too. It is release, it is letting go, it is surrender, no more restriction or control. I see, I feel! This is forgiveness! This is the key to our evolution. No fear, I am not afraid, they are not afraid. They are love. I am love.

My vessel, my ride, my first-class frigate is fading, my breath is fading. I am aware how precious my life and my body are, in human form. I hope I remember for next time so I can cherish every moment and send love to myself and others unconditionally, because I am aware this is the plan, the divine plan. And our free will, our navigation, is distribution of unconditional love.

I am everything; I am unique and I am the same as all divinity. Words do not do it justice. Logic does not assist in explaining this.

This is peace. No pressure, no expectation, no desire, no need for acknowledgement, no need, no needs. Preference yes. Preference is my uniqueness, my identity.

No pressure.

But I feel pressure. I see a barrel dislodge my trapped foot. I am here. I am here. I still see the colours, the frequencies, but I am here. I feel the cold that refreshes and heals me. I am connected to my DNA.

Three barrels of spice, half full of air, smash into my limp body and pressurize me to their curvature, quickly launching to the surface. There is no time still; it becomes more relative as I reach the surface. I pop out of the surface tension. I am still pressurized to the barrels somehow, and another group of barrels hammer to the bottom of the barrels to which I am attached.

My diaphragm ejects the water from my lungs. Pressure the other way now forces air straight into my lungs. I breathe. It's not an option; it is the force. I close my eyes. Everything is still there, all my experiences. I am the sum total of all of them. I open my eyes. I see, I feel, I hear more than I ever did. I taste, I smell more than I ever did, especially nutmeg. I understand perspective, perception. There must be others like me. There must be others dissimilar to me. There is balance, always.

I am not afraid. I make my choices. I will survive. I will forgive. I will be at peace now and in the future. And I will still learn sometimes through pain and suffering. And I embrace all of it with my whole heart and soul. Infinity.

I hear voices and am pulled onto the deck. I am cared for. I accept. I am at peace. I look down at my chest and I am not injured, I am not disabled. But I see the signal flags from the mast wrapped round me, they had secured me to the barrels in every perfect way. The flags, signals, say “England.” It is still outside me, external to me, not within. I feel, I understand, I evolve.

Time is relative, time is here, time is not here.

I retain humility and know that the force of my river finds its mark with perfect accuracy, timing, and power. It does this with discernment and specificity. There is no rush, I am one with it and its perfection shares naturally.

I am with my mother, I dance with my dogs that keep me warm and dream with me. I learn from their infinite wisdom and unconditional love. I feel all unconditional love and I transmit.

I am not alone, we are not alone, we evolve. We can embrace our evolvment with love, without condition. Always connected.

I am here, I am home, the other Spice Island.



Julian Hobson was born in Sheffield, UK, inheriting and developing the abilities of healing through his grandmother. He lives in the East Kootenays of British Columbia, sharing his time between his profession as a cardiac sonographer, his practice of hypnotherapy, and nature.

EXERCISES, CHAPTER FOUR



1. **BREATHE.** “Mother Son” is paired with the artwork *Breathe* by Helena Hadala, on page 11. Breath is the symbol of life. It starts with an inspiration and ends with an expiration. Every time you link an inspiration with an expiration, consciously remind yourself of your life’s journey of accumulating knowledge and evolving, through your choices. You can be aware that there are many paths you can take, and this awareness exists in every breath. Spend two minutes each day concentrating on your breath, eyes closed, with an intention in mind. End your session eyes open with one big breath from the sunlight or moonlight either in your mind or safely looking up.

2. **FRAGRANCE.** In this story, spices evoke a sprinkling of magic, resulting in delightful stimulation. He says, ‘I open my eyes. I see, I feel, I hear more than I ever did. I taste, I smell more than I ever did, especially nutmeg.’ Do you have spices in your cupboard? Possibly nutmeg, clove, or mace? Smelling spice or essential oil fragrance can enhance your awareness and make life feel more vivid. Enjoy the scents in your spice rack, light an incense stick, or indulge in sample sniffs at the essential oil display at the supermarket—take a fragrance holiday.

3. **CONNECTION.** We can embrace our life with love, without condition. Always connected. By expressing gratitude to others, you can strengthen connectivity and create a positive feedback loop of kind and generous actions.

For further study:

Singer, Michael A. *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself*. New Harbinger Publications, 2007.

Newton, Michael. *Journey of Souls: Case Studies of Life Between Lives*. Llewellyn Publications, 1994.

EMBRACE YOUR DIVINE FLOW

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