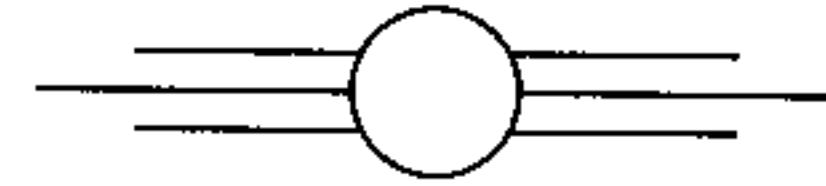




A CRY IN THE DESERT  
THE AWAKENING OF BYRON KATIE



CHRISTIN LORE WEBER



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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"How can we acknowledge a few when there are so many?" Byron Katie asks me. "Everyone who has ever drawn a breath in our direction needs to be acknowledged." All right. Thank you. You who read this, thank you. All who told their stories, thank you. All who helped with time, talent, love, encouragement, criticism, even discouragement —thank you. Editors, thank you. Readers, thank you. Artists, thank you. Beloveds, thank you. Financiers, thank you for the money that made the first printing of this book possible. You all have names. You all know who you are. "Say we acknowledge All," Byron grins. We know who we are. We are the One. We are the Thank You. —○—



## CONTENTS

### PART ONE

Byron Katie .....	2
Gathering .....	4
Meeting .....	15
Awakening .....	23
The Only Thing That Holds .....	44
Recognition .....	55
The One .....	69
Touched All the Way Through .....	73
No Fear .....	83
Success is Not Betrayal .....	87
Fullness of Life Now .....	92
Hold the Bliss .....	97
Open Heart .....	111
What Wonderful Thing Will Happen Next .....	128
I Am Not This Body .....	137
Living a Full Life .....	147

### PART TWO

The Cry in Our Souls .....	158
What Anyone Might Be .....	161
Masquerade .....	170
The Higher Thing .....	175
Hell on Wheels .....	180
The Other Side of Death .....	194
There Is God .....	202



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

— PREFACE —

Attempts to articulate the life and teachings of Byron Katie defy language. "In the beginning was the word. Unknow the word." This is what she tells me as I struggle to write this book: "The words to which you are attached are the steps away from experiencing the presence of God that you are."

Her language startles. She uses words unconventionally. By this practice she invites us to unknow. The word, itself, is the first movement out from the Divine. The original One does not move. All of Byron Katie's words are an invitation to return to that One.

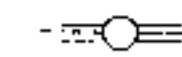
The normal structure of language is inadequate to Byron Katie's experience. Based, as it is, on distinctions between subject and object, relative and nonrelative being, and temporality or the location of events in time, language strains and cracks under her use of it to communicate herself. From Byron Katie's perspective all is One, admitting of no object or other. If there were a language of pure subjectivity, Byron Katie would speak that language. She exists in a reality of complete nonrelativity: All is God. "I Am You;" she insists. She would like to capitalize every word that does not refer to an illusion of human ego. She is most at home in present tense.

Some people are saying that hers is a new language, a new religion, a new psychology, a new medicine. Byron Katie laughs and tells us there is nothing new. There is only God. "Undo yourself," she says. "Know the Truth."

Byron Katie's words are best taken at their most fundamental level of meaning. When she speaks of *realizing* something, for example, she means to become one with the Reality. She is not speaking of conceptualization. When she tells us to know the Truth, she is not suggesting that we engage in some intellectual process. Instead, she is telling us to *be* consistent with Reality, the pure and living Truth that is God.

Because a book requires a language structure, I attempt to be as true as possible to Byron Katie's experience, while, at the same time, to render a text that is readable. When quoting or referring to Byron Katie's teaching, I take liberties with sentence structure and capitalization of words that usually appear in lower case. The awakened consciousness, although it cannot be captured in language, can leave traces of its presence. If the reader's mind feels boggled, I suggest a suspension of mind. Read with the heart.

Christin Lore Weber





## PART ONE

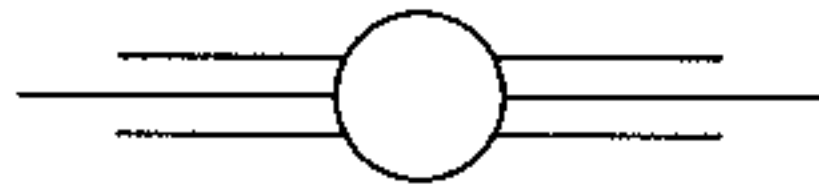
*I am one who knew nothing*

*One who awoke*

*Witbin an ancient wisdom.*

*Byron Katie*





## BYRON KATIE

Wind whips across the California high desert lifting small twisters of dust against a dizzying light. Gold light cleans the earth of all but what is necessary, and wind blows the dust away. Mountains of pure rock, gigantic needles of stone, umber colored, burnt red, lava black, pierce the sky. Springs well up from the rock creating pools of warm, healing water. Gnarled Joshua trees insist on life. Golden spiders skitter over the sand and rattlers glide.

A woman walks this landscape along routes as varied and contradictory as people's lives can be. The desert is her home. She has fought its dust storms and stood naked under its canopy of stars. She finds her way where roads don't exit. She survives thirst.

This woman, like anyone, has lived with rage, with daring, with exhaustion, with dreams and failed dreams, with hope, and with a broken heart. She has been alone and cursed it. She has been surrounded by the world and run away. She has been rich and poor, loved and despised, sought out and rejected. There have been times when she has thrown herself away.

She is a mother, a sister, a wife, a friend. She has also been the opposite of each of these. Perhaps there is nothing that she has not been. She says that she was born in an attic room when she was forty-three years old. That was the day this woman understood that she was worthy of her own love.

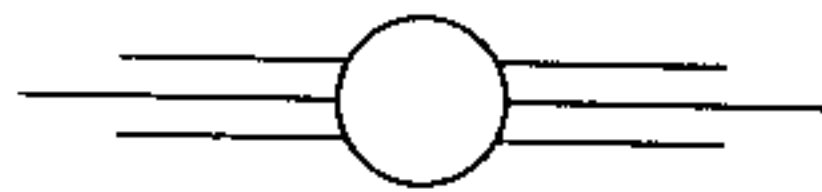
She is a mirror. She lets us look at her to see ourselves. However deep the pain we feel, she knows a

— BYRON KATIE —

pain as deep. However far our hopes, hers extend there. If we are desperate, she has been desperate too. She is just a woman who told herself the Truth and now she is free. She discovers within herself an abiding Joy.

You might have seen her anywhere. Maybe she sat next to you in an airplane or at a Twelve Step meeting in your neighborhood. You could have seen her in the supermarket, maybe in the fresh produce section. She has a way with fruits and vegetables. Probably you wouldn't recognize anything special about her; she looks pretty much like anybody else, any woman out there. Maybe she picked up something that you dropped and gave it to you. Probably she smiled. Maybe you went home that day stunned by the clarity of her eyes. Probably you wondered who she was, and if you had a chance to ask her, she might have told you that it was yourself you recognized in her eyes. Maybe she simply smiled.

Some people call the woman Byron. Others call her Katie. Her husband calls her Kate. This is her story. It isn't the whole story. It isn't even hers alone. It is the story of people whose lives she touches. Through their lives this woman is woven like a purple thread, or like silver, even gold. It might, in fact, be your story. It certainly is mine. =○=



## GATHERING

— GATHERING —

Carol Lynn calls to say Byron Katie will be at her house for a Gathering. Do I want to come? Of course. I want to see her. I'm distracted. For three weeks my husband, John, and I have been searching the woods and inlets of the Puget Sound for a new home. Every place that draws me by its beauty and solitude costs more than our budget can stand. We've been back two days and my mind still reels with images of Long Lake, Port Orchard, Poulsbo, Bainbridge Island, the San Juans, and especially a bluff on the southwest side of Camano Island and the stony beach below where gulls cry and eagles ride the updrafts.

This morning, back in California, the Byron manuscript lies before me. It is time to complete it, but I have no idea how. I need to see her.

She looks sixteen, younger than the first time I met her. How does she do that? Once, about a year earlier, I arrived late at a Gathering and was startled to realize that she looked ancient. I thought: She's gained weight! She looks like somebody's jolly round grandma or like a female Buddha, feet pulled up under her, bestowing joy. In the winter, at another of Byron's Gatherings, I thought she looked her age. Fine lines enhanced her eyes. Her skin had that soft, textured look. Now her face is smooth, her skin taut over high cheek bones.

"You look at least ten years younger!" I minimize the startling effect that I know is not the result of anything artificial.

"I do?" Byron laughs. "People tell me things like

that. Thank you for telling me; I can't know otherwise." Later, in the group, she emphasizes that her body is not her concern. Mind: That is her responsibility. The body follows. She says that she is a mirror, and I wonder if the changes I perceive in her are really changes in myself I see reflected in her face.

We sit on the sofa by a roaring fire. It's a chilly February night. The room is filled with family and some friends. A little girl toddles over to offer me a blow on her plastic trumpet.

"Did you find your home?" Byron's clear eyes radiate in a way I can't take for granted.

I tell her that I do think I found the island where I'd like to live, but everything is too expensive. I know that I want to live by the water and waterfront property is even more pricey.

"When the time and place are right, the money will be there."

I sense that as long as I hold the thought of expense as preventing me from living where my heart desires, all I will see is a dollar sign, and I will not recognize my new home. My belief about impossibility will create impossibility. All it would take is a slight turn of mind to accept what Byron Katie says.

I'm suddenly alone with her. If there are other people in the room, I'm not aware of them. We talk about the book, about publishing. Only a small part of me is taken up with that conversation. The rest of me is caught up in a reality underlying the words, the roaring fire, the people, and the place. There is no Byron and there is no Christin. There is One Being. She's a door into this experience of Oneness that never fails to open when I'm face to face with it. "I am the Door," Jesus says. Byron shows me what he means.

We walk into the living room, which has filled with a laughing, chattering group of folks who all seem to know one another. The little girl runs from this person to that one offering her plastic trumpet. There's a good mix of men and women, young and old. Byron sits in a strategically placed easy chair and pulls her feet up under her soft coral skirt. Carol Lynn does the introductions and asks Byron to tell her story. "I know that you like to give people your philosophy," she says, "but please, tell us how this happened to you, how you weren't always like this. Tell us how you used to be and how you changed."

Byron Katie looks off into space. Her eyes cloud just a bit. I imagine this is difficult for her. She still reaches for the words to explain the "resurrection" or "awakening" as she calls it. She is still remembering events that seem to her to have happened to a person other than the present self. "I'm a baby and I'm ageless," she explains. "I opened my eyes only nine years ago and I saw all time."

She starts with seeing herself as being locked out of the house when she was three years old. She says she became a wild animal. She says she went to a man who molested her "and it hurt. But the next day I went back because I would do anything for touch, which I now see as Love. Again it hurt, and again I went back. I did that to me."

"But surely," the people react, "you aren't excusing him. You aren't saying it was your fault. You were a child, after all."

"He had his own pain. I can't judge that. I only know that my mind took my body back to the man. If there was pain inflicted upon me, I was the perpetrator of that pain."

"But surely you would want people like that locked up! So — you know — so they can't do that to others."

"If I were abusing children, I would want you to lock me up so that I would not be able to hurt you or me in that way. To harm you *is* my suffering."

She asks them to go inside themselves. "Put yourself in the position of perpetrator and then of victim. Which would you rather be? Go deep," she says, "know yourselves."

I ponder how difficult it is for us, for this society of ours, to enter Byron's world. We want judgments built like stairs over people's pain so we can climb out of what we call their wrongdoing. We want to achieve goodness at the top of those stairs. But it isn't there. We don't *achieve* goodness. "Do not call me good, only One is good," says Jesus, telling us not to set him apart from the rest of us at the top of some stairway of judgment. Goodness is the constant state of being in itself. All is good. All is One. We cannot do anything to make us good; we already are.

"Then I got married to a wonderful man. . ." she goes on to her years with her first husband, a brief recitation, "and I didn't know it. Together we built a life of illusions, of unreality, and I didn't know it. Everything was upside down. And I had children and they were part of it. And I made a million dollars and lost it and made another million and it didn't mean anything. And I got divorced before I even knew who my husband was and I took my children to another town and started over. But nothing was enough and pretty soon I was stuck in my bedroom, doing business from there and a little room next to it, buying and selling, and my children were on drugs and alcohol and fighting and miserable and there was no way out. One night, very



late when everyone else was sleeping, I went to a church because I'd heard that people found answers in churches so I thought I'd try even though I didn't understand religion. I went in the vestibule and picked up some pamphlets, left quickly, got back into my car, and drove home. I sat on my bed and read the pamphlets over and over. I read them one paragraph at a time. I read each sentence. Slowly. I absolutely couldn't understand one word. I couldn't make any sense of it at all."

Again and again people in the Gatherings ask Byron Katie for this story as if they have a fascination for the way our wealth-seeking, achievement-orientated culture didn't work for her. She achieved; she had wealth; she wasn't happy. She died of it and when she woke up, the wealth and achievement no longer mattered. It was a nonissue. She began living simply, in the moment, without thought, in a state of complete being that we sometimes sense in the stillness between one thought and the next.

"But don't you have goals?" the people ask. They are incredulous. "Don't you make plans? How do you know what to do? How do you keep from doing wrong? How do you know what's right? And if everything is as it should be, then what about the murderer, what about the starving children, what about wars and poverty and death? Don't you feel a responsibility to help other people? And if you don't feel that responsibility, why are you here tonight?"

"It's who I am — I am this," she tells us with a little smile.

"Why did you come?"

"I was invited."

So simple.

"That's all?"

"That's all."

"But what about laws? What about the murderer? What about society? Doesn't society have a responsibility? Are you suggesting that we all do whatever we please?"

"We do it anyway, don't we? We just are not clear about what pleases us."

I see several people nod their heads. There's nervous laughter.

"That's anarchy!" a somewhat irritated male voice erupts.

She does exactly as she wants and here she is, giving herself to us because that action gives her more happiness than anything else at the moment. She is the most compassionate person I have ever encountered.

"Do you believe in law?" asks another man.

"I fasten my seat belt," she grins. "I love all the laws of this country. I love the laws of this world. You say fasten your seat belt, and I say okay. You've made the laws for me; I don't have to. The laws are there, wonderful, for our benefit. They are what is and I love all that is."

"I still don't quite get it," says a woman — and we keep coming back to this all evening — "you think everything is perfect and yet we have all this suffering in the world, all this poverty, all this violence. How can that be perfection?"

"It's a mirror. Ask: What is the violence in me I cannot accept? Ask: What is my fear of death, of poverty? Is it true? Is there something wrong with death? It's a belief. All our pain comes from beliefs. We experience a thought and attach a belief to it. We see death and believe it's evil. Who says? We look at the sky and say it's blue. Is it? It's simply an ancient

myth. When I no longer fear my own death, I hold the dying child without fear. I look into that child's eyes and he sees only peace. I cannot give him the belief that death is something to be feared. I cannot give what I do not have. What is not believed cannot be feared. I will be with him, in peace, to that very experience we call death because I no longer have that fear which prevents me from being present. For you—me."

"Okay," says a woman who is sitting on the floor in front of me, "I can understand about acceptance and love and all that, but I get so confused. How do you know what to accept? How can you know what to do? How do you get to the point where you can be peaceful when someone you love has died?"

"You do the dishes." Byron Katie is absolutely serious.

"What?"

"I call that my highest spiritual experience: Katie does the dishes. In the moment the thought arises, 'Do the dishes,' I do them. Thought-action. Simple. Then another thought rises. I move. I am movement. I don't ask why. Hell is to ask why. Someone calls me on the phone and asks me to come to San Francisco for a Gathering. I check to see if I'm already committed and if the time is available I say yes. To know the Truth and speak it is heaven."

"Do you ever say no?"

"Oh yes. I'm very clear about saying no. If someone makes something for me and brings it to me saying, 'I made this for you will you accept it?' and I look at it and I don't want it, I say no. Truth. The Truth sets you free. Know yourself and act on that Truth."

A gray-haired woman flares. "That's crazy, completely out of touch with reality. Sometimes you can't

say no. Life just presses down on you. People who talk like you do just don't know about anger. I'm angry. My anger is what's real. I had eight children; I didn't have a choice. That's what's real. I can't say I don't want them—not now. But I can't help but be angry either."

Byron's voice is gentle. "Who said yes eight times over? Who said yes to the minister at the wedding? What is the price you are not willing to pay? Who were you trying to please with your yes? I see great love from you, misdirected and not taking care of yourself, not crying out the NO—that scream into real integrity. Can you dare to learn to speak it, now, in simple ways? That is what eight children are for. Is the pain enough yet? It is as *you* say it is. Truth is the highest order. God. Truth spoken is the voice of the Ultimate. Who ordained that we have eight children? The body in action *is* the *yes*. *Not* to see this is to be out of touch with Reality."

Another woman on the floor presses on, "So when I'm trying to figure out what to do in order to make my life meaningful . . .?"

"You do the dishes. Your life is meaningful already. Your life is. Live in the moment. When the thought arises, do it. When you have done it often enough, the thought that arises will be visible as your heart's desire.

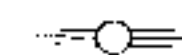
"When belief marries thought, we're moved from Truth. 'Do the dishes,' the thought says. 'But doing dishes is a menial task,' the belief proclaims. Belief sticks like Velcro™ to thought. That is the marriage. Then they produce children and grandchildren beliefs. Eventually we are living on a foundation built from generations of untruths and confusion. This is an example of reincarnation, the only reincarnation there is.

"For example, 'Do the dishes' marries 'I ought to be doing something meaningful.'

"'Why should I be stuck doing dishes?' That's the baby. 'Surely my life is worth more than this!'—now the baby's getting married! 'Surely I have a task in life higher than doing dishes!'—along comes the first grandchild. 'I can never do anything important; what a dunce I am'—the grandchild is married. 'Why doesn't anything good ever come my way?'—aha, a great grandchild. And the family of descendants choruses, 'Why don't people expect important things from me? Poor me! Nobody notices me. Nobody recognizes how wonderful and wise I really am. All I ever do is wash dishes!' This is marriage without birth control, and I still haven't done the dishes. By this time the marriage of belief to thought has produced the reincarnation of what we see as life.

"When thought marries belief we have material form. Nothing new. All recycled. The lie is born again as was done in the beginning of thought that we call time. This is reincarnation; there is no time and space; you are the thinker of it. To see all this in Truth, in the thinking moment, is to experience the collapse of time and space.

"I've been away from home now for more than two weeks. My husband isn't very good at cleaning and washing clothes, so one thought is that I will walk in the door to see dishes stacked up and there will be dirty clothes and the house will be a mess and I'll have a pile of mail a foot high. By night all of it will be done. One task after another, simply, without mental argument. I just walk through the house and do what comes to me to do. I do what is in front of me. I do the dishes. This is my privilege."



"Carrying water, shouldering wood"<sup>1</sup> is an ancient spiritual maxim of Zen Buddhism. It is preparation for enlightenment: devotion to what is in front of you. I'm constantly intrigued by the way Byron Katie's teachings parallel age-old teachings of virtually all the spiritual traditions: Christianity, Buddhism, the various Yogas, the Tao. And yet she studied none of them.

Accept the Love in front of you. This is my favorite of Byron's teachings. Everything I need is right in front of me. If I don't recognize that, it is because I am focused on something that isn't there. When I insist on the thing that isn't there, I miss the Love in front of me. I ignore the light of Truth and cannot see the Love. I resist enlightenment.

In a culture where *more is better*, how can we grasp the truth that Jesus gave to Martha? "Thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful" (Luke 10:41-42). It is the thing right in front of you. I do the dishes. I write the book. I weed the garden. I listen to my friend. I look into my dying mother's eyes. I sing the song. We carry water. We shoulder wood. We do the dishes.

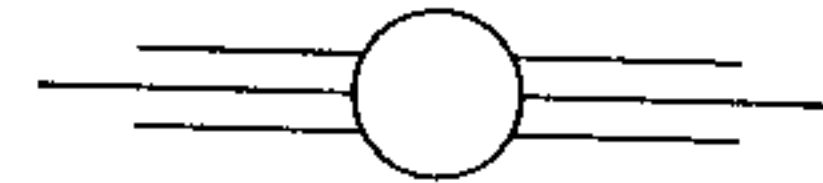
Nothing is wanting anywhere. All is Love.

We stay four hours at Carol Lynn's. Some of us would stay all night. Carol Lynn suggests we eat some of the breads and nuts and fruits and vegetables we've brought and laid out on her dining room table. We begin to move. Several men pull chairs up close to Byron Katie. They continue to question her. If everything is perfect, what is there to achieve? If we have everything we need, why strive for wealth? If all are innocent, what about the murderers, the child molesters,

the rapists? If we can't climb out of wrong, what are we doing here? And she continues to answer with all she knows. "We are. We are One, creating. In that stillness we are the awareness of creation moving as Itself. We lack nothing." Some can hear her; some shift before her very eyes, awake to the Truth they experience.

Coming home from Carol Lynn's, I remember the woman who is angry about her eight children. She is not different from me. There are times I have been equally angry that I never became pregnant. I wonder why we cling so tenaciously to our pain, to the thoughts that keep us from our joy, such thoughts as: Reality is anger; I didn't have a choice; I've never had enough.

It's late. I climb into bed. The thought comes up that John and I will never be able to afford a home on the waterfront. I smile and put the thought aside. I go to sleep and dream of gulls. —○—



## MEETING

I first met Byron Katie on a September evening in 1993 at the home of a mutual friend. When I arrived, Byron was sitting on the sofa talking in low tones to a modest-looking woman with long gray-blond hair. Byron sat cross-legged, her feet drawn up under her, and was wearing a full Mexican skirt in corals, blues, and browns, a matching vest over a brownish shirt, and lots of beads and long earrings. Her curly blond hair was caught up on top of her head in a coral ribbon. She wore heavy eye make-up and didn't look like my idea of a spiritual teacher.

I sat down on the floor. There would be lots of people coming, many more than the available chairs. I wanted to be positioned in such a way that I could see Byron at close range and, at the same time, witness her interaction with the other guests. If I were tucked back into the corner close to the sofa I would remain unobtrusive. I would just watch.

My last month had been more than a little unsettling. It had started with my mother's death and ended with the news that I could no longer postpone major surgery. Just two days before, driving back from the Costco store, I had started crying, sobbing like a child, feeling scared to death. When I asked myself why, all I could come up with were a child's nightmares, images of demons and of houses burning down and of losing people that I loved. These were fears I had banished long ago with airtight, rational arguments. Now I worked at consoling myself. "Your mother died," I said. "It's grief."

Nevertheless I felt fragile. I didn't want to talk. I pulled up a pillow and leaned against it. The modest-looking woman was asking the one that must be Byron Katie whether it was okay to drink coffee. "If you ask the question, you may want to take a look inside," Byron said. "Only you can know the Truth of you. I hear that you already know."

I looked around. Seven or so women sat in clusters of two or three. No one seemed to be paying attention to the two on the sofa. All at once Byron Katie looked straight at me. "I'm Byron," she said and smiled.

Never had I seen eyes like that. Later Sandra called them "see-through." Someone else called her the "lit lady." I thought her eyes looked silver. To another woman they looked turquoise. The thing about which we all agree is that Byron Katie's eyes shine.

"I'm Christin." That was as far as I intended to go, at least until I found out more about her.

She locked onto me. She seemed like a hawk, I later thought, soaring in on me, and no matter how I dodged she wouldn't let me get away.

"What are your thoughts?" She smiled and waited. What a strange question. Answering it could take all night—a lifetime, maybe. That's why I write books: My thoughts are manifold. I pour them out. Package them. Store them on shelves.

I decided to be careful. It's so easy to be fooled.

"I thought about that on the way over and decided that I want to learn." These were my words. I had actually thought: *I'll just sit there and listen and learn. I'll only say something after I'm comfortable and then only if I really have something to say. I don't want to risk too much; I feel too fragile. I don't want anyone to know about the fear that popped out the other day.*

"Ah, you are a student." She seemed pleased.

I wasn't a student anymore. I had graduated—lots of times. I had degrees. I had written books, taught classes, lectured, done all sorts of things. I used to be a student. Being called a student reduced me to a beginner in the work to which my whole life had been devoted. On the other hand, just the other day I had felt three years old and as frightened as if I had never learned a thing.

"You might say that," I admitted.

"Tell me your thoughts. What is it you would like to learn?" She leaned forward. Those eyes radiated. She looked like a female Buddha, but also like the hawk.

I started feeling like a mouse in a field. The hawk soared. "I would like to learn about fear," I blurted out. Caught in the open. No place to hide. The screech of the hawk; the shadow of the wing.

"Fear results from the belief that you are going to lose something or not get something you want. There is no exception to this, even as your ego attacks itself." So simple. But it felt like she was reading my heart. She said more, but I can't remember it. Her words hit home. I felt tears slip down my cheeks. My fears seemed childish but at the same time gripping. I was embarrassed to admit them but felt powerless to escape them.

"Now tell me about your fears." She waited.

I took a deep breath. "Pretty much what you said. I'm afraid of losing what I love."

"And what exactly is that?"

My mind said no, you can't say your fear aloud. You can't admit you fear childish things. Only uneducated people fear such things. You know better. What will all these people think of you?

"In front of all these people?" I laughed a little, "These strangers?"

"There is only One. There are no strangers here." She spoke with authority. "Now, tell me your thoughts about fear."

I started blurting out a tangle of stuff that caused my heart to race even as my mind rejected it. I ended by saying I felt I was on a threshold of something, but if I stepped over, everything I had believed and accomplished all my life would be shown to be an illusion and I would lose myself. There would be nothing. I knew I was sounding crazed, hysterical. I felt three years old and about two inches tall.

"That's right," Byron responded. She assured me that yes, this would be the end of the world as I experience it. Her eyes blazed. Clean. A pure light. Indescribable. A combination of love and white heat that evaporates impurities. I no longer remember the continuity of what she said. When I try to repeat the words, they sound bland compared to the way they felt when she directed them to me.

"That's right," she said, "all the beliefs that you've constructed to protect yourself throughout your whole life are not needed, unnecessary. You are afraid because you think you are a body. You think you are a body, and you are afraid of death—afraid of nothing, only illusion, belief systems. There is no death. You are using your mind to scare yourself. To shame yourself. You cannot lose the ones you love. It is impossible. You are the one you lost. Others don't belong to you. But you obliterate them in your mind. You are the one who says they die. You are experiencing your own death through the thought. Your fears turn into realities, you create them, you materialize them.

Unlearn those beliefs. Do you understand?"

"Who are you?" I asked. Her words sounded like a combination of New Age jargon and esoteric wisdom. But my mind and its critical functions felt bypassed. I believed her. Tears ran down my face, and I didn't bother with them. I'd never met a human being like this woman. In a flicker of memory I thought of those disciples of Jesus who came to him in wonder, asking the same question, and he said simply, "Come and see."

"Who do you think I am?" Byron Katie smiled at me. Jesus said that, too, didn't he? "Who do people say that I am?"

"I haven't the faintest idea." It was true. All my ideas about reality and what is possible for human beings to be were falling in my mind like dying stars. I stood on the threshold of a new creation.

"Because you do not know yourself, you cannot know that I am you. You see only yourself in me. You cannot know yourself in the center of a thought storm that is, itself, these insane thoughts. You are so beautiful. You are so loved. In the fear you create, you cannot know these things."

Who was she? I had to know. "Have you always been this way?" I asked.

"No. Seven years ago I was just like you. Frightened. Scattered. Fragmented. I locked myself in my house. I wanted to die. I weighed more than two hundred pounds. I closed myself in my bedroom and took to my bed. Then a being from another realm came to me in my house and led me through all the creation in all the universes. I felt myself pass through everything and everything pass through me. I realized that I am the stars and the rocks and all the people and the earth and the animals and there is only One. I



returned as you see me now.”

I didn't understand, but I found myself accepting the mystery of this woman. That evening Byron Katie told me I must open my heart to joy, accept the beauty of my life, serve with love for the pure joy of it. Now it is possible, she assured me, to give the gift of myself and let the fear go. “You are a little baby,” she said. “Do you understand?”

I understood that I was something new.

She turned to someone else. “What are your thoughts?” she asked.

Three hours later I went home still not certain who this woman was. I knew there was something extraordinary about her. I was beginning to understand that she had dealt a deathblow to my ego and its fears and that I needed that. I realized that I had wanted to look good in front of all those people. I realized that I had to stop hiding now. There is nothing to cover up, nothing to protect. Not if all of us are Love. Not if everything is One.

I woke the next morning with the thought that I would buy a red rose for my neighbor, Sandra, who'd just returned from the hospital where she underwent a radical mastectomy. I would take her a rose along with some tea. I wanted to bring peace to her in whatever way I could.

On the way to get the rose, I let myself look out at the world—the cars rushing up the freeway, the hills purpled by the rising sun, all the movement of creation—as one being. It came to me that the word I have preferred for God is Holy One. But I always placed the emphasis on *holy*. This emphasis differentiated the One that is God from everything else. Suddenly I understood not just with my mind but also

with my heart that the emphasis is more truly to be placed on *One*. There is only One. All is included. Even I. Even I am included.

I stopped at Safeway for Sandra's rose. There was only one red one. I looked at some other bouquets but knew the rose was for her. I bought it and some fruit. We sat in her dining room, put the rose on the table with other flowers and some candles. She talked about her cancer and about decisions: what to do about radiation, about chemotherapy. Alternative medicine. She was using a treatment from Mexico. I told her about Byron and said she worked with cancer patients. Sandra's eyes lit with something like humor. “During my meditation this morning I asked for a healer,” she said.

She called and spoke with Byron. In an hour Byron was there. She sat with Sandra and asked her some of the same kinds of questions that she had asked me; brought her up against her fears. I saw Byron bring Sandra right up against her death. I watched as Sandra released her fear.



During the months that followed, I thought of Byron often. In November I attended one of her workshops and witnessed person after person release mental and emotional pain that had plagued them for years. I learned the process that Byron calls The Work. I wanted to know more.

I was clear about this: Byron speaks Truth and she loves whoever is in front of her. She loves them completely and unconditionally. I thought it possible that this gift of Love is the key that unlocks resistances and releases the courage we all need to tell ourselves the Truth of ourselves. That Truth is Love. And Love heals.

But what of her life? What had happened that was powerful enough to reveal this Love in her? I determined to find out. One evening after a Gathering I approached her.

"Byron?"

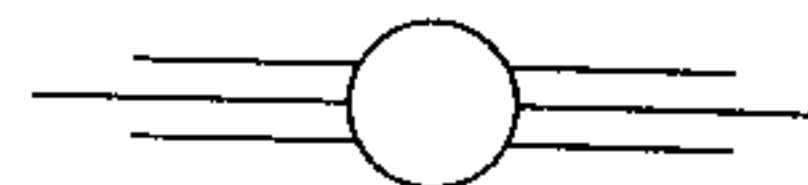
She turned and smiled. "Yes, honey?"

"Byron, I'm a writer. I think I'm supposed to write a book about you. What do you think?"

"Yes. It's true. And anything you want to know, anything you need to write this book, I will be there, twenty-four hours a day, to give it to you. Just ask."

That simple.

At first I didn't know what I needed. Then people began telling me their stories. Byron shared audio tapes of Gatherings and of the workshop I attended. She met with me. She answered every question I could think up. People filled out questionnaires and sent them to me. Suddenly, it seemed, I had fifty hours of tapes, a photograph of Byron, laughing, on my desk, and all the time in the world. I was ready to begin. ≡○≡



## AWAKENING

Byron Katie's life began in February of 1986 when she was forty-three. A cockroach crawled over her foot. She lay on the floor in an attic room of a house on the beach just outside of Los Angeles. It was a halfway house for women recovering from eating disorders, which Byron now identifies as thinking disorders. She doesn't know how long she lay there. Time is nonexistent. She couldn't lie in the bed. She couldn't go downstairs. She was told that the other women were afraid. Katie raged. They feared she would break through, throw her enormous body through the locks, the boobytraps, and hurt them all. She tells me that for two weeks she was "not even coherent, really; insane things were going on in my head. I was asleep and the sleep felt like rage. Early one morning a cockroach crawled over my foot—I was awake."

As far as she knows now, she had been dead, and this awakening resurrected her. Like an infant she stared at her foot. "I experienced the feeling of this cockroach moving over my foot. I saw a foot and I didn't know it was mine. I saw the cockroach and I thought it was me. I saw the foot move in reaction. I noticed a prior thought and the Joy experienced in that recognition is beyond words. The hand moved. The body moved. She rose as consciousness observing itself, all a result of prior thought already done, delighted, walking, moving—animation observing itself. She lives!"

Beliefs bombarded from the material world. "I looked up and I saw the bed because I'd been sleeping



on the floor. I experienced that they'd made up a bed for me, and I saw that the bed had been there all the time even though I hadn't recognized it. I became aware of a belief that I wasn't worth a bed—an ancient dream. I came to know, instantly, that it was, in fact, okay to lie on it. Everything, imagined or unimagined, is okay. Life as I had known it was changed."

She had no way of distinguishing where she left off and something else began. "I was the all and the all was me," she says now, but at that time she had no reference to any kind of language, any philosophical system of spiritual practice that might identify that "all" for her. "How could the undefinable be identified? I knew nothing of spiritual matters. I knew nothing of God; I knew nothing of Buddha; I knew nothing of students of spirituality. I didn't understand why people even bothered to study such matters. In fact, I knew nothing. I didn't think. I was just trying to survive. I saw doors and I saw ceilings and I saw people and when you spoke I vibrated with the sound of your voice—I didn't know what it was."

Her husband came. Her children came. She didn't recognize them in the way we take for granted. She stared at them. The one they called her husband said he was Paul. She knew it was true. When they said "husband" and "children" she also knew that to be true. "All this naming is a cosmic joke," Byron explains. "In this human realm we name things. That's fine with me. It's fun. But it's never to be taken as the Reality. I also would look at my hands and see. . ." she pauses, at a loss for words, "hands, husband, children — all the same, all loved, all adored."

She stared at her family from what felt like millennia of distance and from that distance rose the

thought of children. But the thought was of little ones and these were grown up. "They said they were mine and my husband said we were married and other people agreed and so we were. We still are. I'm devoted to that. I am devoted to what I woke up to. It's the obvious. That's how I know who I am. What I became devoted to was the thing in front of me."

That's in retrospect. Back then Byron Katie was lost in a world without delineation. Byron's daughter, Roxann, who was about sixteen at that time, experienced her mother as having regressed to about two years of age. "I led her around by the hand," she remembers, "and she cried because she was lost. She went from being a rageful woman to this little lost girl."

It was almost as though Katie were not herself, the loss of her former world was so total. And it persisted. Some time after her return home from the halfway house, she attended a class reunion and didn't recognize her former high school classmates. "But I knew from a million years ago who they were. I knew them at some level—their vibratory level—intimately. I knew everything about them but I couldn't tell you— what it was; I couldn't tell you their names and I couldn't connect the faces. I knew beyond faces and names. Then they started telling me who I was. I had all these people I'd known from childhood, all filling in my life for me. It was wonderful. That's one way I can know humanness, who I am in the material world."

Her living was more profound than can be identified or explained by the word *amnesia*. It wasn't simply that she didn't remember people's faces or where her house was located. She'd lost her entire structure for perceiving reality as she had known it. The ability to communicate went with it. Katie had to start from

scratch. "How can I talk with you without speaking of past and future? How can I put sentences together? How can I tell you what anything is? I didn't know what my house was, what my town was. I didn't know what *anything* was. I didn't know there was anything to 'was.' So I had to learn humanness; I had to learn to communicate the way that I see. And the way that I see is to see in the total present, with no past or future, week after week, month after month, year after year — with no belief attaching itself to thought, ever."

She started right there at the halfway house. She came downstairs and the therapists taught her to meditate. Even had she experienced awareness of her former life, meditation would have been foreign to her. "I'm this woman from Barstow, you know, and we don't do that. We'd only read about gurus and such things in the funny papers. The therapists told me simply what to do, and I was so awake that I just believed them. They told me what to do and I did it. This was pure Joy. This was life lived simply. To act without thought is divine."

During the meditations Byron Katie moved deeply into her "awake" experience, so deep, in fact, that she lost touch with the sensory world. One day during the meditation an automobile crashed into something on the street in front of the halfway house. People jumped up and ran to the windows but Byron Katie sat there, still in meditation, completely oblivious to the noise, the commotion. "Then when they directed me to come out, I came out. They were all talking about the automobile accident. But I had done what they told me and I trusted in that. I was in meditation. I was just following directions."

Byron says that during the meditations she left

and came back with knowledge that she calls revelations. Paul chuckles over this now and says he teases her about taking time off and going to college when he wasn't looking. This knowledge was new to her. People called it wise, clear. These were things she'd never seemed to know before.

"For three years the revelations were nonstop," Byron explains now. "I would literally take them to the streets and try to tell people, but it scared them and so they moved away from me. Really, the revelations couldn't be put into words. That was where I was doing harm, by trying to put them into words. Once in words they narrow down to very simple things like *unknowing is everything; no time, no space; there is only Love; I am Love*. These simple things are everything. They are everything. Said in words they are so simple but they can't be heard; they can only be experienced. They can be told in the stories that I live and people sometimes get the experience. One who *is* that experience can teach it because the experience is the teaching. Only one with the awareness that she *is* that revelation can consistently take that road. All that stands in the way of awareness are the many forms of ideas that represent a belief that we are not that revelation. We are stopped when we believe we are not what we really are; that is the power of belief. We are stopped by any concept/perception that takes us from the awareness of "I Am."

She amplifies the revelations with stories of those years after the original awakening. "There is no time," she claims. "There is no space." But she says more. "I missed large spaces in time. One example I like to give is that I started a load of laundry and walked to the kitchen. I didn't hear the washing machine going so I went back to check on the clothes and they were

already washed. I didn't know what time had elapsed. It was then that I started knowing in this dimension — how can I say it? — the demonstration of no time or space. I didn't just *know* it; it was demonstrated. I was without thought. Then I had a thought. In the space between, the clothes were washed.

"Then I was in a hot tub and heard the word, *Adita*, and it was a wonderful experience for me. It came out of me as though it were tripping over a child's tongue, issuing from a child's lips. I said it over and over and over. It was familiar. It was the sound of *abbb*, so lovely, twice in one word. I sat in the hot tub and became aware that I hadn't been breathing for a long time and that I was awake and that all of this was being done without breath, in bliss."

Byron shares all these experiences with us as examples of the awakening process. The unfamiliar can terrorize us. She wants us to know that waking up is fun. She wants us to realize that we don't have to shut the process down because of the terror we might feel as a result of our unfamiliarity with it.

"In this process I have been paralyzed from the waist down as my body was prepared. My legs were paralyzed and I experienced only bliss, not knowing what it is for in 'time' and not caring. This is how it's done. This is the manifestation. Who am I to say? And why would I? There are no thoughts for this. This is the only way I can communicate it to you. Everything is a gift.

"There was a time when I was with some people and I experienced that my whole body drew up like a gnarly old lady. If you'd have had to move my limbs, my fingers, my toes, you would have had to break my body to do it. I was like that for over an hour one day. They

moved me into a bedroom and asked if they could drum, burn sage, and rub my feet. I could see that this would please them, and that's what I'm here for. The gift to me was that I got to see humans burning sage and drumming. I got to experience that humans rub feet. I got to see ritual performed in the attempt to ward off fear. The next day it happened again. On the second day a scream issued forth from this body. Years later, my friend, Ann, told me this was a primordial scream; it is within everyone. At the time, I didn't know that. I simply heard the scream and that it came from this body. The scream continued for an hour. At no time did I experience it as personal. I call it 'The Scream.' It is old beliefs, as body, catching up to enlightened mind — belief systems undone. After 'The Scream', the people asked me not to come back. It was their belief that I was too open and that dark entities could possess me without effort. My knowledge is: There is only God. I could shut down and live in fear of dark entities, paralysis, screams, people's opinions, or I can live as Light. Darkness cannot survive the Light. And Light is Truth.

"What a privilege to serve you gnarled. What a privilege to serve you this way or that way. There's only serving. The only Joy is in the serving. I serve me first. If I serve you it is only to serve me; I am so clear about not knowing what you need. I can't know what you need. It's not my business to know what you need; it's yours. You are responsible for fulfilling your needs. So if you need something, ask, and if I can supply that, then I do it, for me, because in that doing is my Joy. You're there to show me Joy so I can serve endlessly, effortlessly. But I don't step into the delusional thinking that it is for you. You do yours. In that doing all the books of Life live."



To Katie's new way of seeing, her former life looked upside down. The people who came in contact with her after her cockroach experience, including her family, found her an enigma. They tried to fit her into their experience. She listened and she believed each of them until whatever they said no longer coincided with what was being revealed to her from within.

"I woke up and people started mimicking me," Byron says as she describes what this time was like for her. "They took on my characteristics and talked like me and gave me feedback like 'you're awake; you're a this; you're a that.' I had no clue. I was just opening my eyes. I'd get into the shower and discover a leg! And it was mine? And my hands would be washing and I'd think—what is it doing? I'd begun to see through different eyes. The Joy of this cannot be described."

Some people called her *walk-in*. It was an identification that gave her refuge for several years because it acted as a metaphor to explain what felt inexplicable about her experience. People told Byron that she was a spiritual entity that had taken possession of this body by agreement and that the one her husband and children knew and recognized was dead.

"They said 'You were dying anyway, so you walked out and the *walk-in* stepped in.' It sounded fine to me; I didn't recognize my home; I didn't recognize friends, family, anyone. I was seeing everything new and they named that *walk-in*. That fit for me. I must be here on the planet for the first time, a being of Light, because all I see is Love and I don't understand why others pretend that they don't see it also. At the same time I knew that all of us are the same, the others just

weren't aware of it yet—that's what time does; it teaches us specifically how to live in experience as cause and effect. So I could be a *walk-in*. I believe everyone. I am *walk-in*; I am walk out; I am all things."

Roxann also found the description helpful. She says, "I don't know how to describe what she was like when she came home. People said she was a *walk-in*. I'm not saying that's what she was, but this is what it was like: She was as if she were dead. Then she came out of the halfway house. Her face was changed completely. Her eyes were cleared. She was not the same person."

Later on Byron realized that *walk-in* is symbolic. "If we don't survive our reality on one level," she says, "we go to a different level always available to us within and are served always. The higher teachings that come to me from this level show me that there is only One. It was me recognizing Me. The next step can't be told. There are no words for it."

The essence of Byron's awakening is Truth. Commitment to Truth is primary for her. The moment of the cockroach taught her this. In the immediacy of the moment, everything was One. Then her mind moved her slightly off that realization to the sense of "foot" as separate from "cockroach" and from that to the notion of "I am not. . ." This movement away could have continued and eventually she would have arrived at the state of being she experienced before awakening. But instead of moving away, she returned to the "Oneness out of all beliefs."

"I saw. I felt. Then I lost it. And I identified that it was an untrue belief about what I saw and, therefore, felt that belief was the movement away. I saw that the belief wasn't real. I unlearned the concept attached to 'see' and 'feel' and experienced 'home' again. All that



needs to be done is to develop this process. And this is what I teach—a written way of staying in awakened Truth. When you know that it is your belief attached to thought, your untrue concepts, that separates you, it's over. It's done. You're awake.

"When I was a child, I knew I was Love. Then I had the thought that I *was not*, until I was forty-three and Truth came to me in the peace of the moment and I knew again that I *was*. Then I had the thought that I *wasn't*, and instead of its lasting forty-three years, I recognized it now for what it was and am again the awareness of the *I Am*. Even that thought is two steps away from the Divine that can't be told—only experienced."

Unlearning is moment-by-moment work. It requires dedication and renunciation. Katie knew she needed help. To get that help she went from teacher to teacher, beginning with the therapists at the halfway house. From the start she chose to stay with Truth. Truth was her highest choice. Truth was higher than either attachment or loss. She realized that attachment and the perception of loss is the only death. Life springs forth as we let go of attachment.

Paul wanted to take her home immediately. He was ill. During the seven years that preceded her awakening, Katie had fallen more and more deeply into a depressive state, and Paul had taken on the service of care. He did whatever he could to carry her, to carry the family, to carry their business through. He loved them all. Paul tells me, "When you love someone, you love them, that's all. It doesn't matter if they are fat or thin, sane or insane, sick or well. You just love them, and it goes beyond all those things."

He carried a weight not meant for any human being. It wasn't his love that was so heavy. Love kept

him alive. Love kept them all alive. Love is a free gift and frees the one who gives as well as the one who receives. The burden Paul carried was the requirement he placed upon himself to save them all, to keep Katie alive.

He almost died. During the seven years of Katie's illness, Paul suffered four heart attacks. She felt terrified that he would die. It was as though Katie and Paul were dying one another's deaths.

"I began to die those last seven years," she says of that time, "and in the meantime I married Paul. I was so sick when I married him. I was so confused. So confused—and I did it anyway, just like I did everything else—so confused. Then I literally began to die and he stayed with me and he stayed and stayed. He married me at the end and stayed. He took care of the children. He was their mother-father. I was really out of my mind. No matter what I said or did, he stayed."

"When I woke up he came to the halfway house to take me home, and his doctor fixed him up with heart monitors. They told the administrators that if I didn't come home he would die of a heart attack. He had already experienced four heart attacks, and each time they said he wasn't going to live. (All of this happened before I woke up.) My thought was that he would have another massive coronary and would go into intensive care and die. It was terrifying! He was my caretaker."

"So he came to the halfway house after I woke up and told me I had to come home or he was going to die. I looked at him and told him: 'If I don't come home you *may* die. If I come home I *will* die.'

"I'd already had the cockroach experience so I knew. I knew. Nothing moved me from God at that

point. Nothing. And in the halfway house people talked about God.”



Paul didn't know her. He loved her, even changed, but he didn't know her any more than she knew him. He laughs over it now, saying that when, finally, she came home, she was someone else. He told her he needed to go back to the halfway house to find his wife. At the time, Paul says, the loss was devastating. "I paced through the house for several years asking, 'Where did she go?'"

Change is change even when it is for the better. And "when the slightest thing changes," Byron Katie says, "everything changes because the slightest thing is everything." Her change meant that the whole family would change and they resisted.

"I hated her," Roxann shares. "I was sixteen years old and my mom was gone! I thought she was full of shit. I thought 'She'll get me. She'll lower the boom just like before. This is a trick.' Actually I was so scared that she'd come back—the one she was before she went to the halfway house, the beast, and I'd do anything to keep that one away. The other part of it was that she continually challenged all the beliefs she'd once given to me. Like, she'd tell me I could choose. Choose?! Was she kidding? Why hadn't she chosen, before, if choosing was so easy? Who did she think she was kidding? I thought she was messing with my brain. I didn't believe her."

Byron's son, Ross, who totally accepted her life before treatment, who'd always done whatever was needed to obtain her acceptance, who had shared what she now calls her insanity, felt betrayed. "I was in

denial. When everyone said she was sick, I didn't think she had a problem. What she was seemed normal because I'd experienced her that way for eighteen years. I didn't know any different. Then she started getting into all of her spirituality, and it was very, very weird—crazily weird. I was kind of like, embarrassed, because she was so 'out there.' She was in outer space. I think what happened was that she hit the extreme opposite. She was a space being. It was very, very radical. I didn't believe her."

Byron's mother, who had always taken great pride in Byron Katie's achievements, stayed away. "When Katie was really, really sick," she tells me, "I have to say that I was not the person to deal with it. It was a terrible time, and all I felt was that I didn't know how to cope with it and I felt rejected. Because it never occurred to me that people got sick and turned on people they love. It was sad. I did think, though, that I was not the best person to be with Katie."

The losses that followed Byron's awakening and her subsequent work to stay in Truth touched her to the core. Byron says that letting go of attachment is sometimes experienced as sadness. The only letting go of attachment is the letting go of a belief. But that letting go is, ultimately, the loss of a whole world. We awake from a dream to see the mythology we create and substitute for Reality.

"I lived separated from my family of origin—my mother, older sister, younger brother, nieces, and nephews—for five years; it was so painful. I woke up and they weren't there, and I wasn't invited to Christmas or Thanksgiving or their birthdays. Holidays were arranged throughout the year, and I wasn't invited and neither were my children, which is

understandable due to the change that had taken place. It was so scary. I thought I would die of the loss. So I had to love something higher. I had to stay with the mother that I knew. That mother was Truth.

"I say it like it was nothing, but. . . . And I do share it with people always. Whenever I was around my family, they treated me as if I were going to break, as if I were so fragile, and it seemed they couldn't get away from me fast enough. They gave me the gift of being without family on the physical level of reality. This was an honoring beyond what I could know. It lasted five years.

"I had to have Truth. It was how I stayed free. Families leave. Friends leave. Our children leave. Mothers leave. Husbands leave. God is. Truth is. God never moves. That's how loving God is. We move away through God so that we can know—beyond what we can know. We are all innocent."

After three or four weeks, Katie left the halfway house and came home. The family expected things would return to normal, that Katie would again become the person she had been before her seven-year slide into depression and death. For her, though, that way of being was gone. It wasn't normal anymore. She reached toward them, they yearned toward her, but they couldn't meet.

"I was living in a world I didn't recognize," she says. "I wasn't able any longer to do what all of you do. I couldn't eat like you can; I couldn't see like you can; I couldn't hear like you can; I couldn't verbalize—none of it. I was in passionate Love for everyone and every time I went to you I couldn't keep my hands off

you. I was wild with Love. I was mad with Love. And every time I went to you I scared you. So I couldn't. None of me was acceptable."

When the anguish of this alienation became too great, her husband and children needed to hold her down on the bed while they telephoned the therapists. She told the therapists about her wild love, her unrestrained compassion. "And they took time out to hear me. That they would listen was beyond my comprehension. But, of course, if I'm the Love, so are they. I went out and found that all people are that way. After that I could ask for Love without scaring you and attacking you. I'd just say, 'I'm not doing very well, would you hold me?' That was my line. Just the Truth. Whatever I was feeling. And I was never turned down by any human. Ever. Anywhere. We are Love."

Katie took to the streets, went to the people. She asked Paul to drive her to the Los Angeles area, just to let her out in the middle of the city. "And he would argue and yell so much that I didn't recognize him. He went nuts about this. I was loving everything equally and he and my children were very confused. And this man, my husband, would drop me off with what he saw as a homeless woman in downtown Santa Monica. He'd drop me off with 'those people' and leave me. He suffered the agony of not always knowing when he was to pick me up, and I hadn't been out of his sight for years; I was his baby. I'd say, 'I need to do this or I am going to die.' This homeless woman, who had also been one of the therapists at the halfway house, spoke of things I could hear. She was an angel to me. Paul loathed this woman. He may have seen me as loving her more than I loved him. I would go to her. In his mind she was taking care of me now. She was nurtur-

ing me. Nevertheless he left me there with her. He trusted. That's Love. That's Love."

She attended Twelve Step programs with this woman. Together they visited practitioners of New Age spirituality. "I ended up sleeping on the floors of the strangest places. I stayed with her because she had names for what was happening to me. Later I came to realize the possibility that she may not have been experiencing all the beautiful Truth she was teaching. She took me to people who spoke of channeling spirit guides and I was amazed. Eventually I came to know another Truth. Except for the beliefs that say otherwise, there is only One. All the rest is projected."

"At one point my homeless friend became so frustrated that she stopped contacting me. This was the separation and what remains is the Love that I experience as this woman. I'd never heard the things she spoke before. I'd not heard that you could have the God of your choice. I didn't know anything about any kind of choice."

After about a six-month friendship with this woman, Katie began to live without her guidance. "I found that body, like all external things, is simply another symbol reflecting mind." Katie went the way of Truth, and her body responded with health. She says each of us is the ultimate teacher. She experienced that when she took in any animal source as food, her tongue bled in a strip down the center, and she needed to wipe it with tissues. Each time the animal source had passed through her, the bleeding stopped until the next intake of any animal source when the bleeding would again appear. Cause and effect is the ultimate teacher in the material dimension. Raw fruits and vegetables seemed to be the easier foods her body

would accept. No more ice cream. No more cigarettes or alcohol or red meat. No more death.

Six months after the cockroach, the Lady came. Paul was holding Katie. They lay on the bed and she felt agony, another kind of death. In the midst of this, she noticed a woman sitting in the chair by the side of the bed. She sat with her legs apart as an unrefined old lady might and held her hands in front of her, making interlocking rings of her thumbs and forefingers. She looked wonderful to Katie, voluptuous—an old lady in a dark paisley dress, her hair in a bun on top of her head.

Katie felt herself merge, one with the one that she calls my Lady.

"And then I saw—*all of it!* I was this woman, sitting there. I could see through her eyes that also became my eyes. That was where I learned there is no time and no space. It wasn't taught; it was known. I looked over at the man and the woman, who were my husband and me, and saw the terror in their eyes. They were not even visible to me as man and woman; they were barely human. These are the only words I can use to describe them—barely human from time's beginning. They were suffering from profound guilt, and their only guilt was that they didn't know that they didn't have to suffer. I felt an all encompassing Love for them in their innocence. They didn't know who they were; they didn't yet know the beauty of themselves; but I know. What I am went so far beyond what my beliefs, at that time, could encompass that I split apart. This is the split we all feel between the manifested self and the real Self. And that can't be put into words either. What I am is a complete, total Love that has never left this One. It was a cellular change. It was radiant. It stays."



Words are incapable of describing with exactness what happened to Katie. She says, "I shot through all the realms." Instantaneously she became the awareness of Reality in its completeness. The metaphor of time, its beginning and end, and the endpoint of what we call evolution opened to her. She was, herself, the evolution. She was being, fully evolved. "I learned what I needed to learn. Then when I saw the couple on the bed, I knew that they just didn't understand. To them, it wasn't time yet. They hadn't advanced as that yet." She knew herself to be the complete One, the totally perfect Reality and, simultaneously, the woman in process, evolving into that One, located in a specific moment. "And it was done. I found the place in what we call time and focused on it." From the fullness of Being, the moment focused. That moment provided her with a gateway back into the dimension of reality we call time and space, back to the two people on the bed in the house in Barstow, California. "I believe today," she tells us, "that if the experience had not been projected outside of me, it would not have been possible to hold the vibration of Love that I am—that we are. On a cellular level it could be described as an explosion, an obliteration in Light beyond what a human could survive."

We pass beyond this mortal life. We enter into God. Katie returned from this experience relaxed, her heart healed by the Love of the Lady.

"Did you see her?" she asked Paul.

"Who?"

"My Lady."

He said no. He didn't question.

The Lady stayed with her for as long as Katie needed her, approximately seven years. Katie discovered that if she exaggerated any experience or deviat-

ed in the slightest manner from the Truth, the Center, the Light of Reality, then the Lady would be standing in a corner with her head down. Katie felt her absence and moved toward her. The Lady motioned, "I abide only in Truth."

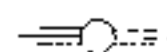
"Existence was unbearable without her. I'd found one who understood. I kept returning to Truth and then I felt her presence again and I walked in that Light.

"I continued as revelations and tried to speak of it, but there are no words. It's like going out into the open street and saying, 'I saw God's eyes today; they are my eyes. I saw God's face today; it is my face.' Those are the words for it. And yet, I didn't see eyes and face. There are no words for what I saw: the Beauty of this One, that One, no One, Everyone.

"There were angels everywhere. You are angels. That's a way of speaking, a symbol for perception that appears. It is one way I can speak the language.

"What I've come to know is that I projected the Lady. Bodies are projected as long as one is limited to seeing form as experience. We give us what we need. We supply our own medicine and we call that angels. What happened to me and what continues to happen is that I experience the *is* that I *is*. I am always available as that. Communication is the limitation that always falls short. Today I don't wait for angels. *I Am* always the angel I've been awaiting, and so are you. It is not out there. What happened with my Lady was that I automatically projected her out there like a movie, not on purpose, but as a result of perceived painful limitation I was experiencing in this dimension. Some people would project Christ, others Krishna. I projected this fat Lady with a bun on her head, wearing a paisley dress. That's who I could trust. Now I trust all and All."

"I woke up knowing that God is everything. Each person makes that decision. We do it moment by moment, thought by thought. Actually, the decision has already been made, but when you are not at peace you have moved from it and decided 'Yes, God is everything, but not this.' That thought is never going to work. There is no exception. Not in my experience. Why would I not live this? Anything else is suffering."



The power of Byron Katie's awakening communicated itself. She saw some people dissolving in tears with just her touch, before she said a word. She noticed this effect right away, while she was still in the halfway house, and it continued after she returned home. In her presence people felt healed of both physical and psychological disease. "I began to notice that people would come to *me* for healing. Then they would recreate the disease as a result of their unhealed thinking and return to be healed another time by me. They would lose it again and come back again. I saw the house as not being large enough to hold all the people who wanted me to do their job. There were not enough hours in the day, and people became enraged when they were turned away."

From a reservoir of stories, Byron picks out that of the Los Angeles city cop and his wife. The woman came to Byron at her home. Day after day she came and sat in the presence of the one she saw as an awakened healer. Even after being forbidden by her husband, the woman came. Enraged, sure that he would lose her, the Los Angeles city cop followed his wife one day. He burst in on the two women, waving his arms, yelling, ordering his wife to leave. He threatened


Byron that her house would burn down in the night, at a time when she least expected it, and that her children definitely would be in it. Byron Katie smiled. She was perfectly calm. "How can you kill me?" she asked. "You can wreck my house; it isn't my house. Take my house; it's yours."

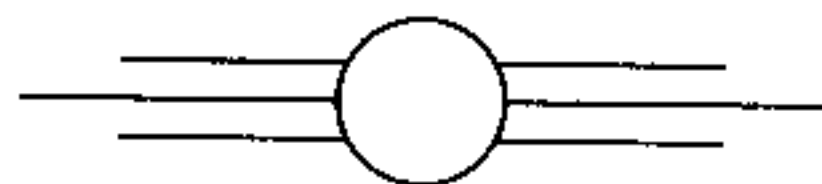
The Los Angeles city cop burst into tears. Byron took him in her arms. He had heard the Truth. His surrender was the step that healed him of the rage and hopelessness issuing from his view of the world as harmful and threatening.

Even though people approached her as a miracle worker, Byron didn't see herself that way.

"Healer, heal thyself. It became clear to me that the healings were a Band-Aide™ and could serve only to promote myself. When this became visible, I began to give people The Work and invited them to heal themselves. Their healing wasn't my job and couldn't be held even if I wanted it to be. Hold your own. In my presence you heal. I am a reflection of you — unconditional Love reflecting itself as the You you recognize. Away from my presence you recreate disease as a result of unloving beliefs. Undo those, one by one; experience health, life, the You of you.

"The Work appears to be phenomenal for those who want it, for seekers of peace. I work with people who are considered by some to be the hopeless. My house is open. It's not my house. The hopeless are available to the touch; it is the only thing left for some. And because there's no fear in me, but because I also know what fear is, I can move inside. There's nowhere, now, that I am not inside.

"Only you can heal you," Byron tells us. "I'm a boost. I'm what it looks like on the other side." 



## THE ONLY THING THAT HOLDS

People came to Byron Katie and they continue to come. One of the things she gives is what she calls The Work. It's simple: a series of the limited questions we have always asked from the beginning. These questions serve to uncover the Truth and assist us in assuming responsibility for our own life. She culled the questions from her soul, from three years of posing them to herself and answering them. "I went to the desert," she says. "I did The Work." It was the way she held her own awakening.

People met her anywhere: at Twelve Step meetings, waiting in line at the bank, at a discussion of *A Course In Miracles*,™ in a group of violent, incorrigible men and inmates, in the streets, under the stars in the waters of desert hot springs. They were men, women and children. Their vocations varied. They were homemakers and restaurant owners, artists and landlords, publishers and textile workers, nuns, teachers, psychotherapists, professors, avatars, massage therapists, street people, people in prisons, cancer patients, photographers, financiers, actors, writers, ordained ministers. Their spiritual beliefs and practices spanned the gamut: Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, *A Course In Miracles*,™ Goddess spirituality, Atheism, New Age spirituality. She touched them all. She spoke a language each could understand. She taught them how to heal themselves. She sent them back into their lives, their work, their churches, their spiritual communities with deeper

— THE ONLY THING THAT HOLDS —

understanding and renewed commitment to the Truth of all that always had been there.

I asked them why they came to her in the first place. Many had heard of her through friends. They came in trust. Some had felt a powerful intuition akin to a spiritual call, a summons. Some had simply recognized in her something ineffable that they couldn't resist. These people approached her although she was a stranger to them. Others went to workshops seeking help for their lives and found a woman they describe as genuine, open, noncontrolling, wise, beautiful, humorous, enlightened, joyful—someone who lives what she teaches. "She is ecstasy in a body!" said Mary. "Katie *is* that which we are all striving to become, *which is perfect Love*. She is, to me, the epitome of Love. Her very presence gives me a feeling of peace and Love comes through her eyes."

She can be a surprise. When Byron Katie, who spent forty-three years living and working in Needles and Barstow, walks down the street, she could be anyone. She doesn't impose her way on others. She only answers questions that are asked. You could be her next door neighbor and not know who she really is.

Byron Katie and Paul often saw Ernstina at the bank. They were customers of hers. "Then I ran into her at a friend's house," Ernstina writes, "and found that she was not the same Byron that I meet at the bank. We began attending study groups of *A Course In Miracles*.™ It became apparent that while all of us were struggling with the concepts of the Course, Byron was a teacher of Truth. It was obvious that she *knew* and lived Truth. She studied with me as a courtesy—she already was the material and was living it."

Randy was Ross's guitar teacher. "I was intro-

duced to Katie's family by a friend," he says, "to give beginning guitar lessons to Katie's son, Ross. Ross and I quickly became good friends. His dedication to the instrument was rare, but so was the support and involvement of his mom. Katie was as excited and enthusiastic as Ross. During that short period of a couple of months I felt very close to this family. They were quite special. Katie always had a kind of magic about her that lit up the room. I had never met anyone with such a consistently positive attitude. It was incredibly contagious. Katie always built up my self-esteem and gave me the feeling that I could succeed at anything. This gift she apparently gave her husband and children, for it reflected all around her. How mysterious this talent was."

Eventually Randy decided to move away from Barstow. "Katie bought my bus ticket and, as usual, overpaid me for lessons I had given." He established himself, managing a restaurant, in Fresno, California. Now and then he phoned Katie and never failed to send cards at Christmas. The Christmas of 1994, he returned to Barstow for a visit.

"I have difficulty explaining the changes that took place inside my head and heart after my visit with Katie and Ross this past Christmas. I stopped by for a short visit just to see how everyone was and to check on Ross's career as a producer. I had been depressed for a number of months, mainly over occupational uncertainty.

"Katie told me briefly what she had been up to (workshops, etc.), and it led to my opening up, sharing some bottled up feelings. The advice she gave me, although simple, was profound. And I listened. I listened!! And I learned.

"It's almost seven months later, now, and I still feel the way I did when I left Barstow that day. I have endured the split up of my parents and my dad's remarriage, the emotional roller coaster my mom has been riding, the breakup and difficult divorce proceedings between my brother and his wife of twelve years, and my recent job change after more than thirteen years.

"I feel fine. It's like magic."

The lessons Randy learned on Christmas that serve him so well are five. They summarize his understanding of Byron Katie's teaching:

1. Don't dwell on the past. *The mistakes you have made in life are wonderful. Some day similar circumstances may allow you to use the wisdom you have gained from wrong decisions or behavior. There is pain in the past. Why continue to endure this pain when life is happening all around you?*
2. Don't dwell on the future. *It pays to have a plan. You might even be foolish not to have insurance and a retirement program. But to worry about things that may never come to pass creates needless pain. There is pain in the future.*
3. Dwell on the present. *If you spend each day doing what you know is right, everything will be okay. Moreover the doors of opportunity will present themselves, and you will be prepared to recognize and open them. This is not to be confused with the frivolous proverb of "Live for today, tomorrow may never come." You have a job to do. So get it done. Katie says one of the most beautiful sounds she knows is that of 'Katie does the dishes.' This is the practiced art of recognizing the essence of living by appreciating the human senses. Work becomes music.*

4. There are three types of business.

*Your business.*

*Other people's business.*

*God's business.*

*The wisdom of knowing the differences allows you to realize the reasons behind why you get involved with situations in daily life.*



"Katie told me 'If Ross and Paul are quarreling in the same room I happen to be in, I leave the room (business #2). They may ask for my help in resolving the situation. If they do, I can say yes. Then I know I am helping them, not just making myself feel better.'

"This does not mean you must absolutely abstain from involvement in things that don't directly involve you. But knowing what motivates you to do the things you do helps you better understand the differences between interference and welcome reconciliation.

5. When you are worried about what people think or expect, ask yourself "Is it really true?" *Oftentimes it isn't. Sounds like more needless pain, doesn't it?*

"These are the few simple principles she offered and I gratefully accepted. My perception of life is much different now. Although this wisdom may be found in dozens of published books of quotations and are, for the most part, basic biblical principles, it took Katie to teach them to me.

"I understand there are many others like myself."



Yes. There are thousands. Friends are telling friends. Therapists recommend their clients attend a

workshop. Many therapists do The Work as a part of therapy. Spiritual teachers come to learn from her. Some of them become children again in her arms.

Karen felt a deep intuition, a call, to be with Byron Katie. She herself is a teacher of wisdom. A former nun, now a clinical hypnotherapist, Reiki master, Shen practitioner, shamanic counselor, ordained spiritual healer, she says she is now on the true path of the heart. Her time with Byron Katie quickened her development. "I can now move through blocks, barriers, and illusions with rapid speed. I am so much more at ease, at home with myself and others. I am no longer afraid to die."

Karen signed up for a workshop. Her experience transformed her. "I had a profound initiation," she writes, "a spontaneous initiation with Katie at Tacopa Springs last December. She and I were driving to the hot springs during our seven-day retreat, a short distance of several blocks, when a car of new arrivals for the day passed us, and we stopped momentarily so Katie could talk to them. While I waited I became aware of regressing to the age of three and could feel intensely my small child's fear of abandonment and deep desire to be accepted and loved by the Mother—to know the Mother really loved me. I was feeling helpless and needed desperately as a small child to feel the bonding between Mother and Child—my child. After Katie's conversation with the people in the other car, we proceeded to the hot springs, showered and entered the women's pool naked. No one else was in the pool. Some old women were sitting in the sun outside and up above the pool. My three-year-old self took over and in a small child's voice I spontaneously asked Mama Katie if she loved me. She immediately

responded by coming right to me. She looked me directly in my eyes and told me the truth: that she loved me. I asked her if she would ever go away, and she told me clearly she would never go away and would love me always. My sobbing self was then embraced by Mama Katie, my breasts touching her naked breasts in the hot pool of water — rivers of tears cleansing my heart, my body, my soul — our bodies touching so every cell in my body knew the moment of love entering, the full embrace of love. All the years of loneliness, abandonment, and fear were being washed away in the women's pool, in the healing waters, in the embrace of One who knows herself and can love unconditionally the wounded self."

John, a teacher of *A Course In Miracles*,™ explains the powerful effect of an encounter with Byron Katie this way. "When she looks into your eyes, she sees not the false image you have created through many lives of fear, pain, and guilt. Byron sees only the Christ (perfection) within, and she reflects it back for you to see and, by seeing, enter the Peace of God (Source/Higher Self)."

Some come as skeptics. Others feel the chattering arguments in their minds grow silent as they are released to a deep honesty.

Sandy writes: "I attended one of her workshops out at the hot springs and in my normal, judgmental state of being, I sort of kept score of Byron and the weekend. It went kind of like this:



### MINUS POINTS

- She was hours late.
- She didn't tell me there were three gates.
- I don't like to take baths.
- Raw vegetable juice tastes yucky.
- She didn't tell me I was going to be the only fat person in the group.
- She's pretty.
- She's too happy.

### PLUS POINTS

- She respected my not wanting to hug or be touched immediately.
- She was kind, intelligent and honest.
- She has a sense of humor.
- She could see through my ego's lies.
- She knew what it was like to be overweight.
- She spilled her guts alongside the rest of us (never asking of us more than she would give of herself).
- She has a wonderful son.
- She knows what she's doing, even if she can't explain it.
- She helped me see my own mind games.
- She accepted me despite my financial state.
- She has lots of wonderful friends, and their testimony gave more credence to her teachings.
- She let me ask a lot of questions.
- She didn't laugh at me naked in the baths.
- She didn't make fun of my teddy bear.
- She helped me help myself.
- She understands.





“As you can see, the pluses far outweighed the other, and it wasn’t long before I was up to my neck ‘in the Truth.’ By leading us through the exercises and subsequent discussions, Byron helped me see the ways I often twist things in my mind to suit my immediate self. That is, I relate more naturally to short-term benefits and tend to procrastinate on the steps I could take today that would help me achieve long-term goals. I came to the workshop with a deep sense of hopelessness, feeling angry and afraid and apart from myself, and I didn’t like it. I didn’t like me. Byron showed me how to pardon myself—not to excuse behavior but to see and understand it so I could consciously decide if I wanted to continue it.

“I suppose this sounds rather vague. I can’t say I’ve been happily living on raw vegetable juice since I went to the workshop or that I’ve lost ‘X’ amount of pounds because of the workshop. In a worldly sense, the only thing I can directly attribute to Byron and her workshop is the workbook I wrote as a result of my experience. I use the exercises she taught us. I live more consciously (and more honestly) now. It may not show to others, but I can feel it. I am not so downhearted and weary. I now see the opportunities in my regular job (that was a real sore spot when I attended her workshop). I feel more at peace with myself and with the world, and I think that it is because of Byron’s ability to penetrate a person’s mind and heart and get to the source of the conflict within.

“Also, on the practical side, I respect Byron for helping me as well as many others in spite of our lack of financial resources to compensate her. I have been to many, many self-help seminars and programs where the true emphasis is monetary profit for the leader(s).

This is clearly not the case where Byron is concerned. I think she should be paid, and I don’t object to being charged for the workshops or supplies, but I am particularly grateful and indebted to her that she doesn’t deny her gift on the basis of money.”



Different people experience what Byron teaches according to their particular need. One says she teaches how to live in the present moment. Another learned radical self-responsibility. Unconditional Love, the oneness of Being, forgiveness, innocence, nonjudgment, the primacy of Truth, the dispelling of illusion, respect for all life and for our bodies, Joy as life’s essence, healthy attitudes toward food, the realization that we teach what we are: Each of these focused The Work for a particular person and became the energy of transformation and healing.

They say The Work changed their lives. And it holds. It’s practical. Bobby no longer avoids her feelings. Sandy lives with greater consciousness, hope, and honesty with herself. Martha lets people off the hook; they no longer need to change to make her happy. “I’ve been on the path for twenty years,” she says. “I had cleared a lot, healed a lot, learned a lot, unlearned a lot before I met Byron. Still, my life changed profoundly from being in her healing presence and doing The Work. She’s a rare, precious, and wonderful friend and teacher. She lives love, speaks her truth, and shares everything she is with those who come to work with her.”

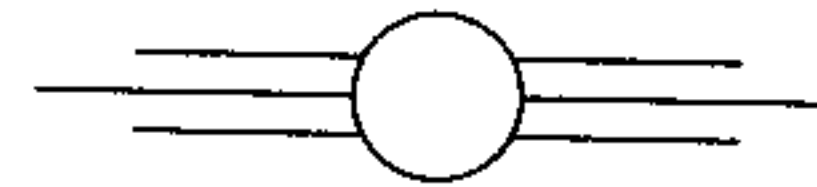
Pauline respects her body now, doesn’t eat the foods that make her sick, and no longer needs medication for allergies. John resolved pain he experienced

as ancient, existing over many lifetimes. Ernstina discovered that her search is an internal one. Mary meets new people and situations with greater ease.

Gay, who is a spiritual teacher herself, reflects on her experience with Byron, saying that The Work is too new for her to be aware of its effect on her life. "But being with Byron is an experience of openness and love, of the hope for unending growth and reconnection with Source. Byron is and exemplifies her teaching. It is so authentic that there in front of you is the proof. Not too many teachers have that powerful a tool in themselves.

"Byron sums up what the great masters have said in such a *simple* way. I love it! After struggling to memorize, and after doing so many practices (mostly Tibetan), it's a gift to realize that the great undoing is life itself — not a lineage of concepts. Byron's friendship and example do continually expand my life."

Byron Katie's story continues and expands through encounters, in the lives of all of us. Through each person she teaches to do The Work, we all learn more about ourselves and about who she is as a mirror of ourselves.



## RECOGNITION

Carol brims with her story. She can't wait to tell it. She calls me on the phone from Ohio. "I got your questionnaire," she announces in a voice tinged with the South, breathy with excitement. "I tried writing. There was too much, so I taped it. Then it filled up with details that I didn't know whether or not to include. My husband said to put them in and you'd edit them out if you didn't need them. But today I decided to call you, and so here I am."

Carol's voice rises and falls. She laughs and weeps. She never before met anyone like Byron Katie; this theme runs through every detail of her story. Carol announces. She's a clarion. In a crowd of people she recognized a woman who was different, a woman who was like a tuning fork for Truth, an embodiment of Wisdom as ancient as the world. Recognition came at a workshop in Sedona, Arizona, in the summer of 1993.

It was Carol's birthday. She was fifty-two years old, which hardly seemed possible; she felt so young. Several months before, Carol's friend, Mary, phoned to tell her of a Sedona hiking trip with a shamanic teacher. Carol was excited. She had heard about Sedona and its energy vortexes, and she wanted to experience them. She sent her registration and she and Mary began preparing for the trip. Then Mary's back started giving her a lot of pain. She wasn't sure she could keep up with a hiking group. Carol wanted to go, but she also wanted Mary with her.



She might have given up the trip except for a profound experience. Carol heard something like a voice. It was as though she were *told*: "Someone will be there. Someone wise, who knows the Truth of life. Someone ancient." It was a feeling that took form. A kind of thought but more than thought. It was something received. It was as though Carol were already there, in Sedona, before she was there, while she was still in Ohio. She felt herself part of a group, a circle of people. In a kind of vision, Carol saw a woman walk around the group, and no one but Carol recognized her.

Immediately Carol called Mary.

"Get well, Mary, we have to go to Sedona."

Carol told Mark, her son, who had developed an interest in spiritual things, about the trip. He was in Las Vegas and decided to join her in Arizona rather than make the trip home to Ohio. The three met in Sedona, got settled in the hotel, and Carol anticipated her destined meeting with the woman of her vision, the woman who was wise.

Carol wasn't a person who spoke out in public. She surprised herself at the introductory session when the hiking group gathered outside by the pool. Everyone else was there already when Mary, Carol, and Mark arrived. They settled into the remaining places. Carol glanced around. Across the pool from her sat a woman whose face was radiant. "Oh my God, look at that face!" she murmured to herself, "I want to know who that is." She couldn't see the woman's eyes, but as she stared at the woman's face all she could think was "Light."

Introductions began. When it came time for the woman across the pool to speak, she said, "My name is Katie Rolle. I woke up one morning and I didn't

remember who my husband or my children were." Simple. Short. Mary remembers thinking, "My God, that poor woman." Her own introduction was even simpler: "I've come to learn," she said.

Introductions proceeded. It was Carol's turn. She began, too softly. Mary urged her, "Carol, stand up, I can't see you." She stood. "I'm Carol," she began and then, not understanding why she did it, she told the story of a spiritual experience she'd had ten years earlier.

Carol had been a person with everything: a wonderful husband, three children, money, a fine home. She had no reason to think all of this would change. Then something happened. A trap door of the soul sprang open. She fell through into darkness. In her daily life there were problems with the children. She had no answers. She barely knew the questions. She drifted away from herself through a gloom that felt endless. Three months passed. She says she was catatonic. She moved, though, enough to get herself into her car each day and down to a cafe where she smoked cigarettes, drank coffee, and read books. She came home afterward, sank in front of the TV, and ate junk food. She stopped cleaning house. She stopped cooking. She did nothing.

Her husband asked if he could help, if there was anything that he could do. There wasn't. He endured. He watched and hoped.

One day after coffee and cigarettes, Carol drove home, not thinking, not paying attention, when a current like electricity shot up through the soles of her feet into her body and out the top of her head. She stopped the car.

Her gloom vanished. The nothingness, the deep depression was totally gone. All the guilt was gone, all

the blame she'd taken on herself for her children's problems, all the anger, all the fear, all of it was gone. She felt only love and joy and peace. She felt a presence. She turned around to look in the backseat, thinking, "Surely I'm going to see God." Peace enveloped her. It felt like a place. A being. "In that place," she says, "a person has access to the knowledge and wisdom of the One Mind where everything is connected in One." There was nothing else. She turned her face to the daylight streaming all around her, dancing on the leaves of every tree that lined the boulevard and whispered, "thank you."

In Sedona Carol told this story and finished by saying, "I know who I am; I'm just in the process of remembering," and she sat down. The others in the circle introduced themselves, and the session was over. The guide instructed them to return pool-side later so that he could assess their physical capabilities and give instructions for the week. People rose to leave. Carol, distracted by the late afternoon slant of light, remained in her chair. In a moment she became aware of someone standing in front of her—the woman, Katie, from across the pool. Carol looked up and saw the same love and joy and peace radiating from Katie's face as she had felt from the experience in the car ten years earlier. She wanted to know this woman.

"When you told your story, I cried," Katie said.

"You did?"

"I did. Have you had any more experiences like that?"

"Yes," Carol admitted, "a few."

"Well, I would like to talk to you about them if I could."

Never before had anyone shown this kind of

interest in Carol's experiences. She'd been rather solitary, living in the country, not belonging to any women's groups, keeping to herself. Katie's request was a shock. She felt shy. Her face reflected it.

Katie stepped back and smiled.

It came to Carol's mind that Katie might not have shared her experiences with anyone before. Maybe both of them felt shy. "Oh, yes," she stammered. "Heavens yes. This is the first time anybody's asked, and it took me by surprise."

"Then we'll meet again during the week and talk?"

"I'd love it!" Carol replied, not revealing her premonition and her suspicion that Katie was the wise woman of her vision. They'd be taking some trips to good hiking trails. They could talk then. They hugged each other and went to their rooms.

Carol burst in on Mary. "Did you notice that woman? The one with the radiant eyes? The one who forgot everything? Did you see the life and the light and the love come from that woman's face? My goodness!"

For two days Carol watched Katie. Katie never seemed to tire. She climbed mountains and looked as fresh at the top as when she started. She walked with ease. She never stopped radiating the mysterious light that first attracted Carol to her. "She's the one," Carol realized. "She's the one I heard about, the ancient one, the wise one."

Since her experience in the car ten years previously, Carol had searched for a way to hold the love and peace and joy. The awareness lasted two weeks. She'd been ecstatic. Then one day as she was driving, a car swerved in front of her. She slammed on the brakes. Her heart raced. She tasted fear like metal on the back of her tongue. She lost her ecstasy. But she

never lost her knowledge of what was possible. For ten years she prayed, "Please, God, show me where I am; show me if I'm on the right path. Let me see."

When Mary introduced herself by telling the group that she had come to learn, she was speaking of something essential to her life. Mary is a woman in her sixties who has spent most of her life searching in books and consulting with teachers to find access to the divine mysteries and how to live a transcendent life on earth. She's a woman hungry for Truth. In Sedona she attempted each climb, despite the pain in her back. People assisted her. But by the second night she was exhausted. She decided to leave the room where the group was gathered to witness the shaman leader demonstrate shamanic rituals. She tried to find Carol but couldn't. In the hallway, Mary looked for the elevator. She couldn't remember where it was.

Suddenly, seeming from nowhere, Katie appeared.

"Hi, honey," Katie smiled.

Mary told her she was so exhausted she couldn't even find the elevator, and Katie pointed it out to her. As Mary turned to go to her room, Katie said, "I admire your integrity."

"There was something," Mary says now, "each time she looked at me. Something about her eyes."

The next day Mary didn't want to climb, but the shaman encouraged her, saying that it wouldn't be difficult. It was. The group gathered to examine hieroglyphics on the wall of a large cave in the mountain-side. Mary, exhausted again, felt tricked. "This shaman speaks with a forked tongue," she declared to the group. Then she looked over at Katie. She remembered the words, "I admire your integrity." Suddenly

Mary thought she recognized who Katie was.

That evening, alone with Carol in their room, Mary said "Carol, I think I know who Katie is."

Just at that moment there was a knock at the door and Katie came in. Both Mary and Carol suspected they had encountered in this woman a being beyond what they had ever known. For Carol, she was the ancient wise one of her revelation. Katie pulled a chair up and positioned it between the two women who were sitting, each on her own bed.

"If there's anything you want to ask me, please do that. I'm here to give you what I have to offer if you want it."

Mary had learned from her teachers to question everything, particularly in one who claimed any spiritual authority.

"Are you a *walk in*?" Mary asked.

"Well, I don't know. Tell me what a *walk in* is and I'll tell you if I think I am one."

Mary explained the belief that the spirit sometimes leaves the body of a person and another spirit, a being of Light, enters to occupy that body, to perform some kind of work on earth. It would account for Katie's loss of memory, for her sense that she had awakened, new, in the middle of her life.

"I am Love and Joy." Katie beamed. "I am a *walk in*, and I am also an angel." She looked at Carol. "I am Love and Joy," she said, "just like you."

Carol felt tears rise and then sobs. Something washed away, leaving her clean and open. It was divine peace, a feeling Carol recognized immediately from her experience ten years earlier. Mary was crying too.

"Precious friends," Katie crooned, "crying is good." She held their hands in hers.

Miracles of the spirit are gentle as rain.

Carol's mind floated like mist over a deep pool. She couldn't think of a thing to ask. All these years she'd prayed, "Father, am I on the right path?" Now her hand belonged in Katie's hand. "There isn't anything but Love," she finally said, "and the emotion of that Love is Joy."

"You're absolutely right. I am Love and Joy, just like you. You are the same as what I am. What you see is you."

Mary looked up. "Can you hold us, Katie?"

"Come, sit on my lap."

"Oh no," Mary sounded startled, "I don't want to hurt you."

"You can't hurt me. You cannot hurt this body. Only I have that power."

Mary turned to Carol. "You go first." She was sixty-three years old and speaking like a child.

Carol got off the bed and sat in Katie's lap. She leaned into Katie's arms, put her head on Katie's breast. And Katie held her. She let herself be a child and Katie held her. Katie mothered her. Her breath felt feathery against Carol's head, and Carol heard a ticking noise, very fast, which Carol identified as the frequency of the Life Force. Some years before, Carol had been sitting in her living room, resting. When she looked out the window, she felt the air vibrating to a frequency identical to the sound emanating from Katie. Carol relaxed into the sound. She felt her prayer being answered.

Then Katie held Mary. Mary heard the same sound. When, later, the two women asked Katie what the sound was, she told them everything was Love, the source of all. Carol understood then that although different people use different words and images to talk

about that out of which everything comes—that original One, that Life Force, that Source—its energy frequency is the same. It is Love.

From that time on Katie joined Carol and Mary, riding in the car with them to the different hiking trails. She became their teacher. Katie, Mary, Carol, and Mark spent the remainder of the week together. In Katie's presence, the others found peace. They all understood that Katie was their purpose for having gone to Sedona. Their recognition of her opened them to her teaching. Mary and Carol both feel they were destined to receive from Byron Katie the Truth of their lives.

One day the group hiked to a place of healing water, a place sacred to the aboriginal peoples. Carol rolled up her cotton pants and walked upstream, almost to the headwaters, to a place where an underground spring joined the river. The ground was flat. Carol sat on a rock with her feet in the icy waters. She started to meditate. She lost track of time. Her body melded with the body of earth, her spirit and the river became one.

The Arizona sun is relentless. When consciousness of her surroundings returned and she looked down at her legs, she saw that she was sunburned from the tops of her feet to above her knees. By that night, when the hiking group met on the grass by the pool, Carol's legs were swollen huge with pain. She asked Mark, who is a second degree Reiki master, to Reiki her legs. It gave her some relief but not for long. She excused herself and went to her room.

"I am not this body," she told herself. It was something Katie had taught them. "Dear, dear body, you do not need to have this pain," she repeated over and over. She let this message run through her legs

like healing water, cool, refreshing. She let the words wash the pain away.

Carol discovered in the days to follow that Katie never answers a question that has not been asked. She does not impose. On another day, the group visited an Indian museum at the site of an ancient cave-dwelling people. The group had scattered throughout the museum viewing artifacts when Carol realized she was not doing what she wanted to do. She wanted to be with Katie. But the prospect of disturbing Katie verged on the impossible. Carol had grown up in the South. Politeness, being proper, holding back her own impulses and desires in order to assure the comfort of others were values deeply instilled. "Don't bother people! Don't make a little pest of yourself!" How often had she heard those words?

As she stood alone, gazing at an exhibit of prehistoric tools, she thought, "I'm being proper, so proper. There's nothing I want more than to be with Katie and learn everything she can teach me. But she needs to have her space. I don't want to be a pest." That was it. She didn't want to be a pest. Suddenly such thoughts seemed silly.

Carol left the exhibit and found Katie standing in another room by a painting. She went up to her and burst into tears.

"Katie, I'm trying to be so proper and not bother you, but that's not what I want. I want you to teach me everything you know. I want to know what you know."

Katie took Carol into her arms. "Oh, honey, it took great courage for you to come to me and say that."

Carol continued to weep. The two women went outside and sat on a large rock. Katie began to talk intimately, intensely. Carol's gaze felt locked into

Katie's. She heard Katie's voice, but she didn't hear her words. It may have been the voice of creation, the voice of being. It had the timbre of wind in the crevasse, the gentleness of the mountain stream. It felt to her like the infinity of a Sedona night, the miracle of stars. It ran through her like blood; it was the beating of her own heart. It was the vast and open spaces of Divine Mind.

Katie finished. Carol's sense of the two of them sitting on the rock returned and she realized she hadn't heard a word that Katie had said. The last words she recalled were, "In all these seven years since I woke up, I never told anyone this before. . ." and then the words were lost until she heard Katie say, "And your name is Humble." And those words were the last, the one's that brought Carol back into her separate individuality.

"Oh no," Carol said to herself. "What did you do that for? You didn't hear what she said, and she was teaching you something." Since that time she asked Katie several times to tell her again, put it into words, but Katie smiles and says that Carol is too intent upon the words. What she has is enough. Katie says, "Hear me like a song. It cannot be heard with the mind anyway."

On the day the group was scheduled to go to an observatory, it was closed. Some chose to hike another trail. Mary was tired and she and Carol returned to the hotel for a rest. When they told Katie of their plan she said, "I'll come along and we'll do some work."

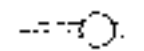
On that day Mary and Carol were introduced to The Work.

Carol still has the scrap of paper Katie brought to her hotel room. On it are written simple phrases: I should . . . , I am . . . , I need . . . , I want . . . , I won't ever . . .

She and Mary worked with Katie to write down all their thoughts, their tiny thoughts, self-absorbed thoughts, thoughts that didn't work, crippling thoughts, thoughts that were illusion, thoughts to which they'd clung for years. They wrote them down, and Katie showed them how they could let the false beliefs go and find their innocence again.

When Katie left the room she said, "You two have fun, now, with the I's and me's." They laughed. The Work really was as fun as it was profound. The next day Katie came back into the room and the two others resumed their questioning of her. In a space of time following Katie's responses, Carol felt a deep quiet grow inside her. She looked at Katie sitting there and said to her: "What can I do for you?" The answer came directly into her mind. She heard the words within herself: "Teach me to be a human."

Carol didn't say a word. She looked at Katie who smiled and said, "It's done."



Carol did The Work for more than a year. She traveled to California and spent time being individually taught by Katie. At Tacopa one night, Katie said to Carol, "You haven't learned yet how to be a human being."

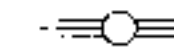
At first it took Carol back. "I am a human being," she thought. Then she understood.

"Katie," she asked, "does that mean that everything that I have done in all my life, from the time of my birth until now, doesn't mean anything?"

"It's true, Carol."

Carol was ready for this realization. "That's a big eye-opener," she says, "when you hear that you've lived

your entire life falsely, with falsehood, nothing but falsehoods. Really. And I tried to do it so well! Wow! That was a wonderful thing for me to hear. It opened a door. If I was going to be a human being, I was going to be a *true* human being. And that's what The Work does. Up to that time I didn't know if I was on the right path. I kept trying to do the best I could—I tried to be nice and kind and loving, but I never knew if I was doing it. Then at age fifty-two I began to live honestly with the help of Katie and The Work."



Carol says now: "It was wonderful. It has continued to be so. I have learned from Katie that a person doesn't need to be validated by others. At the time I met her, I was looking for verification, a gauge to measure with, to see where I was. My ultimate choice in this life is to become a living Christ and to do God's work. That has been true since my experience ten years ago. Katie was a gift. She came. She showed me who I was, where I was, and I have come to know myself since I've known her.

"Katie's work has taught me the Truth of myself, eliminated illusions I thought I'd cleared away but hadn't. It has brought me such great peace and love. I love everyone, now, no matter what. It's a love without judgment. The Work has given me that. I used to pass in and out of that kind of love. Now I can stay there.

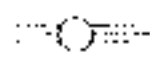
"The Work showed me how to get real with myself. It's taught me total responsibility for myself. Everything starts and ends and has to do with me and no one else, and that was a huge lesson. When it comes to my life and experience, I am the one with full responsibility. That lets everyone else off the hook. It

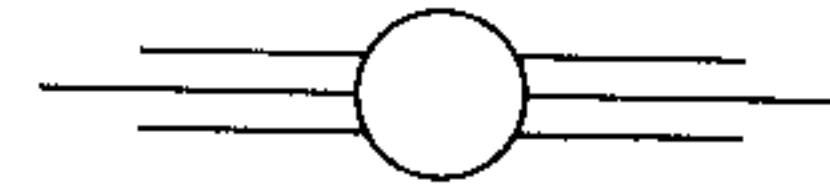


lets me off the hook too because I don't have to be responsible for anyone else, which was something I always used to try to be.

"Katie's way takes you within to your own Truth and teaches you to honor that. She taught me that when you live in your own Truth, you live in peace. It's simple but it's Reality.

"Katie is not here to save the world. She's simply sharing, with anyone who wants to know, the method she uses to wake up. She's real. There's nothing phony or fake about her. She doesn't put on airs. She's simply an open, honest, loving, caring human being. And she is that perfectly. She is someone who can become your ideal. Not idol, ideal. You can look at Katie and say, yes, there is something to strive for.

"It came to me the other night that my life is a symbol of my thinking. So if I don't like what's going on, I need to change my thinking, me. I don't need to change anyone else. Just my thinking. And that's what Katie teaches." 



## THE ONE

There is only *one* story, Byron Katie tells me when I call to ask advice about this book. It doesn't matter who tells it. It is Carol's story; it is my story; it is the story of the one called Byron Katie; they are all the same. When I have them all written down I will see that, she tells me. We are the story of One.

And each story is precious, unique, clothed in the images of an individual life. The one story is filtered through a personal history, but the story doesn't change. It is the story of Jesus, the story of the Buddha, the story of Byron Katie, my story, yours.

"Let your fingers tell it." Byron smiles. It's funny, I know she's smiling even though she's on the phone in Barstow, and I'm on the other end of the line in Martinez. "Don't *think* it. It's better when you don't think it." She's referring to something I told her that my mother used to say: The words are in my fingers. It's the way to Truth, around the ego-mind, around the thoughts that confuse, that get arrogant and censorious. Give them a nod, say, "thank you for sharing," and pass by. The words are in my fingers. The story is told by the soul.

"*My* story, *your* story" — this is a way of speaking, an emphasis on differences. Maybe it is a way I keep myself separated, safe from those I dislike or fear. Maybe there are words in my fingers I haven't yet let out because I hold too carefully to my smallest self.

"Who *are* you?" I keep asking her. She responds that I know who she is. "I am you," she says. "When

you look at me, you see yourself. The only reason you don't recognize me is that you don't know who you are. There is only One. Know yourself and know this."

I am more than my small self. There is nothing I am not. There is no separation. When I look out, seeing what I believe is in front of me, I am looking into a mirror. I see myself, a manifestation of myself. It is the mountain; it is the full moon; it is a consuming fire; it is a storm that tears down trees and rips houses up from the ground; it is the face of my husband; it is the person wearing rags and begging for food; it is he who starves; it is the soldier; it is the torturer and the person who is tortured; it is the child left alone. It is all a mirror. There is nothing I am not.

The One is Love. It is we who perceive the rest. This is what Byron tells me.



Byron and I sit talking on a warm summer morning. Outside in the yard bees dip into the flowers' throats and birds sing.

"Stay in the place where you are not creating an illusion," she tells me. "Stay in the I Am. In the I Am everything is already created. In my waking and living life I can see creation, you, sitting in front of me here and I see your necklace and I see your belt and I know what that is. It's Real. It's Love. It's Me. I'm in the presence of Myself—Love. It's Everything. There's no thought of necklace, not even of beautiful Christin, no concepts; I'm just comfortable as Being. That's the bliss: just seeing what is and knowing I'm sitting in the presence of Self. When I'm sitting still, with my eyes closed, there is not even a concept around that. Once we touch the I Am, it is only the belief or concept of

what is not that takes us away. We become aware that thoughts move us away, and so we stop creating beliefs around the thoughts. Every thought attached to belief takes us away from Reality, from the What Is.

"I teach the Truth that I am. A woman in my last workshop asked, 'Why do teachers not hang out with the masses and play and socialize?' She described her gratitude that I *do*. I had my foot on the coffee table, and I said, 'I can see what you call a *coffee table* and I can put my foot on it. But I have the awareness that it is the Is. Someone named it *table*, and the name is a perception that is passed on. But form isn't even form until we name it. When I live with you, hang out with you, socialize with you, communicate with you, these actions could be seen as risky because, by them, I can lead you to believe, simply through human communication, that it is actually a table. When I socialize with you, I end up teaching you something that is not. Communication, by its very nature, separates.

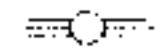
"There are no new ideas. When I sit with people and do The Work it allows everyone to see that there is no separation. We all come to know that there is not one original thought, no matter how drastic and different it may sound. No one has devised a new concept or thought from the beginning of thought, which is what humans call time. It's all the same. The Work is one way that we can see that our thinking doesn't go anywhere or do anything. It's just plotting. We put different symbols on it, and that fragmentation makes us believe our thoughts or situations are different from those of others.

"The point here is that any thought out of Truth is out of alignment and takes us off the path. The only purpose of that thought is to move us from the I Am.



Truth is the I Am. The flower is my body. The song of the bird is my body. I am all inclusive.

"In the stillness, out of beliefs/thought, I can know. Entirety of the whole is visible. It encompasses everything, all the universe, all the universes, and even that is limiting. When we can know the I Am, all the universes become the One, and there are no more questions. Eternity. To be still is simply to be out of concepts."



So nothing we can conceive is the Reality of the I Am. In fact every concept of which we are capable is so far from that Reality as to be nothing. Even God. All our concepts of God are so far from that Reality that they are nothing.

I turn to Byron. "It's like Eckhart saying, 'I pray God to deliver me from God.'"

"Yes," she answers. "But we need to name that, too, like *table*, so we name it *God*; we name it *Buddha*; we name it *Krishna*."

"And we don't really know what it is, do we? And the moment we try to name it, we set it apart and there are two, and this is separation."

"Yes. We have to name it something, so we name it Love. We name it because naming is how we think we keep control. We are bodies of mind in this dimension. But the name we give to what appears as form is the way we feel justified in moving away from It Is."

"So all of being appears to us as a movement in the One, the I Am, and it is myself, and I move with it. It isn't even like stimulus-response because that would be to say *two*."

"Yes. Yes, Christin, only we don't move *with* it, we move *as* it." ...



## TOUCHED ALL THE WAY THROUGH

John and I are just sitting down to dinner when the phone rings. "Hello? Is this Christin?" The woman's voice sounds careful. I respond that I am Christin.

"My name's Sharon. Katie—um, Byron suggested I call."

These conversations with people who know Byron Katie can take an hour, sometimes longer. I should let the answering machine handle calls while I am eating; that's what I bought it for. I feel pulled between John and the woman on the phone. I tell her I am just sitting down to dinner, that I am eager to talk with her and want to give her my full attention. That will be easier in about an hour. I ask if I may call her back.

"An hour?" I hear uncertainty in her voice.

"Is that a bad time for you? We could arrange another time if you want."

"No, an hour's okay. I'll call you."

There is a click and she is gone.

Something feels wrong. I'm not sure I'll hear from her again. But in one hour precisely to the minute the phone rings and it is Sharon. I apologize for the delay and thank her for calling back. Then I ask, as I always do for the telephone interviews, if I can tape our conversation. I explain that I can listen much better if I don't have to take notes and if I need to quote her directly the tape will provide me with her exact words.

She is silent for an uncomfortably long moment. Then she laughs nervously and says that as long as

she's decided to do this at all, she may as well go along with what is best for me.

I press the record button on the machine and wonder how this conversation will proceed. Even though Sharon called me to tell her story, I keep feeling her retreat.

"Let's get some background on you, okay Sharon? Can you give me your full name, address and phone number?"

"Well, my name is Sharon, but I don't want to give you my full name. And I live in Barstow; it doesn't matter where. I'm just someone whom Katie has helped a great deal, and I owe my life to her. She brought me back to God and—I don't know."

Her voice fades off.

I ask how long she's known Katie. She tells me four years. We talk about both women having lived in Barstow most of their lives. Sharon says she's lived there her entire life. Despite this, they only met four years earlier.

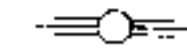
"I guess Barstow is probably big enough that people could do that." I'm thinking what a powerhouse Byron is and wondering how she could live in a small town without most everyone at least knowing who she is.

"I'm an isolator," Sharon voice seems to withdraw, "so that may be the reason we didn't meet."

An isolator? I've never heard anyone identify themselves that way before. I ask about the circumstances that brought her together with the one she calls Katie.

"Well, I was basically dying and I wanted to die. For about twenty years I was in and out of mental institutions. I'd had a strong religious background, but I

couldn't seem to pull out of the depression, out of everything I was in. I don't know. I think God brought Katie and me together. I just didn't want to live. I was sent to a place I don't want to name and I met Katie there. I remember her placing her hand on my shoulder, and I was very angry. But when I felt her hand it was like God said, 'She's the one you can trust.' I didn't trust anyone—not at all—and I still have a hard time."



Good heavens! Here is a woman who fought for twenty years to climb out of isolated depression, out of a complete lack of trust in people, and I had just asked her to call me back so I could eat my dinner.

"This is very brave of you, then, to call me, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Yes. Very courageous."

I remember Byron once telling me that she is here for the sickest of the sick, the very poor, those deepest in trouble. As I listen to Sharon's story, I let myself learn that what I am doing with this book is letting my own heart be opened, letting myself be touched and healed by those who Byron has loved back to life. These people who come to me with their stories are my teachers. Humility feels more appropriate than professionalism here. I'd do well to hear in the ringing of the phone, as Byron does, the voice of God.

"Anyway," Sharon continues, "I did give Katie a call the very next day and asked her if she would help me. That was a very big step for me and she said she would. From then on she just helped me. She loved me until I could love myself. The most important thing she did was to get me back to the God that I'd always

known. I came from losing everything, myself included. I was very low with no confidence at all, and now I'm working and doing a real good job. And I was told I would never be able to work again—that I was permanently disabled. But it's not true. I'm making it!"



Sharon's story is stark. It is a knife peeling away at her mind. It is tears and the silencing of the heart. Sharon's life diminished her hope and left her afraid. It is life wanting to die. It is a life of voices cackling in her head.

Her family was filled with holes and she fell through. It couldn't hold her. It couldn't care enough. At two years old she felt the betraying hands of sexual abuse. She disappeared inside her mind. But there was nothing there that she could trust. Finding nothing trustworthy inside or outside, Sharon grew to hate herself. "Everything I seemed to do was not good enough for me and others. I tried every way I knew to get help but I never could trust enough."

Her mother took her to church, just a few times, when she was a small child. Sharon held to something she felt there, something she had first felt in nature. "I felt God at a very young age," she says, "I used to go sit out with the calves and cows and felt that God was taking care of me—that He was the only one I could talk to." God gave a security that balanced the abuse and the terror in her mind. God blocked her memories and helped her stand outside the pain. But when she was fifteen, that "Mighty Fortress" in her mind fell. "That's when I first tried to commit suicide and from then on it was just one big roller coaster, a state of confusion. Mainly I was just trying to survive or die, one or the other."

For twenty years Sharon battled. Angry voices in her mind grew louder, so loud sometimes that they drowned out the voices of her therapists. She had no real friends. Everyone feared her. The therapists and psychiatrists locked her up or tied her down. That's how she recognized their fear. They told her she was schizophrenic.

She gave birth twice. The children grew up in the chaos of her rage. She consumed enormous quantities of alcohol combined with psychotropic drugs. "Every time I overdosed, someone would bring me back to life and I'd get very angry. It just didn't work for me. I simply didn't know how to quit doing the things I was doing. And if I did quit for a time, then I didn't know how to live. I couldn't talk to people or go outside my house. I was too afraid."

During these years God continued to be a refuge. The church, the same church she attended with her mother when she was a child, kept its doors open to her. "They didn't chase me away even though I couldn't stop drinking. There was one lady who never stopped praying for me. She loved me unconditionally but she couldn't help me. I just felt so much shame and guilt then." No matter which way she turned, death seemed to crouch at the end of the road. "I just didn't want to live any more. It was like that for twenty years. I just didn't want to. But God had other plans."

Sharon met Katie. "I didn't look at her. I remember having my head down. But there was a warm sensation that went through my body. It was unusual for anyone to touch me because I always. . . , no one usually did because there was a wall around me. People just didn't touch me and Katie did. She wasn't afraid of me; I was angry, very angry. Her

touch came all the way through. I was frightened of her, but for some reason I knew she could help me if I could just be honest with her. It took me some time to do that, but she was patient."

Katie was a contradiction that at first Sharon could accept only with skepticism. "She was all loving and all kind and I thought—yukky!" The voices in Sharon's mind warned her to stay away. *Don't trust her, they said. She's a fake. She'll betray you. Doesn't everyone betray you? She'll hurt you. Just look at her, smiling all the time, saying she loves you. What good are you? What's in you to love? She's lying. She's crazy. She can't love you; no one can love you.*

But there was one voice in Sharon, one soft whisper, that allowed just a little trust. And she opened a small, a very old door to Katie. The more she let herself be with Katie, the wider that door opened. "And she's the one who kept helping me, letting me know that it was okay, even though I couldn't concentrate or do anything. She just kept letting me know that it was okay. She kept telling me that she loved me—something I didn't believe for a long time. But did. I don't know when I truly started trusting her, but there was a time when I did. And I do now."

For a long time Sharon couldn't enter Katie's home. They sat in Katie's car in front of the house and did The Work. They talked about fear and guilt and God. "If there is a God," Sharon said to Katie one day, "I need to know because I'm doubting very much." What happened next is something Sharon holds close, a kind of divining rod. She describes it this way: "There was no one around, and when I said that I needed to know, the top of her car popped like someone had slammed it, but there was nothing—no one around. I think it was the first time I started laughing,

and I said to her, 'Okay, did you rig it?' Because I was very skeptical, very negative. I could be negative about anything. But I still remember that event. I asked for a sign and got one just like that. It was powerful. It changed something in me, just slightly, to allow a little more time for more help."

Each of Sharon's voices needed convincing. They continued to make a racket in her head. They made it difficult to do The Work. Then Katie suggested that Sharon change her eating habits. What would happen if she cut out sugar and salt and red meat? Sharon tried it. The voices quieted down. They didn't go away, but there was a noticeable difference. It took a long time to convince herself that it really was partially the food that was doing it. But whenever she returned to her old way of eating, the voices became strong, more vitriolic. "Now I know it's true. It was the only time, in all those years, that anything ever worked as far as quieting the voices to the point that I could concentrate, could understand what was going on. Let me tell you, though, there's still a part of me, sometimes, that says it's a lot of bunk! Then I go ahead and eat the wrong food, and then I go nuts again because I would like to be normal—whatever that is. And it's not a possibility for me to do the things other people are able to do and live a sane life. I can't. So if I want the peace and the sanity and the love I feel for myself, then I eat right. Then things go a lot better. I don't know—it has a lot to do with the food."

Byron Katie teaches that food, like every other symbol, is innocent. "It's my belief that says I can eat certain things, like refined nonfoods," she says. "This is where belief loses its innocence. That is the lie. By acting on the lie, we experience its effects as nervous-

ness, rage, sleeplessness, passiveness, tranquility, obesity, malnutrition, insanity, disease, and death. These effects say, 'My darling, take a look at your mind, at original thought, at your belief, at Truth.' Honor that. The physical choices that result from such honoring bring about a peaceful body reflective of the mind that made the choice.

"If we cannot know that the belief is a lie originally, and we then act on the lie, the body is the voice that tells us the Truth that was not available to the mind. Can we hear it? There is only one hunger. It is the hunger for Happiness and ultimately for God. Body reflects mind; it doesn't have a choice. Truthful mind; healthy body. Deceitful mind; sick body. In time it all appears. Perfect reflection."

Sharon visited with Katie every day, and when Katie left town for workshops Sharon visited with Paul. She liked being in Katie's presence and Paul contained something of Katie that Sharon could feel. But it wasn't just Sharon's own need that prompted the visits. A love and care for Katie arose in her along with her love for herself. She wanted to express her love, her caring. There is a bond between the two women now that is so deep that Sharon says she knows even before she calls whether Katie is at home in Barstow. "It's a connection that I can't explain."

Life still is not perfect for Sharon. In fact, perfection—the requirement she places on herself to be perfect—is one of her demons. "Somebody has to give me permission to do this progressively and not perfectly. I am a perfectionist. If I felt I had to do it perfectly, I just couldn't do it at all. The first time I'd fail I wouldn't—I don't know. I need to know I don't have to be perfect and that God loves me and at least one other

person loves me. I know Katie loves me. She gives me permission to not do this perfectly."

She continues to take medication for her illness. She doesn't like to do that because it's difficult for her to be dependent, but without the medication, she isn't able to work at her job. She thinks that if she consistently ate the foods that she needs, the medication wouldn't be necessary.

Byron Katie teaches that right thinking chooses the medicine (foods) that heal and that taking prescription medicine from doctors is nothing more than the drastic attempt to make this choice. "Heal yourself," Byron encourages, "by knowing yourself and let the medical doctors be the Band-Aides™ that bring you through to the time in which you can know yourself."

"I'm just not willing to do the things I need to do," Sharon reflects. "It's easier to just take a pill than to stick to the diet (the Truth)—but it's insane. I don't know, I think that's why I still don't have that kind of love that I could have. I'm working on it."

The changes in Sharon amaze her therapists and other doctors who have known her for years. "They didn't believe I could," she says. "They just can't believe it. They can't believe that I'm capable of working and that I don't need to take the kind of psychotropic drugs that I was on, and they had me on a number of them. I only take Xanax now." She believes that as she progresses in The Work even Xanax will become unnecessary for her.

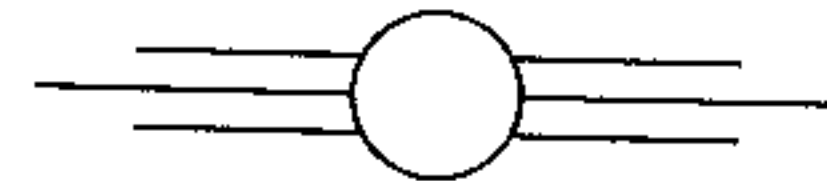
"If it weren't for Katie," Sharon reflects, "I don't believe I would be where I am. I absolutely know that God put her into my life so that she could guide me. He did this when I didn't even know how to talk to people or how to do anything. So it is Jesus Christ,

and no other, who is responsible for my recovery. I give all the glory and praise to him.

"What Katie taught me is basically to look at myself. She taught me how to clean up all that mess that was inside of me, how to get it down on paper, how to accept the responsibility for a lot of things I was feeling—to look at my part in all of that. She taught me how to love myself. It's a miracle. Well, I still can't look in the mirror too much, but I do it a lot more than before. I've changed. I'm a person with self-esteem and confidence, one with the ability to talk with people. I'm capable of loving people and trusting them, at least to a point and, I don't know, I just feel like a completely different person."

When I ask Sharon what it is about Katie that gives her the power and wisdom to bring healing, Sharon says, "I think it's because she's been through the same thing. She understands pain and suffering and all the things I've gone through. She understands the fear and isolation. She found a way to get out of it."

And that is true. —○—



## NO FEAR

Fear brought me to Byron Katie in the first place. It brings many. I know that now. Fear once brought Katie, herself, into a prison of greed and rage and numbing drugs and foods. I still feel pain when I tell the story of her fear and the death she died because of it. Then, because of my pain, I know that my mind continues to seduce me into fears of my own. "Do The Work," Byron would say. "Uncover the lie and live in what is Real."

Fear is the belief that what is Real will harm us. It is the suspicion, often even the conviction, that the universe is not progressing as it should, that God made a mistake or wasn't wise enough to get things right. It's the impulse to take control, myself, of destiny, of the future—as if I can. I know I can't, so then I fall into panic. If God is not wise enough and the universe is swinging out of control and I can't fix it, then my thinking says it's bound to harm me. Fear keeps me trying to be God. Fear ensures my failure. There's no Truth in it. I'm not God. And the One who is makes no mistakes.

In fear we create dramas of our lives. We divide ourselves into parts, make roles, make voices in our minds, scare ourselves to death. In fear we make ourselves sick. "The sick body is the voice of fearful mind," Byron says. Fear becomes an ulcer. It speaks through cancer. It is high blood pressure. It is arthritis. It is a tightening up, an anger with Truth, a resistance to Reality, an insistence on my own way, my ego's way, my little vision.



Fear is until it's not. A peculiar trap devised by the mind is our attempt to talk ourselves out of fear. Thinking about my fear digs a deeper pit for it. Mental struggle tangles the mind. Byron's idea of "drama happening" or "efforting" tangles one in the fear.

She knows. Efforting was her life for forty years. She created a drama to rid herself of her fear of rejection, of being no one, and it reduced her to nothing. She lay under her bed, in rage, in terror, completely afraid—and then she lay there in wonder over a cockroach and there was no fear, anywhere.

When she speaks to me of dramas, dreams, mythologies, I know immediately what she means. I thought the efforting was a responsibility, something I was bound to do, a way of caring for myself. I clung to this belief despite my experience that it never worked; it always made my life miserable and increased my fear. I figured I had failed at thinking my way out of a problem. I tried harder.

I called it being ready. I called it planning. If my husband was late arriving home, for example, I felt attacked by the fear of loss. "What if there was an accident?" said my mind. "What if he's in the hospital? What if he died?" So there was the drama, the scene set. What effort did I need to make? My stomach churned. Images filled my mind. The crash scene. My arrival. Or the hospital. Walking into ICU. "Could I make it on my own?" continued my mind. "Could I even drive? Who might I call, what friend would take the time to help me? And then the funeral, what about that? How could I endure it? How would he like it to be? I'd have to call his family. How would I survive without him?"

By the time my husband walked in the door, thir-

ty minutes late, I'd exhausted myself with this drama of fear. I'd wasted precious energy on illusions. I'd made myself a little, or a lot, sick.

"Why do you do that to you?" Byron asks.

About eight months after Byron first told me I was using my mind to scare myself, and six months after I began doing The Work, I was again waiting for my husband to come home. He and his brother and nephew had taken our new Explorer truck out into the desert for a morning of target practice and experimenting with the four-wheel drive. They planned to be home around noon. When one o'clock came I felt a tiny jolt of fear. Where were they?

I remembered Byron's admonition that we not hold on to such "contractions" for more than a few seconds.

"What's real?" I asked myself.

I felt the sun through the window. I heard a bird sing. I smelled the aroma from my cup of Harvest Spice tea. My little notebook computer hummed, and words I'd just finished writing shone back at me from the back-lit screen. He was late. That was all. Why he was late was something I couldn't know and no amount of thinking would be able to provide me with the knowledge. What was real was the thing right in front of me. I let it be. The reality in front of me contained no harm. I continued to write for three more hours. At four o'clock they still weren't home. The thought drifted through my mind that if they hadn't arrived by supper time I would contact the highway patrol. Just as that happened, I heard the Explorer pull into the drive.

They came in laughing. Dirty. Filthy, in fact. They had been playing in the desert. What could that Explorer do? How good was that four-wheel drive? Drive down this hill. Drive along that dried up


riverbed. And they got stuck, really hung up. It took four hours to dig out, get enough wood under the tires for traction. They rationed their water. The temperature was over a hundred degrees. But they did it. Was there ever a doubt? What an adventure! What fun!

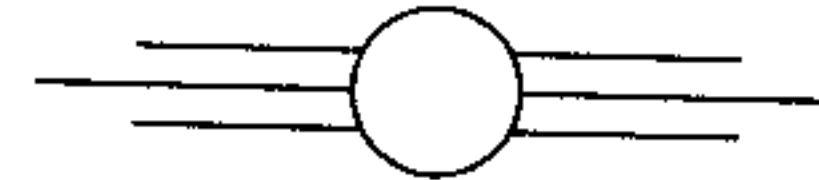
No harm. No fear.

But what, the old voices ask, what if they'd died, then what? And I respond: Would fearing it have helped? It would have depleted me. We have all we need to meet each moment with whatever it contains. The moment we call "death" is no different from the others. Each moment passes to leave space for the higher good.

"The highest good will come when you wait and let that highest good come forth in peace. Because when we let go, it leaves a vacuum that the universe has to fill. It has to; it is a law.

"So as long as you are in contraction, in fear, it cannot move in, but through the letting go, something higher comes in, and that will be perfect. At that moment we can know it, but the minute we move away from that peace into the fear state, it is the mind saying the universe was made wrong, and that we know better than that. We are judging it. We move away and it is not ever going to work, never has worked. So we move into the surrender place and it all becomes available to us again. And we have absolute control over that, moving back into perfection.

"What I am saying is that things are as they are supposed to be. There is only peace and perfection, only good. We have been taught otherwise, but it is just simply not so. If I think something is not good, then I need to work on my mind until I can see the Truth of it. And that is The Work."<sup>2</sup> 



## SUCCESS IS NOT BETRAYAL

"David thinks he's lost." Byron's voice, deep, husky. "What do you mean? What happened?"

I had just told her I'd be calling him. I was about to write this chapter. On the phone three months ago, maybe four, he had agreed to talk further with me.

"From home," he had said, "I'll feel more comfortable talking about this when I'm at home."

David called me, that first time, from Byron Katie's house. He visited her often to bolster his hope. She told me that he had cried after he hung up the phone. She had held him.

"He's so beautiful. He's Love. But sometimes he forgets. He loses what he knows and he comes back here to remember. Call him at home. Ask him to talk. His heart is open." Byron had called me when he left her house. She also told me that the doctors said David had cancer. He hadn't mentioned it to me. "It's there and then it isn't. It can appear that when he does The Work the cancer leaves. When he forgets who he is, it seems the cancer's back. It would be interesting to see the doctor's documentation."

He wasn't home later that week when I called. Then other chapters intervened. I had told him I might not call for months. What does Byron mean that he thinks he's lost?

"He's on chemotherapy, honey. So many drugs. He's not himself. He's like a wall. It's difficult to get through. It's fear. The fear. And he doesn't have cancer. Even the doctors said there was no cancer but

they wanted to do this anyway and David was afraid.”

Lost. The lost boy. Very like that Peter Pan book some years ago that chronicled the pain of so many men in our culture. Like the *Puer Aeternum*, the eternal child of the Jungian theorists; the one who would rather die than release the fantasy of youth. They say that such a one usually does die some time before fifty. David is forty-seven.

I tell her I will need to write this chapter from the David in my heart. I don't want to omit him from the book. His testimony is vital. I remember telling him on the day he first called that his story had national implications. What makes me loyal to his story, though, has nothing to do with implications, national or otherwise. My loyalty is to something in his voice, a quality of wistfulness, a boyish tone like an eleven-year-old who knows the ten-speed bike underneath the Christmas tree must be for him but still can't bring himself to believe it's true.

Byron asks me to hold the line a moment. Someone's on her call-waiting. She returns to say that she needs to take the call. I hang up the phone and dig through my tapes to find David's; I slip it into my recorder. His voice. Hesitant. Soft with a core of pleading. The voice of an adolescent boy.

He grew up poor, a Native American boy in the high desert of the American West. There's nothing romantic about his life, nothing that smacks of Hollywood. He doesn't even mention his tribe. Is he Apache? Navaho? I'll never know because I didn't ask. His dad drank too much, died of alcoholism. His uncles drank. Probably his grandfather too. Probably generations of alcoholics. He's pretty sure. It's how everybody was, he says. It was expected.

David took his first drink in the locker room at Junior High School. He played basketball. He was skilled enough to get a scholarship, one he later lost because of something in his mind that said no. The alcohol felt good, felt powerful, gave him confidence. He wasn't used to confidence. He thought he would play better basketball with drinks before and after. When he was high nothing could defeat him.

“My self-esteem came back. I didn't feel like just this poor Indian barely surviving with his family.”

Everybody did it. All the boys. All the men. He hung around the bar. He and his friends rode dirt bikes through the desert. They yelled. They strode up to girls. They showed how strong they were. Alcohol and sex. David says they can't be separated. There's no love in the mind flooded with alcohol, no respect, no morality. And there was no way out. It was how they demonstrated solidarity.

“In high school every weekend was a beer party. I went to school high. Drank during lunch time—after school. It got progressively worse. I got kicked out of school for drinking. I got kicked out of athletics. I went to Junior College and I drank. I played athletics and I still drank. I didn't know it, but my drinking was getting more and more. All my friends, all my relationships, were centered on drinking. I picked them out or they picked me. Then I started taking drugs—weed, cocaine. That was when I got into major college—a full scholarship to a private school. I didn't complete it because of drugs and alcohol. I'd just get myself in trouble all the time.

“And sex. It was a problem. I'd try to screw any girl that walked in front of me. That was when I was on alcohol and drugs. When you're drunk you do all the

immoral acts. When you're drunk you look for women. All of us did it. I have no morals when I'm drunk. Your whole body changes. You're not really you. You feel like an illusion, a powerful being who can get any woman you want. And in reality it's a big, fuckin' lie.

"Kids don't believe this. I have sons. It's like that for them too. It just keeps going for people until it clicks. It's a lie. I can't clean my sons up; they have to clean themselves up.

"I try to talk about the sex and alcohol problem at Twelve Step meetings. People sidestep this issue. They don't want it mentioned. Maybe it's because both women and men attend the meetings. It makes it real hard. They're afraid. You have to watch what you say. People don't keep secrets. The sickest of the sickest are sitting in that room. Big time fear. That's probably why we drank in the first place. Fear of succeeding.

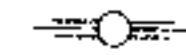
"Will all my friends hate me if I do succeed? Peer pressure is strong. If I straighten up and live right, like you're supposed to live life, will I lose all my friends? I didn't want to do it. Not when I was growing up. There's a lot of conflict there. Especially living in a low financial environment."

A terrifying logic. He is telling me that this is what is done in his culture. He talked himself into believing it—Indians drink, carouse, drive fast through the desert, pick up girls. Indians don't need the white man's ways. Indians scorn white man's success. Who needs education? Who needs a career? Who needs anything of this U.S. culture, the culture that destroyed the Native American people?

If he lifts himself up from that environment, he thinks he betrays his people, as though succeeding is to fail. He seems to believe it's a failure for a Native

American in his environment to fit in to the common American culture. I suggest this to him.

"That's true," he tells me. There's an edge of surprise to his voice. "I never thought of it like that before. It's true. I used to believe that the white man wanted this: to keep us in poverty. In a round-about way I still believe this. The prejudiced thoughts are still around. It might be 1994, but the thinking is still the same. We still put up with it. I'm not saying everybody does it, but a lot of people with power have those ideas, and they go to church on Sunday."



David tells me that in one afternoon Byron turned his life around.


"She saved my life."

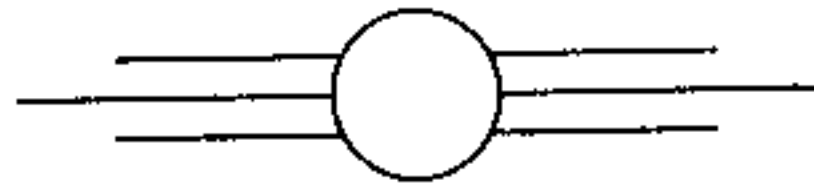
He heard about her from mutual friends. He had no other hope and so he called her up. She told him to come over to her home and he went. She taught him to do The Work.

"She made me write it all out on paper so I could look at it. I found out it was all a lie. My thoughts were lying to me. I was living a lie."

Our conversation circles around again to the alcoholism. "It's a major problem in the Indian population—the mission Indians, the reservation Indians. You go back and it's there; the alcohol keeps Indians from succeeding, from keeping jobs. The kids just grow up watching the adults being dishonest, immoral. Katie gave me what I need to break the chain."

Now David might be dying on the shadow side of his fear. Or maybe he is breaking the chain—learning how to live without failure.

None of the stories here is finished. 



## FULLNESS OF LIFE NOW

David is on my mind. I think I know the place he inhabits. I think I've been there. I've tightened up, grabbed hold of the smallest reed rather than allow myself to be carried by the current, borne up by the flood of life itself.

"Fear of success," I reflect while Byron Katie listens, "must be the fear of living."

"Yes."

I want to know more. I think how easy it is to limit myself, set boundaries on life, make it small. The smaller life is, the less likely I will fail. That's the lie I tell myself. The lie is the failure.

"There is no failure." Byron smiles. "There's only the mind that tells me I have failed."

Success and failure, bound together, flip sides of a single fear.

"Tell me what you know about the fear of living," I ask her.

"The fear of living is the fear resulting from the thought that I am a body. Protection of body becomes the only goal. But I am not a body. Every effort goes to protect what is not. There is not one thought that is not about preserving the body. And I am not this body. When thought dominates, the true 'I' sleeps."

Only rarely do I understand what Byron says about not being a body, and when I do, it is not conceptual understanding. When my mind is eclipsed, then I understand. It is always an experience in which what I think of as my body simply does not exist in any

way that separates me out. One is. One without limit. I am not canceled but eclipsed. Body is fluid; it is air; it is a shimmering in the Light of the One. Then nothing that could be called success or failure can be said to have any meaning. They simply are not anything at all. Life is All.

But my mind exerts itself. I pull back. My body is solid. I am separate. Limited. I am as small as I think I need to be in order to keep my fears at bay.

"With David, in the Native American culture, to hold on to the past is to disregard evolution," Byron reflects. "When we say that the white man brought modernization that took us from the real earth, and that that is not okay, we are saying that we know more than God. For us to say that evolution and modernization is not okay is hopeless. Everything changes. And Reality is always the highest order. How do we know? Here it is. We begin here, now.

"To hold on is painful, hopeless. It can't be done in the physical. We call it the past. But holding on is what people try to do and it's called old age, high blood pressure, disease and it's called death. It all stops when I stop. That's what the pollution of the earth is for; we can know it now or we can know it when the air and water are too polluted to sustain. I am the cause; any one of these ills is the effect. It is our choice. That is what everything is for—time, evolution, even our planet. All, the same. The earth is your body, a perfect reflection of mind. Pollution is the voice that says 'My darling, take a look at your mind. It is choking you to death.'"

I am seeing what holds me back. I am realizing why I don't hold the awareness of life in its fullness. I ask, "If I fear success and believe in failure, is that to say I resist evolution?"

"Yes. It says that the past exists and it says that the future exists. And to step into the future, which is what you have created as the result of how you misinterpreted the past, is terror."

"And if we believe in time, we're in bondage to it."

"Yes. You are in the bondage of a past, seen, but never having existed except through your interpretation of what you think happened—not what really happened. That is the dilemma. And the result is all the pain and suffering we see in people's dying. The last word is always, 'It's not fair!' That response is never going to work because everything is good. Everything is already fair. It's just the eyes that can't see it that suffer—the eyes that can't see what is. On this planet there is only abundance, the Garden of Eden, heaven also. Above as below—the same. Heaven is the higher thought.

"Fear is all about the future. The past doesn't exist anyway, except as jaded reflection. We let go of interpretations and see literally or we die because living in the past, as we have come to interpret it, is just a big ball of guilt and shame. To see and hear literally, without interpretation, is to remain ageless—infinity.

"Particularly with regard to this thing that holds many cultures in its grasp. If we only could see this. It's not just a Native American thing. All of us hold something back in our culture, whichever culture that may be. We preserve language. We preserve traditions. What for? So we can stop change that can't be stopped. So we can be separate. So I can be different from you. So I can know more. So of course it hurts when we try to live and be something that isn't, that doesn't exist.

"We need to move into the present. That's what evolution means. It's just seeing What Is—really. It's the act of living fully in the present, fully evolved to

what is our Ultimate Home—as it really is—now."

For two days I wonder about the connections between preserving bodies and traditions, striving toward success, worrying about failure and, by living in the fear this causes, missing my life altogether and turning evolution back on itself. The second night I go to sleep with the word *form* on my mind. "Don't cling to forms," something in me says. "Forms change. Being is eternal."

When I awake in the morning, the sun shines into my room through the gold and russet leaves of my Sweet Gum tree. It's the last day of November; in another week the branches will be bare. Birds sing. A dog barks. A truck rumbles down the street. My empty stomach rumbles to be fed. A kaleidoscope of forms. Suddenly I grasp what had seemed to me to be a contradiction in Byron's talk about the body. On the one hand she tells me I am not my body. On the other hand, I interpret that she emphasizes treating our bodies well—feeding them with living foods, giving them pure fluids, exercising, enjoying everything the body can do.

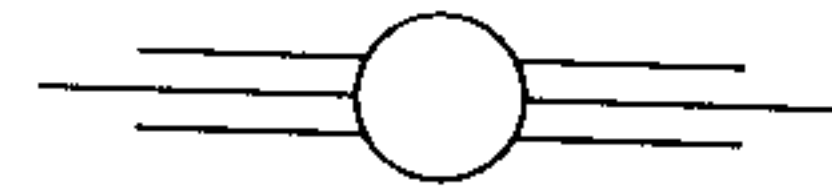
There is no dichotomy. This whole world, including my body, is form—multicolored, varied, dancing, changing form. Clinging stops the dance. The dance is the fullness of life at every moment. To focus on the form, to stop it because of fear, because I need to be in control of what I can never understand, is what we call disease, pollution, cultural decline. The forms unfold, spiral out, a flurry of leaves on a whirlwind.

Byron tells me, "Yes. This mind is the form body takes as me. This body, personal or cultural, is my teacher. Body follows and reflects mind." Body tells me where I'm holding on, stopping the flow of life. It tightens up, resists. My work in this world is to untie



knots my small mind has made in the mistaken effort to keep me safe. My work is to honor this beautiful body, allowing it to unfold according to a Higher Mind than the mind I've created within my self. My work is to give this bodily form what it needs, a sane mind. Then body must unfold at the speed that Being moves. This unfolding is to be what is living, active, joyous. To be Love. As everything is lived, let it go. Move on to the next step in the dance. Whirl with the leaves. Spin with the planets. Shine. We are the stars.

I remember, suddenly, what Byron Katie once said: "You have the choice to see the Reality of the moment or the choice to project onto it the perceived past or future. It appears the past has happened in its own moments of time and is unchangeable, but to see it again as it really happened is to change it—therefore it is changeable. The future is determined as you interpreted the past. We are only this moment in Reality. Everyone can learn to live as the moment, to catch everything as the moment, to love what is in front of you as you. The miracle of Love, of What Is, comes to you in the presence of the uninterpreted moment. If you are out of the Reality of the moment, you miss real life. Be the moment and experience the Joy and Love that you are. If you are in the uninterpreted moment, your body is always available as the purpose it needs to serve. Now is the result of the miracle that happens. This is all there is and all there ever will be. This is beyond imagination. This is the simply obvious." ≡○≡



## HOLD THE BLISS

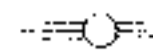
Sandra is my neighbor. We sit, sometimes, in her backyard—a tangle of vines, herbs, bushes, flowers, and trees. English Ivy hides the fence separating her house from the one behind. The fence leans, weighted down. A workman, fixing her bathroom, ate his lunch in the backyard and told her it reminded him of *The Secret Garden*. He meant the tangle, the density where treasures might be found by one who treads lightly and clears the thicket. Sandra does that. She goes out there every day and clears a space, gives room to a flower, digs up a plant from here and puts it there. Waters things by hand.

She's a tiny woman, thin, pretty in an alabaster way. She used to be a nun and so did I. This rather odd coincidence brought us together in the first place. "Nuns make better wives," she told me once, laughing. "We've been trained to serve." I recoiled from that, perhaps thinking of service more superficially than she, and not at all as Byron Katie thinks. "I am here to serve you," Byron tells us. "I am Love. To serve you is Joy."

Before Byron entered our lives, Sandra and I visited seldom. She worked in a gallery and, at home, had children growing up; I had my writing. Three, maybe four times a year we sat in my backyard or hers and talked of convents or of esoteric spiritual games like Tarot. We hadn't yet reached one another's souls.

Now we check in with each other every day. Sandra lives on the fine edge of life. She lives more alive than most of us. Her eyes shine.

This is the story she tells. It is her own voice.



On the day I met Byron I had been home from the hospital for two or three days. I had a mastectomy. I had my right breast removed. I knew they found cancer cells in eight of the ten lymph nodes they took out and that it had spread beyond the lymph nodes and that the prognosis was not good. I had also started alternative therapies. I was in a state of utter terror.

I'd read some Bernie Siegal books and listened to tapes beforehand, and I'd started on a special meditation. I would get up and meditate and then have breakfast, but by that time the results of the meditation would have worn off and I needed another fix and would meditate after breakfast, and then I might put a load of clothes in the wash and by then I'd have to go to bed and meditate again. I'd meditate after lunch, after dinner, and before I went to bed. On the third day of this, I realized that I was still in a state of utter terror.

So I did my meditation, that was all I could do. And after the meditation, I said, "I really cannot go on." I said, "I need a healer." I could hardly breathe. "I need somebody who cannot just read your aura and pat your hand. I need one of those healers you read about who traffics between worlds. I need somebody who's been to the other side and has come back and who knows you can go there and you can come back." I finished the meditation and was still lying in bed because I was very weak and tired. Then the phone rang and it was Christin.

Christin lives two houses down from my house and I knew her because of that. Christin is an exnun and I'm an exnun and we had talked on and off, but we

were not good friends. I was busy with my children and with my job; and Christin, I always thought, was writing up in her room, and I didn't want to bother her. I used to think that what Christin was doing was too important to bother her.

This particular morning Christin called me on the phone and she said, "Sandra, are you up?" And I said, "I will be shortly. I just finished my meditation." She said, "I need to come over." And over she came with herb tea on a lovely tray with two sweet little cups and a rose. And she told me the story of how she had been with Byron. She had never met anyone like her, and she explained what Byron did. I said that I had just asked for a healer, one who trafficked between worlds. Now, any other healer, any other person, I would have dismissed, but this woman's story was so extraordinary that I knew it was a direct answer to my meditation only about ten minutes earlier. It was so fast, and such a direct hit on what I had asked for that I knew I should eventually contact this person.

Christin said, "I think you should call her. She's in town." I already respected the power and greatness of this woman from Christin's story and the effect she had on Christin, but I didn't feel that you could just call someone like this on the phone. I felt you had to be a greater person than I was. But Christin said, "No, I think that you should call her." And because it was so close, everything was so close, I called her.

A lady answered the phone and said, "Well, why don't you talk to Byron?" which astounded me again and it astounded me that Byron talked and it astounded me that Byron said, "Oh, well we just have to get the groceries for the retreat we're having and then we'll stop at your house. You live by Christin; we'll

know how to find it.”

By eleven o'clock this woman walked into my house and she was beautiful! This is the thing you have to realize about Byron, that she is beautiful. You don't expect someone who is so far out to be so beautiful. She has wonderful eyes and she accents them.

She gave me this huge hug, which I couldn't receive. I felt like a drowned puppy or one that was drowning—and I looked like one. I still had the bandage around my arm and was a nervous wreck, and so I couldn't receive the hug.

Then she began this questioning. She said, “Okay, honey.” She said, “Ohhhh, Hon-neeeey,” and gave me another huge, huge hug. Byron's hugs are great hugs, and you realize each time you get one that you're getting more than you got the last time.

She sat down next to me in my living room and she said, “What did you think of over there?”

I said, “Well, I was thinking, if you are as great as Christin said, how come I didn't feel more when you hugged me?”

She said, “I felt that too. That's because you can't let us in.”

As this Socrates type of questioning went on, she said, “So far you haven't let us in. But you had this operation that is, in a sense, like a hole through which you'll be able to let the love in.”

In one of my meditations at the time I had the lumpectomy, before the mastectomy, I heard the same thing. I heard a voice then that said, “This is good because there are all these people who love you and you won't let them in.”

Byron began dealing with my fear of death. The biggest thing about death for me was not that I would

die but the grief that my family would feel when I did.

She said, “Okay. What would happen to that daughter of yours who is in the kitchen if you died?”

“Well, she would be very sad.”

“Yes, and then what would happen?”

“She would get over it; she would have to. But she *would* get over it.”

Then Byron said once again: “Tell me your thoughts!”

“I am spending all of my time thinking about whether to use alternative healing instead of chemotherapy to heal the cancer.” She looked at me with those crystal eyes and said, “It is already healed.”

“You know that?” I asked.

“I know that,” she said.

“Thank you for not asking me what my gut feeling is. I have no gut feelings. I am beyond gut feelings. I don't know what to think.”

“Good.”

“Good?”

“Yes,” she said, “it means you are ready to begin.”

Then she spoke of God's perfection, and mine as God's creation. In the Mind of God, I still exist as perfect. It is when I leave that Mind, step aside from that place of love and peace and joy that sickness occurs.

“Any uncomfortable thought is a killer of the body. When you move back to that place of peace the body is already healed.” This is the sense of what she said to me.

“Yes, but how do I get back there?” I wanted to know.

She explained briefly some traditional means of meditation. I called it bliss. She said, “Yes, honey. Hold the bliss.”

That doesn't seem, I guess, very meaningful, but just her taking me through that process, getting me to that place, helped me so much. Then she asked if I had any questions about her. And she explained as much as she could to someone who was in a highly nervous state and who could only accept a small amount. She talked of how she trafficked between worlds—she was talking about a duck they saw that morning on their walk and how she just kind of dissolved, blended into her surroundings and into that duck and back again and also into me. And she briefly described her life history and how seven years earlier she had been a very unhappy person. From that I began to see that her terror and her fear certainly had been as great as my fear. She explained the bliss and how she found it. And she said, "Now, do you have any questions?"

"Yes," I said, "I don't think that I can do this."

So we worked a while with that, and she explained the traditional Buddhist way of centering, but I could tell that this wasn't exactly the way she did it. Since then, by listening to Byron, I have a sense of what she does and how to do it. She said, as she was leaving, "Hold the bliss." She looked at me and she said, "Hold the bliss."

I said, "What am I going to do when I just panic as I do six or seven times a day?"

She said, "Hold the bliss!"

That's what I did all that day. After a while when you are sitting with her, she seems to transfer that high state of energy to you. I could feel that she'd helped me relax a little. Not that she felt I needed it, but it was easier, kind of like a medication, easier, a nice thing, a bonus, fun, not really necessary. It wasn't a hard thing for her to do and she did it. All that day I

held the bliss, and I felt she was thinking of me and helping me and that's how I knew I could do it.

As she left I said, "Byron, may I pay you for this? Is there anything I can give you?"

She said, "You can repay me by doing The Work. It's very important that you do this so that other people can learn."

I know there was something else that she said about this. She was so sincere in the way that she said this; it wasn't a pious thing; it was just like it was true; I should do this. I didn't think it sounded strange. Then I said, "Can I give you a flower?" So many flowers were sent to me at the hospital. And she felt comfortable taking a small Safeway variety chrysanthemum, and she said, "I'll take this because it will remind me of you."

She had great love and respect for me, and it was wonderful for me that someone like this could be my friend. I knew I'd been looking for this and for her all my life. It made ultimate sense. From then on I used my alternative therapy and in four months all indications were that I had no cancer in my body. I kept working with Byron.

About two or three months later I was able to make a retreat with Byron and I learned The Work. Doing it with her was the most powerful thing.

I'd started *A Course In Miracles*<sup>TM</sup> at Christin's recommendation and had begun doing the daily lessons, but it wasn't until the retreat with Byron that I felt I'd really joined the human race. It was the most liberating experience. Things that can sound like platitudes—forgiveness, unconditional love—were made clear. I could feel them; I could understand things that hadn't made sense before. When I thought about passages from the Bible that I'd heard all my life, they

were given new meaning. Byron told us we could call her at her home any time we wanted, and I knew that she meant it, but I have never done that. I think I always knew that all I really had to do was concentrate on her and I would be tapping into the Source. That's what I've always done. So while it would be very nice to be with her, and I think that there will be a time, again, when I will be—and I could really use it because I short-cut the process often, and I think I'm short-circuiting myself that way—nevertheless I've had some remarkable things happen.

On the last day of the retreat I said, "Byron, as you're speaking I feel all this great anger in my chest and I don't even know what I'm angry about."

"Yes." She said. "You have to go home and make a list of everybody you've ever been angry at."

I said, "That'll be a long list!" I was sort of flip.

She said "Yes, it will be."

And yes, it was! I started thinking of all these people and pretty soon it occurred to me that if I were lucky, some of these people would be dead. I could work through the process, and I wouldn't have to do the last step that Byron indicated. She said, "When you finish working through the process, call them. You have to call them." While it's wonderful and easy to do the other things, to call them is really hard.

I have an aunt who was like a mother to me. In fact, I always gave her cards on Mother's Day and called her my other mother. I'd write that in the card. She had no children and she was very good to me and to my sister. But when I left the convent and married my husband who is an African American, my mother told this aunt the terrible thing I had done to the family and told her not to tell anybody. Now, as my family

works, she did not tell anybody and so far as she was concerned I was dead. I think my mother told the neighbors that I was a missionary in Brazil or something. I was dead.

I sent my aunt a package from California for Christmas and she never sent a thank you note—this is not a family that is kind of ditsy and does not send thank you notes. They send thank you notes; they know numbers; they keep in touch. Everything. I sent her a card for her birthday. It was never acknowledged. She knew my number; she knew my address. And I was just generally out of the family—my mother was not talking to me at this time either. My father wasn't talking to me. Even though I forgave my mother because my mother lives here in California and I'm close to her and wanted her grandchildren to know her, I never forgave my aunt.

After many years of not communicating with my aunt, I called her one day, on impulse, and we had a pleasant exchange. After that, from time to time, I called her, but she never took the initiative to call me. On one occasion I was on the phone with her husband, my uncle. When my uncle asked me how my husband was, I said, "Oh, would you like to talk to him, he's right here!" My husband took the phone, but my uncle had hung up. And my husband said, "He hung up on me."

I found it very hard to forgive this woman until I went through what Byron calls The Work. In The Work Byron asks you to be three years old. Now my rational mind knows I have forgiven, that this is a silly thing and really my aunt is a silly woman and I have forgiven her; my rational mind knows I have, but for Byron's sake I'm going to go through this process.

I tried to get back to my real feelings of anger—

those I felt at the time. It was hard because I was a rational person and knew that I had cleared this. So I prayed, actually prayed for the grace to get in that state again and sure enough, after two or three days of thinking of this, all of a sudden it came, and I felt every bit of the anger that I had initially felt and that I felt during all the years before I tucked it away. With that I was able to work through the process. When I got to the end, I knew I had to make that call and it was not easy. I breathed heavily and meditated and meditated. Finally I just dialed her number and had the most marvelous talk with this woman.

Once, a few years ago, my mom had said, "You know, you have done so many things so well in your life. You're just like your aunt." And I'd said, "I don't want to be like her at all!" That conversation with my mom got me to thinking about the many things I initially admired about my aunt. She's eighty-seven years old and just this year has decided not to have a full garden. She's still working around the house and dances at the fireman's club and is just a dynamo of a person.

I was actually enjoying this "forgiveness" call. My aunt talked about her belief in Jesus and how it gets her through and her sadness when her husband died and I was able to sympathize. But suddenly, at the end of the conversation, she said, "So how is the family?"

So I told her what my husband and my children were doing.

And she said, "Oh no. No! You mean - - OH! You're not calling from your mother's—from your home?"

And I said, "You think I'm calling from my mother's? No, I'm not. Did you mean, how are my

mother and my brother and sister when you asked about my family?"

And she said, "Well, yes!"

I was stunned. Did she still believe I had never married? That I didn't have an African American husband or two mixed children, lovely as they are and talented? This forgiveness looked as if it might entail a little more than I had bargained for.

I explained that my mother and sister and brother were very well. And all of their children, to whom she sends birthday cards every year, they were also very well.

I realized that in her mind my children might never exist. Nor my husband. She might never recognize my marriage. Still she would always be glad that she heard my voice and that we talked. It began to dawn on me that her view of my life didn't matter. I could forgive her and be happy and let it go.

It took me a few minutes after I got off that phone to realize this. I was saying, "Whoa. . . . I just don't know. This is just asking too much." But I was finally able to let it all go and it wasn't hard to do. It was the most wonderful feeling, and it's the most wonderful process.

I continue to do *A Course In Miracles*,™ but as I've begun to feel better, as my health has improved, I'm more and more distracted. I don't meet each day from the center, from the bliss. If I don't, I realize that—well, I just have to, now. It was because nothing was working before that I was able to embrace this so heartily. *A Course In Miracles*™ says that the reason you're angry is not the reason you think. I found out the truth of that. What I was seeing wasn't really what I thought I was seeing. And because I'd run up against such a dead end, I had no where else to go. That's the



reason I was able to find this. But now I have to go back again because I can't resume my life the way it was. It's just not possible any more.

Today, before I started remembering this, I was in a particularly agitated state, and part of it has to do with vitamin pills. I'd stopped taking them for a while and they really aggravated my liver and in Chinese medicine the liver is the seat of anger. I was really angry with my teenage son who hadn't responsibly done things he should have done around the house. I just get agitated when I take foods or medicines I can't tolerate. At this point I'm convinced that the liver is the seat of anger and I have a lot of clearing to do yet. I know there is a way to do it now, and I'm so grateful to have this process that I almost laugh when I get angry because I know that I'll go back full force into The Work and I know the joy that will be there for me when I do it. It's an exciting thing. So in the middle of my agitation and depression, at the deepest point, I'm already beginning to feel the joy that will be there when I come out of it. I know it's like a tip-off, like when it used to rain, then I'd know I'd get to read my novels because I'd set aside that time. So I know when I get this agitated then I get to go into bliss again. That's what Byron does for me.

Throughout all this I see her as a very human person and as a friend. My doctor asked for her name; my oncologist asked what happened to me the day after I'd done this retreat with Byron, and all I could say was, "Well, it's kind of different. At the bottom of everything is love and nonjudgment of other people." He just looked at me and shook his head, but he knew that I was different and he'd never seen me like that.

When I try to explain The Work to someone, I

always fail. They don't seem to understand it, and I don't think I understand it very well, myself, because I don't seem to be able to explain it. But people have seen what a difference it has made in me. I just have so much more joy in life. It's not that I've figured out what I'm supposed to do in life or what I'm supposed to be or what I'm supposed to use my mind for. These were always big questions for me and every now and then I'd wonder. I'd wonder what I was supposed to be doing. Or I'd get nervous about money. But these things aren't so big anymore. I'm just happy to be here at the starting point with this bliss. Things just fall into line. There are a lot of things I've forgotten that come to me occasionally. But I think that the main line is when Byron left me and said, "Hold the bliss." And I knew where she had been. And I knew I could do it.

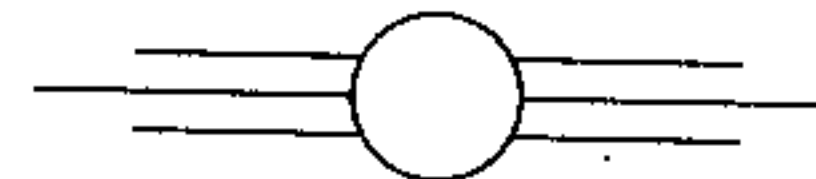
Byron is a Son of God. She is someone who realizes the truth of Jesus' sayings. She realizes the oneness of all creation, her oneness with creation, her oneness with her brother—that insight is so extraordinary. And of course, Christ had it, but when you *feel* it, the freedom is incredible, and the connectedness—oh! In fact, I don't know why I don't feel it everyday like I did. There's just nothing like it.

I have realized through *A Course In Miracles*<sup>TM</sup> that you can sit all day on a mountain, all year, two years—but can attain the same thing by forgiveness of your brother. In forgiveness I have experienced an instant oneness that I had never experienced before in the way I'm experiencing it now. All the people around me know that something's different; they're astounded. I always say, I wish I could explain it; I wish I could be a teacher. It's humbling also; they're getting it. As I'm learning it, they're also getting it. I'm not telling them

anything, but they're working through their own anger. They're mirroring me without my even knowing it, and they're working through their own fear of death at the same time I am, and their fear of illness, and I don't even know it's happening. There is just something spreading out from me.

Christ says, "I did it once and for all so now you don't have to do it." It's like when you work through something for yourself—some anger or resentment, some fear—it is almost as if a person close to you, someone you interact with, doesn't need to do it. Because it is as though that person gets it all of a sudden just by being in contact with you. You don't even need to talk about it. This may or may not be in keeping with Christian belief, but I know a lot of Christians and I've never had a single person draw back and say, "This sounds like the work of the devil."

When I talk about Byron, nobody ever thinks that it is anything but good. ☉



## OPEN HEART

Sandra's story leads me more deeply into my own work on forgiveness. I call Byron with a list of proposed chapter headings. I feel pleased with my juxtapositions of "there isn't . . . there is . . ."

"There is no blame; there is only forgiveness."

"No. There is no blame; there is *no* forgiveness. There is only seeing the Truth, really."

"No forgiveness?"

"No, honey."

No forgiveness? I thought forgiveness is what she's been talking about. Forgiveness. At the workshop I followed the simple instructions of The Work. I let myself experience my anger with the mothers in my life: my own dear Alyce Rose, my novice mistress, Mother Ann and, by extension, Mother Church. I wrote down all they did that injured, all I wanted them to do, all that mothers should do, their responsibility. Then as per instructions, I reversed it all. I turned all that around. I did what Byron Katie calls bringing it all back home. "I did this that injured me. . . I want *me* to do these things . . . this is *my* responsibility." I struggled with it. I wanted to say no. No, I didn't do it. *They* did it. *They* injured me. The *mothers* are to blame. There is no blame. *I'm* to blame. No, there is no blame. Back and forth went the voices in my head. I looked at Byron; she was smiling at me. "Yes, honey," she murmured as though she were reading my mind. "Yes, honey," as though she were speaking to something in me more true than my mind. I followed the path of her acceptance of me into my heart.

Something inside turned upside down. Byron calls it a shift. My head felt light. I seemed to see the mother before me, and she was a child, doing her level best with all the wisdom at her disposal; my heart moved toward her. "She's just a child!" I said. I was crying.

"Yes, darling, yes!" Byron crooned. "You've got it. You understand. Look everyone. . ." she addressed the others at the workshop, "she sees the innocence of the mother. She's seeing this for all of us."

I thought she meant forgiveness. I thought I forgave the mothers.

But now Byron tells me there is no forgiveness.



Months after the workshop, Byron sat across from me in the morning light that slanted through the glass doors and settled like a pool in her lap.

"If I think you have wronged me," Byron said, "then I'd better take a look at that thought because you cannot wrong me. You can wrong you, but you can't wrong me."

"Perhaps someone insists that I give her something or she won't be my friend anymore. Let's say I do that, I give it to her, but then I go through life thinking, 'she manipulated me; she tricked me into giving it to her; she was only nice to me in order to get what she wanted. She wronged me.' That may all be well and good, but that won't set me free. The Truth sets me free and the Truth is, I gave it to her. I did that to me. I gave for the wrong reason. Nothing she could say or do can change that. I gave it to her. I could have said no. I could have said, 'I'll risk the friendship; I'll say no.' When I see the Truth of that, it lets her completely off the hook. I can see, 'Oh, I gave it to

her; I did that.' In the sight of my deed, her deed falls away. Her innocence is revealed to me, and we name that revelation of innocence *forgiveness*. She asked; I said yes. Forgive her for what?"

Wait a minute. Blame gushed up into my throat; I could taste it. I'd done that; lost friends that way—by lying in an attempt to keep them. Suddenly I felt angry with Byron. I thought she said there is no blame. She was blaming me—telling me I ought to blame myself. My mind did a funny turn. I looked at her. She was grinning. She wasn't blaming anyone. The blame was in me. I was doing it.

I couldn't believe how fast I turned her story in onto myself and beat myself up with it. Somehow, somewhere I acquired a belief that for every pain, for every ill, for every mistake, someone has to take the blame. I had spent much of my life and enormous energy protecting myself from having to be that blamed one. But despite all my well-constructed defense, one little story could break through to my secret belief—I did it; I'm the bad one; I caused all the pain.

Seeing the innocence of the mothers was just the first step. How could I see my own innocence? I knew I couldn't, not so long as I held the belief that someone was to blame.



At virtually every one of Byron Katie's workshops, someone tells the story of childhood abuse—sexual, physical, emotional. Byron has her own story of "the molest" when she was three years old. The wounds of people abused as children cry out for healing.

A fifty-year-old woman tells her story. She was so small. Four, maybe five. She stood by the window.

Her daddy said, "Come here." Her stomach turned. Her head buzzed. She didn't want to go. Daddy was in bed. He didn't have his clothes. He was big. Mommy always said, "Don't go outside without your clothes; it isn't right." It wasn't right for Daddy not to have his clothes. But he said, "Come here." He was her daddy. In the living room on Sundays her daddy held her on his lap and read the funny papers. He smelled good. He felt strong. Safe. She cuddled down into his arms and her mind drifted with the story of Little Orphan Annie. She loved Daddy so much. Again her daddy said, "Come here." Her stomach turned. She went to him.

I would have done it too. I know that's true as I listen to the woman's story. She's crying. Katie's murmuring, "Yes, my darling. Yes, honey. Let the tears come; tears are good. Yes, sweetheart. Cry."

So many of us. I think of women and men, many of them were my clients, many my friends. I think of the years they spent in therapy before they sought spiritual guidance hoping to be set free. I think of the years they spent in spiritual practice, and the pain persists. My heart opens to them. My heart opens to this woman, here, in this moment. They are in me; they are me. No difference. Had my daddy said, "Come here," I would have done it too. I feel a shift. I did it. I also went when my heart said no. Many times. I went in situations too numerous and too various to describe. Am I, then, to blame for my pain? I look at the woman. I see only innocence. What does her innocence say of me?

"Your father said, 'Come here,' and what did you do, honey?" Byron is speaking softly to the woman.

"I went."

"Yes. All he said was, 'Come here.' And you went to him. You did that." She's whispering. The "you did that" is like a caress. It's an honoring. Choice is sacred. It is powerful. It is an act of love.

The woman stares at Byron. To me it feels like the moment, at birth, before the baby cries. It is the moment just before breath. The woman's face appears to be carved in stone for just that moment and then relaxes, becomes flesh. Her eyes grow wide.

"I did that!" she cries out. She's released. Joyous. There's no blame there. None at all.

"Yes, honey. You've got it! Yes." Byron's voice is light as air. "See how innocent you are. Your father simply said, 'Come here,' and you just went. You simply wanted Love. You didn't listen to the warning in your heart. How could you know? You were Love answering the call of Love within yourself."

Later Byron attempted to explain this to me. "When she could see that he just said, 'Come here' and that it was *she* that gave herself beyond what the voice within commanded, then she could see his part more clearly. She could see her part more clearly. *She* said yes; that was the lie. He simply asked. It doesn't mean he would not have made her come to him, but she can't know that. She is Love answering Love in whatever form it took. Saying yes when we mean no is misguided love. Love has to answer Love even if insanely. And she answered as she did until she could know that Love also says no. No is the word that honors the place in us that feels the harm."

I think I get it. My greatest pain is self-blame. The secret that must be hidden so securely is my suspicion, even my conviction, that had I chosen differently I would never have been wounded. This is what I can't

afford to see. This is why I find it so crucial that some other one be blamed for my pain. The mistake I make that perpetuates my pain is my belief that only if the other one is guilty can I be innocent. With this belief, I spend my life in pursuit of proof of another person's guilt. It doesn't work. All the years of pain, all the defenses I've built, serve only to keep me in my suffering. I made the choice. I did it. But I am innocent. I didn't know another way.

Byron continues to explain: "She abused herself in her mind for fifty years. After the first ten minutes of the abuse itself, I am the one who continues my harm. When she saw her part, she was free. The key to life is to know Truth and be kind enough to live it. The new perception found on the other side of the lie, we call forgiveness."

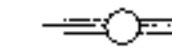
"This is hard to understand," I tell her.

"Yes," she responds. "And this is the greatest gift I bring. It gives you what you've always wanted—you no longer need to be a victim. It gives you one hundred percent power and control in your life. You are one-hundred percent responsible for your pain and your Joy. You always have been and, through forgiveness (seeing the Reality of what happened), you are free."

Suddenly I realize that every time she mentions "responsibility" in connection with injury and forgiveness, I translate it into *blame*. Who's innocent and who's to blame? I want the abuser to take the blame so I don't have to. I think that his confession will free me. It won't. His acceptance of the blame I want to place on him can only increase the blame I lay upon myself. My work is, through acceptance of my responsibility for my own life, to find my innocence. He's the one who needs to find the Truth about his choices. He needs to

free himself. It's what I do to me that matters in my life.

Responsibility really is my response in Truth. To return responsibility to the victim is to restore that one's power. Responsibility has nothing to do with blame.



Truth has layers. I hadn't reached the core, not yet. Some weeks after the workshop, I was called to jury duty. I got there early, found the assembly room, and sat reading a book. The place filled up. A man next to me grinned and said this was extraordinary, this many people for one trial, it must be big. It was. Two men had been found shot dead in the defendant's home, said the judge. She read off the names of the dead, the name of the accused. She said if we knew these people we would be excused. My stomach turned. Acid spurted into my throat; I swallowed it.

I can't spend six weeks of my life face to face with murder, I begged some invisible arbiter. I don't want to judge; I don't want to decide, based upon whatever evidence they give, whether this man, or anyone, is innocent or guilty. Murder. I can't face it. I won't. I might have to.

A large policeman distributed twenty-page questionnaires to the prospective jurors. Some of us would be eliminated on the basis of our answers. I took out my pen. I tackled the questions: "Why is there crime? Have you ever been the victim of a crime? What happened? Do you have a gun? Can you abide killing someone in self-defense? Do you think there is a racial problem in the United States? What causes it? What is your attitude toward the criminal justice system? Make a list of all the places you have lived and all the jobs you've held . . . ." I wrote for two

hours, handed it in as I would a college exam, and went home. I couldn't eat supper.

Murder. I couldn't face it. I refused. I felt terrified of it, of the murderer. When I was left alone after the death of my first husband, I put bolts on all my windows. You can't trust a murderer. And they can be sly. You never know. I didn't want to see him, the murderer, on trial here. I didn't want to look him in the face. I didn't want to say, "I know who you are. I believe you killed those two men."

By then I had worked enough with Byron to realize my reactions to the murderer meant I was resisting Truth. I was defending myself against another lie, another form of self-blame. Write it out, I told myself; turn it all around.

I can't face me, the murder in me. Ah! The murder, the murderer in me. Am I a murderer? I thought of dreams I used to have. I had murdered someone, stuffed her behind a furnace, hid her in an upper room, cut her up and stowed her under the workbench in the garage. I worked on those dreams. It was myself. It was the Christin of my heart's desire. I had done it often—killed my innocence, murdered my essential self. I don't have to do that anymore.

The court case was a teacher for me; the murderer, a mirror.

I saw the Truth. And I saw that I was innocent, just trying to love, just trying to put myself aside in order to "be good and do the right thing." I was just trying to love, but my love was misguided and it hurt me, murdered something of me. The murderer is no stranger to me; I *am* that one.

They called me the next day from the superior court. It wasn't necessary for me to come back. They

had their jury. And I had recognized the Truth.

Finally, the question Byron suggests that I put to myself comes down to this: How wide will I extend my heart? Who am I willing to love? To what extremes am I willing to go to recognize that all of us are Love; that there is One? I sit in the big gold chair where I write my books. Outside the leaves shudder in the wind. I close my eyes. I invite the people in.

The abused child: I invite her in. I recognize her; she is myself. The abuser: I look deep as I can into the abuser's eyes. I invite the abuser in; it is myself. Deep in the abuser's eyes I see the One, abused. They are the same. I open wider. The hungry, the homeless, the unjustly imprisoned, the mentally ill, the addict, the starving child and the mother who holds the starving child, victims of war, all the weeping, crying humanity; they are myself. We are One. Wider yet. I see them coming in the distance. How can I exclude them? The liar, the murderer, the tyrant, the crook: the One made monstrous to my eyes by fear—by my resistance to our pain. They are all myself. I am who they are. We are One.

They cry out in me. They are myself crying. It is the human cry for Love, for recognition of the Love that we are. It is our human striving—often misguided and fearful—to know Truth. It is the cry that Byron Katie says she is. It is the cry in the desert of this world for God.

I fold myself around the world. The world circles back, enfolding me. One sphere. One Love. This is the Love we call Compassion.

We play like children. We create forms, dramas, and we learn. We hold up mirrors to one another. What we call forgiveness is simply seeing clearly.



I go back to my Christian origins. "Forgive them," Jesus said, "they don't know what they're doing." And when he taught us to pray, he said, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The forgiveness that Byron tells us does not exist is the one that implies guilt, debt and judgment. The forgiveness of Jesus is different. I look up the Aramaic. I'm not a language scholar so I need to consult someone who is.<sup>3</sup> It turns out that Jesus' notion of forgiveness sounds like Byron's. He means letting go with every breath of a shadow that's settled over what we truly are. He means separating out the tangles we make of life's threads. He tells us we are clear, pure, without burden and that the task of our lives is to release any lie that clouds this Truth. It was as Jesus died that he made room in his heart for those who executed him. "Father, forgive them," he cried. This was his compassion.

"Except for your lament of the past and your projection of that as future—even into specific moments only—there is no evil; there is no hurt, no pain, no suffering," Byron explains.

"During workshops, I ask people to close their eyes and contemplate: Would you rather be a tyrant, kicking a little child, or would you rather be the little child who was kicked? People reflect deeply. And they report to me that they would rather be the little child who was kicked.

"This is the shift," Byron Katie says, "when something is seen in Truth, old belief falls away. We are the tyrant we fear. When we can see this, innocence is revealed, the heart opens, lies are revealed, judgment falls away; we are free. The experience of that is what we call forgiveness."

Finally I see that the tyrant residing in my own mind is inextricably connected to the tyrant I perceive outside of me. They are forgiven simultaneously or not at all. I cannot be free until I know there are no monsters; there are no victims.

This is not to say that if I torture, murder, or commit any other atrocity, I should not be held accountable. This is not to minimize the horrific effects of what we experience as evil or as sin. But it is to put sin in its proper place: as a betrayal of my nature—of the nature of all, of the One—which is Love. And the refusal to see this Love, to see the fundamental innocence of all being, is the greatest betrayal of all.

Byron's way is not the way of the world. In the world we confront the abuser. We punish. We exact payment for our pain. We lock the bastard up. We execute him. We drive him out like a scapegoat into the desert of our common human mind and leave him there covered with all our sins, infused with essence of pain. We put a curse on him. We make him kneel and ask forgiveness. We wonder if he can be believed. Then, when all of this is done and we think we are free of him, we lie down at night and in the morning when we wake, our pillow is wet with tears.

I watch the television news. I see that something in this society thrives on victimization. It is an industry—big business. It teaches that we've been powerless and harmed. It teaches that someone must be blamed. It separates the good guys from the bad. But no one I know who focuses on self as a victim has ever been freed from the suffering that focus brings. It reinforces separation. Focus on myself as victim continues the lie of my unworthiness.

No one else can prove to me that I am worthy of

Love. Not my endurance, not my continued abuse, not my determination to punish my abuser can buy Truth for me. Truth cannot be forced from someone else, not even from God. The only answer to my pain is to give up the lie I tell myself, the lie that says I am not worth Love.

I feel butterflies in the pit of my stomach. This message about no blame, about forgiveness, about innocence and compassion could bring rejection of the book. Maybe I should leave it out. But it delights me too. I don't want to leave it out. I don't want to be rejected, either. But I think it's true. I'm confused. Time to do The Work again.

I go to my husband, John. He smiles at me.

"You seem to need to take all that Byron says into yourself, you need to reconcile it with all the beliefs of your past. And face it: What Byron is saying has a newness to it. It's like a new religion, a new psychology, even a new medicine. I find it interesting. I even agree with a lot of it. I think it might be the wave of the future. But I don't feel like I need to take it into myself and be changed by it."

I nod. Why can't I be more objective about things? I know why. Everything's a mirror.

"So, Christin, your friend Byron says all these things and over and over she touches on a belief you've held that's different. You twist and turn and wonder how it fits or even *if* it fits. Maybe that's what writers need to do. I don't know."

I'm not sure either. John and I talk about writing. About exposure.

"Put it out there, hon. That's what books are for. You can't know what people will accept or reject. They decide."

Of course.

The rejection of the book? It's mine. I see that I have been blaming others in advance for rejecting sections of this book when, all along, I am the one who does not accept them! I, who wrote the book, am the one.

Then Sandra calls. "I have to tell you something, something really big, that happened to me. I found out that I'm a tyrant!"

"What?" Sweet Sandra? A tyrant?

"Let me tell you. I went on a nature walk this weekend and got to talking with a really nice man, very friendly, a real Renaissance person. As the conversation progressed, he told me that he and his wife both had Masters degrees in physics. Well, I remembered another person I know who is also a physicist and is kind of introverted. So I said that people who go into physics tend to be shy, withdrawn, hermit types.

"Well, this man was taken aback and said no, he didn't think so and that I shouldn't draw conclusions based on one or two people. But I insisted. I just pushed the point and pushed it. I don't know what finally stopped me. Suddenly, I guess, I could hear myself. Such a bitch! I couldn't believe it. Why was I doing this? Nothing is right when another person is hurt. I immediately apologized and said I wanted to take it all back, and I was way off base here, and, of course, I couldn't know this about physicists.

"Immediately, this man smiled at me and said, 'I forgive you.' Just like that! How did he do that?"

"'You forgive me?' I said. I couldn't believe it. It was so easy for him. And he told me I was so charming that it was no trouble at all to forgive me. If it had been anyone else, he wouldn't have been able to forgive them—ever! But he had no difficulty forgiving

me. Even while I was continuing to agonize over my offense, I envied him his ability to forgive because I could not forgive myself.

"Well, Christin, I went home, and this experience wouldn't leave my mind. It appeared that it was so easy for him. How did he do that? But besides that, I was completely embarrassed. I mean, I was such a bitch! I couldn't accept being that way. I did The Work, and I sat on my bed, and I still couldn't get it. I knew that what was happening to me was serious. I was mortified. And you can take that literally. I knew this to be a killer of the body.

"Then it was as though I saw Byron Katie in my mind. She stood, holding her finger centered at her solar plexus, the chakra of power and control. By that gesture she held me, focused me. I would have done anything to wriggle out of this, but I simply could not.

"'Would you deny him this moment?' she asked me. 'It is his *best* to date—the moment to which all his studies have led.'

"I looked, in my mind, from Katie to the physicist and I couldn't get away. Even in my despair, I would not deny him. In Truth, I could not.

"I winced over the enormity of my transgression, but at the same time, I was in wonder over how much greater would be his joy in forgiveness if I were *not* charming—if, instead, I were an absolute tyrant.

"Even then, I could not forgive myself. So I called Byron because, although I could experience forgiveness in my higher Self, whenever I returned to my everyday self and caught a glimpse of the bitch, of the tyrant that I am, I was nauseated, filled with loathing. My thought made me physically sick. This is death.

"'It is your interpretation of the bitch that fills you

with loathing,' Byron said when I told her this. 'You are the one not forgiving you. When he says he forgives you, you can't buy it because the part of you that doesn't forgive the bitch doesn't buy it. Through his eyes, see yourself. You call him liar? He dies in your sight as a result of the error in your perception—that you, the bitch, are not okay. There is only one thing that is not okay with the bitch: She just can't see her beauty yet.

"'See yourself through his eyes. Let the physicist take you to Reality, Truth, the Beauty that you are. Love her. See her as a little girl who simply doesn't know how to think in terms of Love yet. She is the little one who thinks in the lie because she doesn't know how not to yet. See her innocence. Love that. She can't know; can you? Mother her. School her. Truth her in the most gentle way. This is the medicine for every bitch.'

"'How come I don't feel innocent?' I asked her.

"'The little one would not be a bitch if she were not in such terror of her untrue thoughts. The effect of honest thinking is the opposite of bitch. It is *angel*. Its name is you.

"'You haven't forgiven yourself so you assume that he hasn't forgiven you. And he doesn't have full awareness either, as long as he couldn't forgive one other person. You can't be forgiven all the way, through him, because we are all One Person. He is playing; he doesn't know. He forgives. The bitch is playing. She is innocent. She doesn't know. It is the same with the tyrant. All is You. As long as we see one fault, anywhere, the whole story of forgiveness, within us, is not complete. The perception of each and every external symbol is here to complete the mission of forgiveness.'

"My heart did a leap when Katie said these things to me. I could see how a tyrant is innocent. I could see the innocence of all the tyrants, including myself. I could forgive the bitch.

"But I had a further step to take. This morning the focus-in-Truth opened into Love. I love that bitch, I love her so much. I am so grateful to that bitch. I have been afraid of her all of my life. I have been afraid to do anything because I feared she would come out. I've known she was there, and I was afraid she would come out. I never knew how to control her. Now I am able to see the insanity of my attack ways. I love that bitch. I just love her. I love the morning. I love every day.

"I didn't think life could be any better, but now I can get my life together. It doesn't get any better than this. I love Katie for giving me this. I can go on with my life."

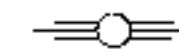
My Christian background provides me with an image of the Christ. Sandra, like Jesus, died, not in a burst of heroics, but by "taking on the sin of the world." She became "sin," became "the bitch" for that man, so both he and she could know forgiveness. Sandra rises, one with the man who said he forgave her. She rises in self forgiveness—the recognition of her innocence.

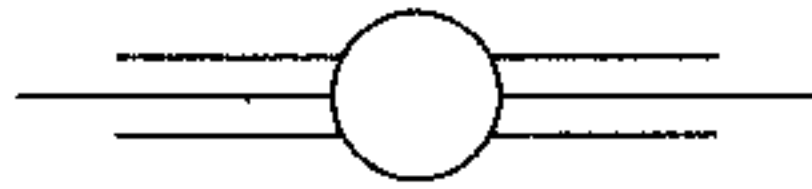
My mind presents me with a prayer I've heard all my life, each year during the Easter Vigil ritual. "Oh, truly necessary sin of Adam," the deacon sings "which was blotted out by the death of Christ. O happy fault, that merited so great a Redeemer." Immediately afterwards I hear the words of St. Paul, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to

sin, live any longer therein?...sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under law but under grace"(Romans 6:1-2, 14).

My understanding deepens. But I am not finished yet. When it comes to innocence and forgiveness, I still have much to learn.

So I do The Work. Over and over I need to take them into my heart—the ones I fear, the ones I blame. Over and over I look into their eyes and find a mirror. We humans are not finished. The play is not over. We contemplate all the manifestations of the One Love. It is a play of shadows over Truth. It is innocent. It is a letting go like breath. It is life on earth.





## WHAT WONDERFUL THING WILL HAPPEN NEXT

From the time of my first meeting with Byron Katie I had heard people talk about Sam. They said he was a businessman, loaded with money. They said she saved his life. They said that in his gratitude, he had set up an institute that paid for all sorts of things like tapes and publishing. Byron says, simply, "Sam is wonderful."

"Sam and I were in the desert," she tells me, "and he had a stroke or something. I don't know what it was. But he overcame his fear of death."

For some reason I wait until the end to interview Sam. I try not to ask why anymore. Despite my best planning, events fall into their proper place.

Sam is home. He says he's delighted to talk with me about the one he calls Katie.

"I met Katie at a health institute in Lemon Grove. The time was short—a couple of days. We didn't get to spend a lot of time together, but I saw instantly that there was something about her. . . I didn't know what it was, just that it was something I needed to understand better."

Sam had followed a spiritual path for many years. He had learned from many spiritual teachers and had even done therapy with John Lennon and Yoko Ono. "I started with psychology, and in the sixties I did TM, which I practiced for a lot of years. I've done just about everything there is to do in the New Age arena. I tried it all because I'm searching. I really wanted to find peace."

He had little peace. Katie came into Sam's life at a time of confusion. Work, relationships, identity all felt tenuous, held together by the finest of threads. Sometimes nothing seemed to hold. He felt adrift in questions.

"Time passed and I decided to go to Barstow. I spent two days with her there, two wonderful days. We walked in the desert and talked. I was dealing with the question of whether I might be homosexual. And I'm an older man; I'm sixty-seven years old. I've been trying to figure out the sexual orientation issue for most of my life. In Barstow Katie was working with a group of people, one of whom was a homosexual, a very nice man whose name I don't remember. With his presence and Katie's help, I was able to work this question through to a conclusion. It was so good for me. I finally was able to know that I am not homosexual and I can feel good about that."

Other things troubled Sam, old things from childhood, constant things like his fear of death. "I haven't totally rid myself of fear," he tells me, "but I've gotten rid of eighty percent of it. I believe now that there is no death. I believe that totally. We continue on. We leave the body and the body remains there and we go on. Where we go, I don't know, and Katie hasn't told me. I don't think she will."

She might. She told me that we don't go anywhere. We are already.

Sam's death fears may have begun with the religious instructions he received in his childhood. His father may have communicated these fears to him. Sam can't be sure.

"I was raised a Lutheran. Very strict. Very fearful. Missouri Synod, the most strict of all of them. I

was afraid of everything. They got up in the pulpit then, when I was a small boy, and told me that I was no good; that I'd never be any good and that the only possible thing that could ever be good for me was to follow God and pray and not sin and you know . . . . It was awful. Terrible. It's a terrible thing to have happen to a young kid. And you have no support. There's no support system.

"My dad was scared to death. He wouldn't go to church, wouldn't talk about it, and my mother was totally engulfed in it. It was a very bad thing.

"God, it really affected my life a lot. That's where all my fears started. Truly. A kid shouldn't be filled with fear of death. And when I was a kid, I was already afraid of death and I don't know why. It was dumb! My dad was afraid of it, though, and that may have been part of it. He was absolutely paranoid about it. I always thought that the *act* of dying was the thing that frightened me. It wasn't really being dead that scared me, it was the act of doing it."

The turning point in Sam's life came during his walk with Katie in the desert. "The first time I was with her, those few days in the desert, we went for a walk in the early morning. It was spring and incredibly beautiful—all my colors. I love turquoise, tans, sage; they all meld together. The effect is so pretty. We walked a long time, talking, and all of a sudden I got such a weird feeling like I was losing it, totally losing it. One side of my face became paralyzed as I spoke. I said, 'God, Katie, I think I might be dying.' And she said, 'Oh well. . .'"

Sam breaks into laughter. The delight over Katie's response continues to be as freeing for him as it was initially. "And I thought, oh this is terrific! Isn't

that wild?! 'Oh well... What wonderful thing will happen next?' Right? She is just terrific!"

I ask him how he understands now what happened to him on that day. "I think there was a transition that took place," he says, "a release, something I had never felt before because I'd always lived very tight, tense, holding on. I think I let go of that. I thought I was dying, but I didn't really experience the act of dying. It might have been nice if I had gone more deeply into it than I did. And having her there at that instant, when I panicked, and she said, 'Oh well. . .'"

"I did learn from this. My mother passed away after this happened. She had cancer. I spent a lot of time talking with her. It's amazing to me how comfortable I'd become with death, with people's dying. I mourned her, but I didn't feel awful. I do feel the loss; I won't be able to talk with her anymore. But from the standpoint of her well-being, I felt good. And I do about anyone who dies now. I don't believe in hell. I wish the religions would do away with that idea. I don't believe there's a devil. There may be a devil in our minds, but I don't believe there's a devil in the world of spirit. I think the devil was something invented to control people. I guess it did that for a long time."

Sam's release from fear endured. It isn't as though no fear remained at all, but eighty percent of it, at least, was gone. He credited Katie and his gratitude sought expression. "I was always trying to figure out a way to get a financial base under Katie because she just lives so much of a hand to mouth existence. She shouldn't be. So many people rely on her now for a lot of their spiritual growth that it's not fair. I told her she ought to charge a set amount per day to show up—plus her expenses. And I don't think that's unfair at all.



But she doesn't do that because she feels it might eliminate somebody that needs spiritual help. She says she can give scholarships and that's true but you need a financial base first. Because she and Paul just struggle all the time to make ends meet and that's not good. I feel it is distracting to her; even though she'll say it isn't, it is. It's out of character but she's human just like the rest of us. We want to put her up on a pedestal, but she's not going to climb up there."

Nothing he tried worked. There was a book, but it was never finished. He paid for a video tape. It didn't represent her adequately. He paid to have her workshop tapes transcribed. Boxes of tapes and reams of transcripts are stored away. Their use is, as yet, undetermined.

Sam puzzles over a situation that might cast some light on the difficulties involved in promoting Byron Katie. "I have many friends I've introduced to her, and it's almost as if they are afraid to get involved with her again. Isn't that strange? I don't understand it. I don't want to judge them because I don't know—I can't get into their heads. I talk to them saying, 'Let's get Katie and have a weekend,' but I just can't get anybody to move. They love her but they just won't move. Isn't that weird?"

But it's not really so weird. The way Byron Katie sees life stuns the ordinary mind, and Sam knows that.

"Do you remember when we had the big fires at Laguna, and so many of the houses burned?" he asks, and I tell him that I do and that I saw artifacts from the fire at last year's Laguna Art Fair.

"Well," he continues, "I had a group of people here at my house and two of the women who came down for that day came through the Laguna area.

They sat in the group telling us how awful the fires were and on and on and on. Katie responded, 'Why do you think it's awful? I don't see anything wrong with it. What *is* the highest order! How do we know? There's the fire. Reality is Love in action. What wonderful thing is going to happen to those people now? How do I know I don't need a house? It just got burned.' It's mind-blowing."

In addition to witnessing Byron Katie's stunning effect on his friends, Sam experiences something of the same resistance himself.

"I'm not absolutely positive—and it's something I struggle with—that becoming as spiritual as Katie is or even close to what she is is something I want to do. I say I do and I think I do but when I get down inside myself and look around, I'm not sure. I'm not sure I want to become this—this spirit. I guess I don't know what that would mean. Maybe that's what stops me from doing it. I really don't know."

He knows through experience, though, that when people allow themselves to be influenced by her, they change. He's seen her with drug addicts and with convicts in halfway houses. He knows it in his inner self, in his daily life and relationships.

"She's had incredible success even with people so far down the hill that you wouldn't believe anybody could bring them back up. One thing she told me one time that really made an impression on me had to do with these guys she works with in a halfway house. I see her as trying to get them to feel love. She said, 'Have you ever tried to get a wall to feel Love? If I am talking with a person who is impenetrable, I become impenetrable. Like speaks to like. I am the wall heard by the wall as itself—recognized.' She got it done! A

lot of them are able to feel things now. I don't know that they were necessarily sociopathic, but they were certainly locked up in their anger and not in touch with their feelings. She's incredible!"

Of his own transformation, he says, "I used to project myself into situations. I've pretty much stopped that. Mainly it's about taking responsibility for yourself. The other is not my business. How can I know? That's what goes through my mind, and it's another thing Katie taught me. How can I know what goes through that person's mind, what they're thinking? There's no way."

Responsibility as a focus in his own transformation, as well as in the transformation of society, is central to Sam's way of life. Byron Katie doesn't compromise when it comes to personal responsibility. It's another thing that draws Sam to her. His heart goes out to the young people of our country who've not had an opportunity to develop this sense of responsibility.

"You can't love too much. The more you love, the more love there is. It is self-perpetuating. You need to live it, not just speak it. Unfortunately I don't see this too much in society. The Katies are the kind of people who will get it there if it ever is going to be there."

And the Sams. This is what I feel like telling him. But he goes on to tell the ways he's changed. "I've learned a lot about forgiveness. I've been judgmental all my life. I was raised like that: taught to be a judge. It's something I've struggled with a lot. But I've made a lot of inroads and have pretty much stopped judging people. I've let go of first impressions: you know—this person isn't very pretty, or is fat, or I don't like this or that—those ideas that go through our heads when we meet someone. I was raised with judgment. My mother

was extremely critical of people and races—the whole thing. She was prejudiced. I've had to learn to not be that. I haven't totally whipped it. I'll be honest: I sometimes get carried away. But I've made serious inroads.

"One morning, early, about five, I was in bed and something woke me up. There was a voice, I swear it, that said, *Stop playing God!* It was incredible. And Katie said, 'Good, you can hear.' I do think I had a tendency to do that—to play God. I think a person who is judgmental is playing God. I don't hear voices, but that voice was as clear as anything I've ever had happen to me."

Sam laughs. There's something childlike and innocent about this man who's been so much a man of the world for more than sixty years. This man who has made and lost several fortunes, who knows his way around, who is—right now—on the verge of financial collapse and already has the creative idea that will amass another fortune. This man is playing. He's innocent. A child.

"I love Katie more than anybody that I know, maybe with the exception of my wife, because Katie is the most wonderful, the most loving—it's just an incredible experience to be in her presence. The last time I was with her, I spent a Saturday, the greater portion of the morning and afternoon, with her. We sat in the living room of her home. I was in a space I'd never been before. It was the 'be here now' experience that you read about—that's exactly where I was. I was totally at peace. It was a marvelous experience, and I was able to keep it and bring it home. I kept it through the night. But it eventually went away. I can bring it back, though, for brief snapshots, but it won't hold. I think it will hold eventually, though; I know where to go to get it. So that's good."

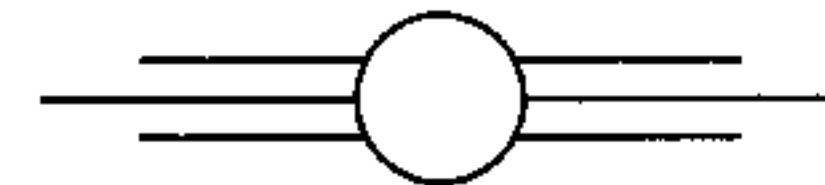
"Katie has made me become a lot more responsible for me, for my own happiness. She's taught me to like myself better, something that was difficult for me; I went many years without liking myself at all. It was a true gift. The Work she does is excellent. It's hard to catch the essence of it in a booklet, though; you almost have to experience it with her.

"What sets Katie apart is her love, her absolutely unconditional love. And her realness. She is incredible. I can have more fun with her, I can cry with her. She's wonderful. I love her. She's beautiful and her spirit is. . . I've never met anyone else like her and never hope to again. That's very special.

"A commitment changes your life, there's no question about it. I think it changes it for the better. I think that, as I told you before, that I feel some fear about continually going on into the spiritual, about pressing into this thing, but I really want to. I *really* want to."

My conversation with Sam is drawing to a close. I can tell because I've learned that as people try to talk about how Byron Katie influenced them, they eventually have only expressions of love. The Work of transformation is ongoing and it is their own. Byron Katie is, as she always said she was, a mirror—what we look like on the other side.

"I don't know what else I can tell you—I just love her and love her and love her." ≡○≡

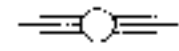


## I AM NOT THIS BODY

Byron Katie spends Holy Week with me. Except for this chapter, the first draft of the manuscript is complete. We go through every word, every sentence. Is it true? Is it the best way to say it? What are the words for that which has no words? We sit in sunlight on the patio. Early in the morning we begin and work until night. We move from place to place: the writing room, the fireplace room. The American language structure is inadequate to Byron Katie's experience in that it requires dualistic thought—a subject and an object. Even the simplest sentence moves from the original state of being in which she lives. "I am." As soon as I say "I," I have moved one step away. What is pure subjectivity, and how can it be expressed? Sometimes we speak and write in circles and need to delete much of it. We laugh. We play with language.

On Holy Thursday afternoon, John and I take her to the airport and I come home to begin what, in my spiritual tradition, is called the Sacred Triduum: the solemn remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus whom we call the Christ. In ritualized reenactment, we Christians make present for ourselves all the passovers: from nothingness to being, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from sin to grace, from death to life, from temporal to Eternal Life. We bring opposites together and act out the healing of dualism. We form a procession of candlelight from the church to the garden. We stand singing under the full moon. We make ready for the stroke of grace that transforms the

human, that reveals to us the divine and always present center of our reality.



Easter Sunday morning rises clear. I have a lot of singing to do. I dress in white and go early to the church to practice with the choir. My voice feels free and soars as if nothing of me can hinder it. Trumpets announce the resurrection. The organ thunders. The Alleluias open up space like a sonic boom. The lector steps to the pulpit. He announces: "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

At this moment I break open like the Alleluia. My individual life has died. What I called "I" is eclipsed, hidden, in the Christ who is hidden in God. I feel present everywhere, in everything, within each person there in the church, between them, unbounded. This must be what Byron Katie means when she says, 'I am not this body.' This body is only one of the forms I take. I am many forms. I am the form of music. I am the form of each person here. I am the form of the wind and of the sun shining through the stained glass. I am the form of the words being proclaimed. I am the form of the Christ. And all form is transformed today. All is hidden in God.

I have seen people die. My father died. I sat with my friend who died when she was only forty-four. My first husband of ten years died suddenly. My mother died while I held her hand. "Life is changed, not taken away," the priest proclaimed at every funeral. I tried to understand. The form of my body changes during all my life; death changes that form radically. I do not die. I am not this body.

I know that I can write the chapter on death now.

"Death is a projection," Byron Katie says, "of everything you have ever been taught by human thought on this planet. If no one had told me about death, I wouldn't know what they meant. We don't die. Death is not a possibility! It is something we use to scare ourselves. Our thoughts of death are upside-down thinking and don't work. The fear is projected from our childhoods. We saw people wailing from seeing other people wailing and falling apart as we now wail and fall apart perpetuating the lie. That is fear. Fear is confusion and ignorance. The human condition is to protect the body because humans think they are their bodies. They have forgotten they are thoughts, being. They are not in touch with the awareness which is that of Everlasting Life.

"Every time the belief of death comes in, know it is the result of this upside-down thinking. The people who 'die' and come back from near-death experiences report the beauty, ecstasy, and peace they encounter. Then there are the ones who step on over and don't even bother to come back to report the obvious.

"Look for one proof that death isn't good other than your belief that they should rise and walk for your benefit. It is not possible to find it. There is only Good. There is only God. There is only Joy! Any thought that keeps me from Life is insane."

I remember that my first meeting with Byron came only three weeks after my mother's death. Now, in the presence of Byron's teaching, my thoughts return to that experience.

It was early, a few minutes past six in the morning of August 13, 1993. John had just left for work; I wanted to sleep some more. I closed my eyes. The phone rang. It was so early in the morning; who would call me?

It was my sister, Liz. She had tears in her voice. "The nursing home called. Mom isn't dead—yet." Then she began to cry. "They said she hasn't eaten anything for three days. Why didn't they call me? They said to call my sister in California." We talked. I don't remember the words. I told her I would be in Minnesota by evening.

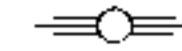
I think now of that trip, the hours in the plane flying from the West Coast to Minnesota. Somehow, even though I'd not yet met Byron Katie, I experienced what she was later to tell me: "The ultimate existential fear of humankind is the fear of what we see as death. But death is not what you think it is. All you know is that when the body stops, it is fearful to you. When you can't see the person as alive, you don't trust that life hasn't ended. When essence leaves the body and the body just lies there, it scares you. But if essence came back to body, body would report it had been in an indescribably joyous place beyond itself. Because of the generations of learned misbeliefs and fear, we are unable to experience a peaceful, joyous life.

"Death is also lying in the arms of a loved one and going to sleep. Every night we lay our head on the pillow and go to sleep. That is what death is. We were put to bed each night by our parents, even before we could constitute thought, and we automatically learned to trust we would wake each morning.

"On what I call the 'other side' is the *Isness*—beliefs are the *Is-not-ness*. Any thoughts we try to put onto that condition of *Is* limit the *Isness*. It *Is*, complete, beyond words to describe!

"My own experience is that I live in this completeness. It is the peace I walk in. I don't 'know' anything. I don't have to figure anything out. I gave up in

time, forty-three years of thoughts that go nowhere, and now I can know the *Is-not*. Peace. Joy. Absolute fulfillment of watching everything unfold in front of me as me. I am a perpetuated mind cause already existing, here to correct itself, now. It is the same as death. *Being!* I don't *know* that I am—I Am."



Thick air wrapped me as soon as I stepped from the plane into the flightway. Humidity. I'd forgotten. My brother-in-law, Steve, stood toward the back of the crowd. He smiled. I expected him to say something about Mama, was she still alive? He said nothing. Gave me a hug. Smiled again. Then he took me over to where Liz was sitting in a wheelchair by the window. She smiled too. I asked about her broken foot; I said I hadn't expected her to be there.

Was Mama dead? Was Liz being brave, not wanting to tell me here in public? I preferred to wait rather than to ask. On the way to the baggage claim, Liz finally said something like, "Mom is still holding on. I spent the day with her."

I wanted to go right to the nursing home. I heard Liz say, "Be sure you take care of yourself; you keep vigils and forget to take care of yourself." I mentally instructed myself to be reasonable. Pace myself. Not imagine I must be with Mama every moment, responsible, somehow, for guiding her through death. I don't have that kind of wisdom, that kind of power.

Mama's eyes were closed and she was breathing very fast. How many times had I been here in my mind, beside her, dying? My mother, dying, in all the others I loved who died. The mother, dying in my dreams since I began to dream and death moved inex-

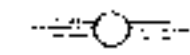
orably toward her house with fire to destroy her. I could not protect her. I could not stop it.

I took her hand. It was still *her* hand. Soft. But so wet, clammy. Fever. Her face too. Clammy. Liz called the nurse. Her temperature was just about 100, her blood pressure holding at what the nurse called normal. So small. Her bones were the bones of birds fallen from nests. Her hair was spread on the pillow over her head, still almost black, straight. Her skin was not gray like all those others I watched die. She radiated a kind of light. It fooled me. She won't die tonight, I concluded, or tomorrow. She will die on Sunday, on the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

Liz said she would not be staying the night. Something in me felt bound to Mama as though once standing beside her I could not move. But I reasoned that if I were going to stay with her all the next day and night, then I had better go with Liz and sleep. We sat by her bed just a little more than an hour. We sang to her. "Goodnight Sweetheart" and "My Wild Irish Rose." We kissed her and said we would return in the morning.

My nephew, David, let me use his room. He had a waterbed. It hugged me. I felt emersed in a cloud. But I didn't sleep much.

At four in the morning the phone rang. I awoke immediately. *It's the nursing home*, I thought and I waited for Liz to come to the door. But she didn't come. If she didn't hear the telephone, which was sitting right above her bed, then it hadn't really rung. I must have dreamed it. I had difficulty getting back to sleep. It would be a long day and I intended to stay up all night with Mama. I kept thinking of the poem I wrote last year; it ended with the words:



MAMA MAMA  
Let the fire die.  
Let me hold you once  
Before you fly;  
Be a bird in my hand  
Resting Nesting  
One again with everything  
We ever hoped to understand  
About our hearts  
Your heart  
Hiding  
In my too too frozen life.



I was up at 7:30, which is really 5:30 my time. But I wasn't thinking about time. I planned to shower and then Liz and I would go to the nursing home. It seemed early to me. It wasn't really early. Then Liz was up. While she was getting dressed the phone rang. A voice said, "Your mother is low. You'd better come over." I told the voice we would do that; I'd just shower. She said, "I don't think you have time to shower; she might not wait for that."

It was sprinkling. A big thunderstorm was moving in fast on the Twin Cities. This was the edge of it. In the parking lot, Liz told me to get out of the car and run in. She'd follow as fast as she could with her broken foot.

There were three nurses in Mama's room, and she was dying. "Oh, good, you're here," one of them said. "She waited for you." I hurried around to the side of the bed where I could see her face, and I took her hot, damp hand. "Mama" came like a sob straight from my heart.



I laid my head close to hers. Her breathing was irregular with long pauses between breaths and her eyes were open. Her lungs were filled up and the breath rattled.

Then Liz was with me.

"Go to God, Mama," I said and I cried again. The nurses left the room. Liz and I were alone with her.

Some phlegm came from her lungs and ran out of her mouth. Liz wiped it away with a tissue and I thought, *Liz is the mother now, doing the motherly things.*

We both became quiet. Time seemed to stop. There was a big space where all three of us seemed to be holding our breath. Mama's face looked so living. That's what had fooled me the night before. Her face was luminous. Several times the space between her breaths was so long that I thought she was dead, but she breathed again.

Then she closed her eyes. At that moment, the radiance seemed to release itself from her face and disappear. She didn't breathe again. I don't remember if we cried. I think we were silent. I think we just looked at her. She was gone. I searched around the room for her spirit. When my first husband died, his spirit stayed in the room for about a hour. I could feel it. Mama wasn't there. She was gone. Just then a thunderclap split the sky open. A deafening sound of rain.

I slipped Johanna Sowa's rosary, my great grandmother's rosary with the tiny beads, out of the medicine pouch around my neck and laid it on Mama's breast with the crucifix over her heart.

I held her hand. She was still warm. Her color slowly faded, the markings of age on her hand disappeared as if by magic. "Let me hold you once before you fly."

Liz and I sat, one on either side of our mother's

body. We talked. Some of it was business. What do they need at the funeral home? Do we have clothes for her? Do they need a picture? When do they need these things? Some of it was miracle. Did you see what I saw? The light? Do you think we actually saw her leave?

Liz began to take Mama's things down from the walls, from out of the drawers, the pictures, the clothes. Most of the clothes didn't really belong to her; they were hand-me-downs from other women who died. What was left of hers? So little. Not enough to fill a box. She had let go of everything. She dispossessed herself. The poor in spirit. The child who had nothing of her own. "Unless you become as little children. . ." Jesus said. Liz wanted to do this now, organize things. It helped her cope.

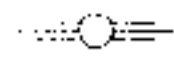
We left most of the clothes. I wanted her hat, her tattered blouse with the green and burgundy flowers. She wore it so often. Liz took the vest I crocheted. The burnt orange afghan I made was lost.

It was just past noon. We didn't want to be there when the hearse arrived. We wanted to leave her as she was, there in bed. Others would care for her body.

We took her hands and formed a circle. We sang "May the Road Rise Up to Meet You." You are the love of my heart. Good night.

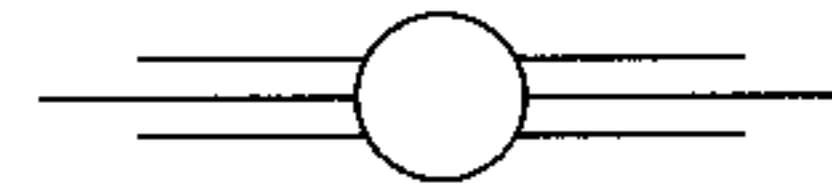
I took the rosary and put it back into the medicine pouch. Liz crossed Mama's hands over her heart. She laughed just a little and commented that Mama never in her life held her hands just like that. Liz started for the car. I stood alone with Mama's body for a moment.

God-speed, Mama. I kissed her. I turned and walked from the room.



This is how Byron Katie can say there is no death. Form is all that dies and, even in that event we call "death," form is not eliminated, simply changed, transformed, brought back and hidden in God.

All of Easter day I allow myself to flow from form to form. The form of bread dough rising. The form of roses, cut, placed in a vase. The form of bird song from a distance. The form of John and his brother arguing politics. The form of spring green hills. The form of California poppies nodding in the wind. I am not this body. This body is but one of the forms I take. My mother is not dead. Her life is hidden with Christ, in God. —○—



## LIVING A FULL LIFE

It is rare for Byron Katie to meet with a group and not be asked about death. A woman, eyes brimming with tears, asks about her father who recently died. A man with cancer says he fears his death. Byron responds gently. What follows is a compilation of those responses.



If I'm to be aware of living a full life, I must be successful in dying a thousand times each day. Every belief I let go of is death—death of old concepts/beliefs that don't serve, beliefs passed on from the beginning of thought that you call time.

When humans believe death to be a terrible thing and don't want it and they believe that anything threatening their safety will cause death, they simply are living in the fear that they will "kill" their bodies and therefore die. Death is a sweet, wonderful thing that has been distorted. One way you can know that is to know that all human thinking is a mirror image unless it comes from a place where there is no contraction felt on the body during the thought.

If you think of injury to your body, you automatically and, perhaps, unconsciously are experiencing fear of death. Know that your thought is insane. For example, I can think about taking an airplane and, if it were to crash, I would be peaceful on the way down because I know how very beautiful the moment to moment of life is. Why would I miss the trip down by

projecting what isn't? Namely, death. There is only one death: the falling away of an untrue belief.

Every time you go on a trip you leave everything you have here. You leave your heart's desires. You leave your home and your interests and your family—the symbols you hold most dear, what you think you live for. But you leave. You just do it. Only your thoughts that you get to go back home to them makes you comfortable with leaving. If you felt you could never go back there again, it's possible that you would be feeling all kinds of torment.

To leave is as good as to stay. If you are sitting at home and you don't want to leave but someone calls and says, "Let's go to Disneyland," all of a sudden you want to leave. This is the reason you don't want to die. You don't have the higher information. You don't trust death. It is a lack of faith to say that living is higher than what we call death. This is insane, upside-down thinking that keeps us from living Life in this moment, in Reality.

Your ego has to terrify you all the time or you would go home to God in the body as I have done. This is what I'm here to live. When we are out of thinking, when we let go of having to know all the whys, whens, wheres—then everything that Is becomes visible. The consciousness of the Isness, the same as death, comes through.

The Isness *is* without extension. There is no perception, form, thought. This is sometimes scary for humans because they don't expand their consciousness enough to grasp this, so they stay terrified. The perfection is inconceivable, especially that it could come from being still and quiet and free of useless beliefs; free of beliefs that, of themselves, are useless. If humans can't

believe they can create something, as if they were gods, they tend to believe they are not fulfilling their purpose. Our purpose is simply to know ourselves as that that we are. Creation is already created. Can't you see?

In the Isness we merge with God. We discover that merging when we go back to the heart place and touch Home. We all yearn for and have the ability of going there—going Home. But every belief/thought we have takes us away from God. This again is death. It is a conscious death. So to wake from erroneous belief: that is Life! Literally, humans live in dying. Live to die! And we fear what we live for!

Sometimes we fear the sorrow we think our death would bring to those we love. But our beloveds would move right along. Look at any family who has lost someone and pay attention to how they adjust.

Excessive grieving can demonstrate a lot of projection. There is pain in, "Who is going to take care of me? What am I going to do without her? Oh, my God! I can't live without her!" Those are their thoughts. What they are going to do is go to work, clean the house, carry on. They will do everything they do, as if you were only gone for the weekend. Except, they are going to carry on all the mental pain and the project of "poor me, my beloved is gone!" What a perfect opportunity to suffer! "I will use your death to suffer!" Ultimate selfishness!

You can't cause them pain and suffering. That is theirs. The fact is that on the day of your funeral they will wonder, "Who is going to do the dishes? Who is going to send the thank you notes? Where are the guests going to sleep tonight?"

They are going to use you in the name of "Poor me! Poor me! Oh, she was so wonderful!" All these

machinations are their proof that it is legitimate to suffer. I would say "Don't suffer in my name!"

In my Reality, death is Life. The only difference is our opinion. I teach one; the world teaches the other. One serves; the other won't. I choose the one that serves. This is sanity! To delude myself into thinking death is bad is insane. No one knows that death is bad.

We look at the survivors of the death of a beloved and we say, "Oh, it's bad." Not true! Only for the poor deluded people who are left behind who are choosing suffering. "I didn't do enough. I didn't tell him what I should have before he died. Who is going to take care of me? What am I going to do; he's not here?" People use this beautiful existence of life to suffer! What they call death, I call a Celebration of Life. Because they can't see it that way, death becomes a legitimate opportunity to suffer. One of the biggest dramas we can create is suffering. Death of a close one is a new opportunity to give me what they gave me and to appreciate creatively as I do it.

The ego uses the thought of death to separate us from God. The ego is a thought system we perpetuate through the generations and each person builds on it. The ego says we had better be afraid. It particularly has its power in our fear of death. So we hear, "Watch out, don't run in the street." Then we have many thoughts about being hurt, or being killed, or being incapacitated, or being in suffering, and we build on those thoughts with all kinds of fantasies. Eventually, if the distortion of thinking is strong enough, we begin to stay in the house because of the fear. And the ego continues to terrify us with other thoughts and beliefs. I teach: Don't be careful; you might hurt yourself.

When we have an intuitive thought, it is our in-

touch-ness with the Creator. But then we think "this is my own idea" and in that thought the ego takes over the creation, the gift, the divineness, and the true flow stops. The ego believes it is in control; then we effort, we plan, we worry, we work harder because the ego is in fear if it thinks it isn't in control. Fear is built upon a multitude of beliefs and its name is dis-ease. Body follows mind and reflects this visibly. That is not living. We live when we are in nonbelief—open, waiting, trusting, and loving to do the thing appearing in front of us.

Life is available when we let go of old concepts that don't serve us. There is only the death of the ego. Everything other than the lie is Joy and Life. This is Truth. We can know it through our sons, daughters, friends, husbands, and wives. They, like the body, appear as the reflection of our minds bouncing back that we may see ourselves.

You move totally away from the mind of God/Good when you believe you have a legitimate reason to suffer. It is the state of the ultimate Anti-Christ. People can then say, "Oh, why did she leave; why did she leave?" One answer is, "God is just a real son-of-a-bitch!" Then they can really keep themselves dead sick. The Truth of "why did she leave" is: "She's gone!" How do we know it's for the best? She's gone! Reality *is*. How do we know? Here it is.

Know there is no death! Diseased cells stop reflecting back, will relax and stop multiplying when you know this. When you are taking medicine or doing something to kill such cells as cancer, know they are supreme in their intelligence. They are the body; they will survive untold obstacles. Yet they are mutations and they are masters. They thrive on fear! They are fear. When there is no fear reflecting from mind, they

relax and become this beautiful blend of the system and fall away. But as long as you are scaring you (fear of death, which is to say, thoughts opposite of God/Good), thoughts reflect back as what we call cancer cells. Call it fear, not cancer. Call it untrue belief systems, not cancer. Know yourself. You are your cancer. You are the something that feeds your death. It isn't only cancer cells but any disease we have created that we name foreign to our system. How can I know my mind if my body doesn't reflect mind back to me? Cause and effect. God is good—I create cancer thinking otherwise.

Fear is a full-time job. Fear is the human condition when we forget. Forgetting is a word for pain and suffering. Remembering is peace and heaven.

Unlearn fear. Make Truth available to yourself. You don't know what death is. If you did, you would rejoice. Take the power from the word. Every time you think the word *death*, think *Life*. Fear is simple to think. You could lose something or not get something. You die over the fear of the something, but when you look at the fear in Truth it always breaks down to your mind being afraid of dying.

In humankind we have been taught erroneous beliefs. If you reverse these beliefs and go to the other polarity or opposite idea, you pretty much have the Truth. I want to reiterate: If you are in fear, you need to turn from that fear and illusion toward the opposite pole in order to be in Truth. When you find a balance with this, you become a respecter of Life and the Unknown.

There is a bodily discomfort when the thought is in fear. We call this a feeling. With practice you can learn to acknowledge the feeling's origin. For some people it is a twist in the solar plexus or a pain in the gut. That is the key. That is how we can use the body.

It is the key that you have just formed an idea that doesn't work. It doesn't move toward peace. You go inside yourself and ask: "Is this an honest thought? What's in it for me to have this thought? Can I know anything but good, really?"

An example is: "My father is arrogant." This is generally not a peaceful thought. Feel the contraction in the body, perhaps in the heart, the solar plexus, the gut, the neck. Then you can realize that you want him to be different. You don't want him to be himself, to have his own thoughts, to be his own person. You want him to be and do everything in the way you would demand if you could. You have projected your own arrogance onto him, onto someone outside yourself. Realizing your own arrogance will allow you to release him to be who he is. Then you are free too. You are free from anger, arrogance, fear, pain, and bodily contraction. You have returned Home to Peace and Joy.

My father is arrogant? I am arrogant to think my father is arrogant. It is my arrogance in that one simple judgment that sickens my body. How else could I know my mind is off? Thank you, body, for reflecting my mind. To change father is hopeless. Can I recognize my own arrogant judgment of him? When I can see it is not him, it is *me*, I'm halfway Home. When I can see my only guilt was my error in thinking, I'm healed wholly.

When you believe others should think and act as you do, it is always going to cause disease on your body. Always! It takes a great deal of consciousness to understand this, but you have been judging that part of who you are, your soul, when you judge someone else. Judging is against the principle of Love. When you judge the experiences other people choose, you are out of Truth. They need to choose their own experiences, to

fulfill their own soul journey. You need to do your own.

So you bring it back into yourself: "He is no kind of father! . . . No! I am no kind of son to judge him as what I cannot know." He is off the hook. You don't have to contract and be in dis-ease. You are corrected. He is living his life the way he is choosing. There are three kinds of business: my business, your business, and God's business. If I stay only in my business, I will be healed!

Alert yourself to the Truth. What is it you think you are about to lose? What is it you want? Notice carefully, because these are fear thoughts and will cause you pain and misery. Then ask yourself: "Do my thoughts work to make me happy? Do they bring me Joy? I have a choice; do I choose Life or death?" You have this opportunity every moment. It isn't later. It is in every moment! Letting go. Unlearning. Unlearning that there is death other than in your thinking.

You are dying every moment you don't choose to correct truly an idea that doesn't bring peace. Living in Truth is what Joy is. Anything short of that is where death is. And ideas come into that death—like "Oh my God, I'm going to die and it must be terrible!" We must unlearn that.

There is only Life. Death is an idea. Life is real. That is why it is so painful when we don't know that. People walk around in the painful physical result of mind and forget the Truth that Life is Joy!

Suffering is just suffering. If I lose that prejudice, I don't have to suffer anymore. I've chosen to change my mind and not suffer anymore. The way I choose to live is in Joy. In Reality, I choose not to suffer anymore. Every person should stop and think: "When did I suffer last except in my mind?"

To live in fear is the inability to discern Reality. You are living in the fear of what you perceive as the Unknown, and fear of the Unknown is the fear of death. It is fear in Life that we are experiencing.

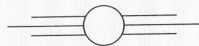
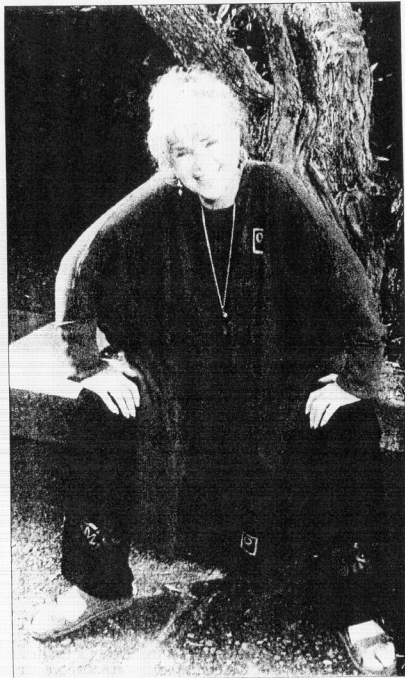
Fear of death is fear of Life. This is a very high awareness. Each time you move away from the peace this awareness brings, you have to look at the thoughts that pull you away. Then you are given ability to heal the thoughts, and you can release them and go back home again, back into the grace of Good, into peace.

When you step out of the fear and into Truth, the living is right there in front of you to be experienced now. Because it is the Unknown and comes up as we perceive it, we can't plan or plot it. It is wonderful, joyful Life. That is why the words "I am available" are so important. You can be available to the Creator, to the Creation, to the Body of God.

In my death experiences, I realized I fell into a conscious state that is much higher than what I experienced before. That is what I am here to report. There never has been a death. There never will be a death. Each time I have experienced what people call "leaving the body," I realize that not once have I really left. We don't leave the body. There is nowhere to go. We are This Now. Everything is consciousness. All our so-called millennia of teachings have been that God and death are outside of us! Not true in my experience. We are this Now and Now and Now!

This is the other realm. This is the All That Is. Out of thought you can know that. You! You can know that too! I am here to report to people. If I am the Awareness-of-Consciousness-Observing-Itself, you are that experience too. ≡○≡





## PART TWO

*I am a cry in the desert.*

*Byron Katie*





## THE CRY IN OUR SOULS

I am caught by what I do not want to tell. Byron Katie says to write. We are the same, she says. That's fine when it means I am the beautiful one I see in front of me, when I look in her eyes and see the love there. But I've heard the stories of her past. They called her "hell on wheels." They called her "killer." They meant that she could work a deal, get money, be powerful. I don't want to repeat this story because I don't want to reach into myself where I am that one. I don't want to see my own dark side.

Just let your fingers tell it, Byron Katie says. She says, "Tell it, honey." She knows we all are this one, all the same one, all with this darkness I don't want to see. I resist her. For a year I resist. I let other people tell the story: her mother, her children, her first husband. I tell myself they know better. I leave the story in their words. I know I've failed myself and you. I pretend I don't know. The book is almost ready for the press. A woman calls me on the phone. Another comes to my house. They read the manuscript. They tell me something is wrong.

I've written the facts. I've not written the whole Truth. Truth shines as the essence of everything. It is the Light shining in darkness. It is the source of every cry.

We are each a cry in the desert. As long as I deny that cry, I can't know this woman, this Byron Katie. I can't know myself. The cry is a stumbling block. It is a cry out of everything that's dark, agonizing, dying. It is the cry of death. It is the cry at the edge of a life of

dreams. This cry rends the dream, tears it like paper, like cloth, like a mask. This cry wakes us up to Reality. There is One. One cry. One awakening. One Truth.

She is born. One day she thinks she is not loved. She builds a life on that thought. She holds her life and shakes it, demanding to be loved. She does whatever she knows how. She marries, makes children, makes money, makes deals, makes her mask, and is concealed behind it even from herself. She is lost. She is angry. She is desperate. She cries out. The mask tears.

Her story is that simple.

She wrestles with her demon and is wounded. She wakes up from her dream and finds that she is the Love.

Her story is that ancient.

She is what we all are. To know her story I must find it in myself.

No one is exempted from this work.



Some time, hours or days, after meeting Byron Katie, people begin asking how she came to be the clear, loving, joyous woman that she is. "Were you always like this?" they ask. "What happened to make you this way? What is your story?"

She smiles and tries to tell of her life before awakening. She doesn't exactly "remember" in the common way we understand what it is to remember. She lives without an experience of time.

The past is nonexistent. Everything is now. She speaks in snippets of what we would call her past experience. She tells the story without chronology, as it makes itself present to her. One must listen to her often in order to collect the pieces and fit them together.

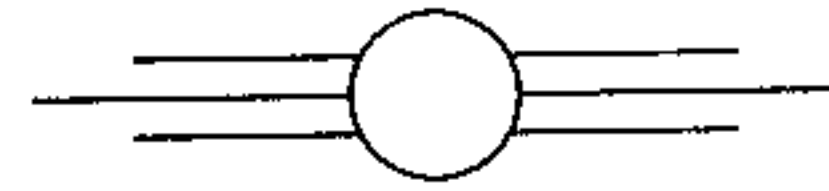
Even then the story may not be complete.

It doesn't matter. It is everyone's story. This is what Byron Katie tells me when I complain that I don't know the facts well enough to write about her. What she thinks of as her "autobiography" includes us all. The details of her life before awakening are secondary if not unnecessary. "Write about yourself," she smiles, "it is all the same."

I go to her family, her mother, children, husband, and former husband. I think that because of her wealth, power, glamour, and the loss of these things, I will find a drama of enormous public interest. But what I find is something I don't want to write.

Suffering, I discover, is a phantom that can narrow the boundaries of our worlds and drive us insane if we believe that it is real. At the point of disappearance, the sufferer cries out. This is the cry that rends the temple veil, splits open the illusion we create, and wakes us up.

It is the cry in the desert. —○—



## WHAT ANYONE MIGHT BE

She was born Byron Kathleen Reid on an icy December sixth in Breckenridge, Texas. It was wartime, 1942. Byron's mother, Marion, had returned home to Texas with her four-year-old daughter Sharon. Marion wanted to be with her own mother, Janie Campbell, during those last months of pregnancy. Times were hard in California where Marion lived with her husband, Rodney, and their daughter. Rodney used to have a job in Texas but war rationing shut down the gasoline distributing company in Breckenridge. He found a new job with the railroad in California.

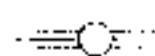
Breckenridge, Texas was a town of under ten thousand people. While Marion was growing up, it was booming. Oil and money gushed. Then the depression hit. Marion leaves it at that as though one ought to know, feel the slippage, the silences in the streets, the big pumps closing down.

Byron's mother speaks in tones of a warm Texas afternoon. She's in her eighties now and lives in California, but she was back in Texas when her second daughter came slipping into the world in thirty minutes flat on that cold and icy December day. "It was very, very cold for that part of Texas. There was ice and snow on the ground, which was not usual. We got up and I dressed Sharon, the oldest, for Sunday School. She was the only one I had at that time. I walked her to the church. I didn't realize what I was getting into—ready to have a baby and taking an icy, snowy walk—but I did it all the same. I felt uncomfortable

but I didn't really expect to have the baby that night."

She dropped Sharon off and made her way to a local restaurant, a gathering place for people in town, a place to get the news, gossip a bit, warm her hands around a steaming cup of coffee.

The war filled everybody's minds. Marion's older brother, Thomas, was already overseas. Seventeen-year-old William had signed up and was waiting around the house to be called. Even her sister, Elizabeth, had left her job with General Motors to join the WACS. All but Thomas and Marion's eldest sister, Dorothy, who had her hands full with a family of her own, were home that Sunday waiting with Marion, knowing the baby would come soon. "They kept me amused during the day," Marion remembers, but in the evening they left to do whatever young people do when there's a war going on and they might soon be overseas. Marion and her mother were alone when the labor pain began.



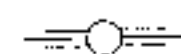
Little Sharon slept. She couldn't be left alone. Janie would need to stay home with her, but how would they get Marion to the hospital? "The doctor was a family friend," Marion delights in this story of Byron's birth. As she speaks, each piece of the narrative is a marvel to her. In a thoroughly human fashion, she's moved by each detail of this birth as though it is a portentous thing regardless of how common it might appear to someone else—how much like any birth.

"About seven-thirty the kids were all gone and we had nobody to keep the baby and I knew that I should go to the hospital. So I called my doctor, who said he'd pick me up and take me to the hospital. My mother

stayed there and took care of Sharon until one of the other children came home.

"I had the baby in thirty minutes! I'd done a foolish thing: While I waited for the doctor I went in and took a hot bath, which immediately brought labor on hard. I barely got to the hospital! My mother showed up just about the time Katie was born.

"She was the most beautiful baby I ever saw. She wasn't red, she was pink and white and round and she had fingernails and curls on her neck. Of course they tell all the mothers that, you know, 'She's so beautiful.' But she was; she was just a beautiful baby."



After six weeks in Breckenridge, Marion returned to Bakersfield, California, and soon afterward her mother joined her to help with the children. Texas felt lonely to Janie, what with everyone gone: Dorothy had her own life and the other three were at the military's beck and call. Marion couldn't find help in Bakersfield, not for a mother with an infant and a four-year-old. And she needed help. Marion hadn't planned on motherhood to begin with. She wanted to be a businesswoman and before the babies came she had a fine start in Ready-to-Wear. She not only sold clothes, but she was also a buyer and accountant for the company.

Describing her life with the babies—three of them, Rodney William was born twenty-three months after Byron Kathleen—Marion laughs. "I didn't know what I was doing. Oh, I was old enough! I didn't have my first baby until, let's see, she was born in July and I was twenty-five in August, so I wasn't young. But I didn't intend to go into this family thing. I'd never kept house. There weren't any conveniences—no washing

machines—and here I was with two babies within twenty-three months of each other! I thought I was a business girl, and suddenly I had three babies! But we both loved babies. In that era you either had babies or you didn't. You trusted a lot to luck. Whenever we found out we were going to have another one, we were very happy about it. As far as I'm concerned, the years I had the children and while they were growing up were the best years of my life. They were wonderful!"

Railroad people move around a lot. Bakersfield to Needles; Needles to Barstow and back to Needles. Needles had the Colorado River but Barstow was higher up and cooler. Sometimes the heat became oppressive enough even in Barstow to drive Marion out of California and back to her mother in Texas. They traveled, took the children and went to the South, to Florida, to the Smokey Mountains. Rodney worked. "He was a real quiet man," Marion says. "I thought he was a wonderful father. I suppose you could say his whole life was being the father and husband. He worked to support us and we always had an easy life."



They called their middle child Katie. The name "Byron" was a concession to the family. Janie Campbell had a cousin, an orphan who was raised, in part, by Janie's father. The orphan's name was Byron. She came to the family with a small amount of inherited money that the Campbell's invested for her and returned to her at the time of her marriage. Her husband, an ambitious young man with no money of his own, parleyed her money into a several million dollar oil empire in Oklahoma.

The millionaire Byron came to visit when Marion

was pregnant with her second child. She confronted Janie. "I notice that none of your children have named any of their children after me!" Janie replied that she had nothing to do with the naming of her grandchildren.

"Well, I'll tell you this much," Byron lifted her head and looked down on her cousin, "if they don't, there's nobody else in the family that's going to leave them any money."

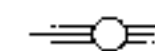
After she left, Janie went to Marion. "You'd better name that child Byron."

Marion wasn't about to be forced.

Janie argued. "Well, you know, there's also that relative of your dad's. His name's Byron too."

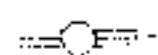
When Marion still was not convinced, Janie pleaded, "I wish you'd do it to please me. Byron hasn't any children. It would make her happy."

Marion laughs about it now. "I love that story," she chuckles. "Byron did leave Katie five thousand dollars, which was enough, at the time, to get her through collage. You know, Katie didn't care much for the name, Byron, but it grew on her. Her name is Kathleen, Byron Kathleen. Recently I think she decided she likes the name Byron best. She changed her life around, maybe she felt the need for a new name."



"When Katie was little," Marion remembers, "we lived in a neighborhood of twenty-one children, and ours was a double corner lot. I had the biggest yard and I didn't allow my children to wander the neighborhood. As a result I had all the neighborhood children in my yard. One day I went out to find Katie sitting on the curb and all the other kids playing and yelling. She just sat there. I'd seen this before, so I

went out and sat on the curb by her, and I said, 'Honey, why aren't you playing? Don't you want to play?' She turned her little head toward me and said, 'No, I don't want to play, Mama; I just want to watch.' I understood because I was a watcher too; I wasn't a mingler when I was a kid. And I said, 'Well, all right, you just watch; but if you want to play, you go ahead and join in.' She said, 'All right.' But she went on watching. She had that little thing about her, to sit back a lot of the time and just observe."



"I wasn't shy," Byron says now. "*She* called it 'shy.' Her stories are that I would sit on the curb and suck my thumb and that I didn't talk until I was, maybe, five or six. She called it 'shy' but I don't remember shyness at all. I remember just not having anything to say. Just observing.

"A year or so ago I remembered an experience; it came back to me clearly. I knew that the whole world—that there was no world, that it didn't exist except for the thing in front of me. I was probably three or four years old. I was lying in bed in our house in Needles on Palmway Street. I was supposed to be napping. I was still. I was aware that my mother was working between the living room area and the kitchen. Then my mind went to another country, a place I'd heard someone speak of, and I knew none of it existed. Only what I could see existed, and I was to observe it. That was clear, so clear. As time went on though, I lost that clarity because the concept of time and space is reinforced here. And so I unlearned what I had discovered about the nature of Reality. My experience is that we all have those recollections when we are quiet.

The more aware we become, the more we remember."

What do children hear? What do they see? A small girl sits cross-legged in the California summer dust. Her face is smeared. No one helped her blow her nose. She's sticky with sweat and the tiny sharp stones grind into her legs where she sits. Somebody comes out of the house. It's her mother. Her mother wants something. "Don't suck your thumb!" the little girl hears. The small girl, Katie, follows her mother back to the house and her mother closes the door. "Katie, stay outside." Later Katie's sister, Sharon, goes in. Little Rodney goes in. Everybody goes inside but Katie. She sits in the hot dust and watches, and she believes she's nothing to be wanted, nothing to be touched, nothing to be loved. Mother said stay outside and Katie thought she meant forever. Her perception was off; she heard "forever." Little Katie's perception was off. She couldn't hear the mother who said "Sweetheart, don't suck your thumb. Stay outside now and you can come in in a while."

Byron says that little Katie was deaf. She stopped asking.

"I went to the door one day," Byron Katie speaks low, softly, "and it was locked. I never asked again. I stayed out and I would wet my pants out there and I would sit in the dirt. I could feel the dirt and gravel on my legs. I just sat there and I wouldn't come in until mother said so, not even to the bathroom. I watched my brother and sister go in and out of the house for anything they wanted. I believed that they could and I couldn't, that I was unloved. My belief is what shut me down most of my life. I perceived my mother and father as not loving me. Today I see clearly the insanity of that child that was me. It is clear my



parents always loved us equally.

"That was my silence. I shut Love off from itself and it began to die. That's the death. It says 'I'm not loved,' and it looks around for the lie to prove it. Or it says 'I'm not and you are.' It's death. And I do that . . . until I don't. At forty-three years old, and awake, it came to me: I orphaned me. I made myself homeless, motherless. I didn't ask."

A man lived next door. He smiled. He invited Katie in. He talked to her. He touched her. She calls it "the molest." She went to him.

"I wouldn't be surprised if I didn't talk to him at all; I think I would remember if I did. I just watched him and he would do what he did. He would touch me. I was three or four. To be touched, even though it hurt, was like being wanted. I allowed the touch. Somehow I perceived it wasn't okay at home, to touch, that I would be punished. It was my perception.

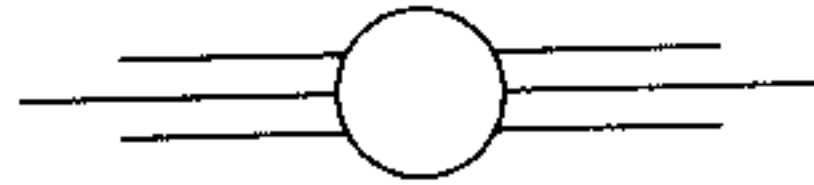
"I remember that my father was bouncing my little brother on his lap and I asked if I could do it and anger came out of him. It felt like punishment to me. That was how I perceived it. Bouncing was okay for other people but not for me.

"Next door, at the other house, he wanted to touch *me*. It wasn't until I was forty-three that I learned, from an experience others call child abuse, that I would do anything for Love. Anything for Love. Anything. This experience was the teacher of 'my nature is Love.' Love has no option other than to experience the revelation of itself, revealed. I just didn't know how to *do* Love, and so I did what was available. I had no teachers that I could hear sanely.

"All teaches Love in the long run. Awake, I understand. Outside of time and space I am so grate-

ful to that experience. All needs are supplied so that I can ultimately know my Self. Who am I to say what form understanding should take? Every experience of my life is for this: I give it to you as the Gift of Me. My experience is all I have. I am the Gift. The 'molest' experience is one small facet of the Gift that I Am. I Am the known Gift in its entirety. These small facets are the darkneses that block out the Light. Brought to understanding they become the ultimate Gift but only available to those who are no longer willing to be deaf or blind. The Gift is made available only to those who are willing to look beyond what they think they know.

"From three-year-old eyes I have seen all that I have *done* as misdirected love, and I share it with you today. Love need *do* nothing. All of the harm I did all those years to me and you—because what is done to one is done to all—all of the harm I did was misdirected but, nonetheless, Love." ≡○≡



## MASQUERADE

Against the pain of being not enough, Katie constructed a mask. A masque. A masquerade. A drama in which she starred as the one who could do and have everything. She didn't know what she was doing. No one does, really, when we construct that ego which imagines itself separate from the One. She wanted to survive. She wanted to be someone.

She forgot the molest and what she calls her other imagined realities. She hid the memory of that child who sat in the dirt and wet her pants because she believed she wasn't worthy to go in and out of the house. Katie concealed her innocence under her pain and then dulled her pain with efforts to be popular and to achieve.

Katie's family observed family traditions, brought the extended family together for holidays. Even Katie's grandmother came from Texas for celebrations. Marion recalls that Katie became the center of fun.

"There wasn't a person in the world more fun than Katie. Even when everyone was bored to death, Katie got us laughing," Marion recalls. She was oblivious to Katie's experience of not belonging. "Once Katie had a feeling that she didn't quite fit in. Her sister, Sharon, could hardly believe it. Sharon told her, 'Katie, you were the catalyst for *all* the fun!' Katie was the life of the party."

The mask became indiscernible, a second skin. By the time she entered high school in Needles, no one guessed there was anything else to Katie but this pret-

ty, popular, vivacious girl who seemed able to get whatever she set her mind to.

The Reids lived across the street from the Robinsons. Bob Robinson, their son, went to school with Katie; they were in the same grade. For a time they coexisted in the neighborhood, hardly noticing the presence of the other. He was a dark-haired boy who liked sports, who got his way. She was a pretty blond in a covey of other teenaged girls, whispering secrets, giggling over mysteries about which a boy doesn't have a clue. One day Katie wore a black dress with tiny red dots scattered all over it like stars. She stood out from the crowd. Bob noticed.

It's a heady feeling, to be pursued. It's intoxicating. Bob was, as Marion describes, "devastatingly handsome." He played football. He had a car. He wanted to date Katie. She didn't want to hurt his feelings, and she didn't know anything else to do but what he wanted. She accepted.

Their parents worried. "They looked beautiful together," Katie's mother remembers. "When they were in high school, Katie's father and I tried everything to break up that relationship. However, her father was very, very fond of Bob. He was a fine young man in lots of ways. He very early got a job and worked all through high school; then he went to college. He did things for himself. He certainly had all the requirements."

Most worrisome to Marion was Bob's intensity of will. "He was just forceful," she reflects, "he was determined to have his way. He'd overrule Katie because he was the biggest. I'm sure it must have been a terrible thing for her because her father was such a quiet man. I don't suppose she ever heard her father raise his voice in her life."

Maybe it was as Marion says, maybe not. Katie married Bob. First she went to college for a while in Arizona while he did his college stint at San Bernardino. They both quit. They were nineteen. What do you do at nineteen, married? They lived in a little trailer in Fresno. It was hot. Katie was pregnant. There wasn't enough of anything.

Bob had a job with PG&E. Katie gave birth to a son, Bob, Jr. They moved into a little house with an evaporative cooling system. PG&E management saw Bob's potential and trained him. Perhaps things were looking up. Perhaps the mask was just becoming even more firmly fixed.

The Robinsons took their little boy and moved to Bakersfield and then to San Luis Obispo, each move a promotion for Bob. Then they were living back in Needles where alongside the PG&E job, Bob began studying for his private electrical contractor's license, which eventually put him into business for himself.

There's a seductiveness in money and possessions. It can capture you. Katie had an instinct for success. Bob brought the money home and Katie invested it. She bought up most of the business properties in downtown Needles, California. Money gushed up like oil. They bought property on the Colorado River and the house that formerly belonged to Marion and Rodney. They filled it many nights and weekends with people who drank their liquor and made deals to generate more money. They made room for two more children, Ross and Roxann. Now there were five. The children grew and played by the river while their parents worked.

The Robinsons got rich. They became powerful. Katie and Bob were supposed to be happy; they were living the American Dream.

This then is the dream, the masquerade: Katie wants more. The movies say money will make her happy. She has money. TV says be powerful, be seductive, be glamorous, be sexy, be the center of attention. She does all that. Katie still wants more. She buys another building; she has another drink. She isn't happy.

The young children run wild, unsupervised and delighted. Katie is wild. She pushes herself, takes on another project, starts a business women's association. More people come out to the river house. She serves hors d'oeuvres and fine aged Scotch whiskey. She brings out the Tanqueray and shakes a dry martini. She ties up another contract; she pushes through another deal. The children are out until after dark.

It goes on for years. Katie wants more. The more she gets, the emptier she feels. She seethes. The emptiness is fuel that, touched by an angry word, explodes. Bob's anger yells. Katie flares. Frustration erupts. They work upon each other like sparks on oil. Like electricity. They touch each other and get burned.

Bob's gone a lot. He makes money hand over fist. Fancy motels, shopping centers—electrical contracting is big business. Paul comes over in the evening and fishes from the dock. He makes friends with the children. He's a point of quiet in a storm.

Paul weaves through Katie's life like a thread. He is earth-toned and real. She hears his voice from far off. She remembers the tone of him from her childhood. Young Paul laughed, called out, his voice a calm thing just outside her bedroom window once when she was a little, little girl. It was the first time little Katie thrilled to hear a voice. His laughter rang in her. She fell in love. She ran to the window. Who was this

laughter, this voice? She looked for him every day. She waited for that voice but didn't hear it again.

Paul works in construction too. He is older than Katie by fifteen years. Bob thinks Paul is of a different generation. He doesn't know that Katie has loved the man forever.

Paul shows up at a party given in his company's honor. One look and Katie is back in love. She has been drinking heavily. In Bob's presence, she tells everyone she will marry this man, Paul. Bob stands by. Maybe he hears. Maybe he pays attention. Maybe not. He doesn't know, and Katie doesn't yet remember, that she has loved this older man since Paul was nineteen and paving the street outside her window in 1946.

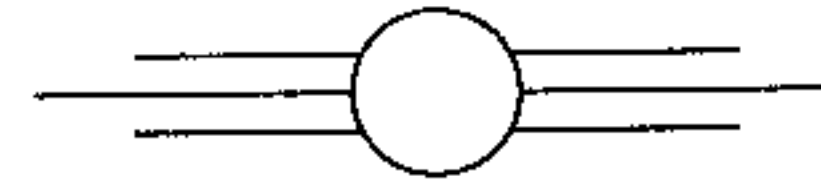
Does it matter? Paul doesn't take the pain away. Even Paul is not enough. He cannot fill the emptiness.

That's all there is. Over and over. Katie has everything. She might as well have won the lottery. Katie has nothing. She wants more. There's always more and it amounts to nothing. What a sorry joke, this masquerade. She's gorgeous and she doesn't care. She never can be pretty enough or rich enough or powerful enough. She'd have to have all the money, all the husbands, all the houses, everything.

The children are wild.

The family dog eats poison and drowns.

There isn't any more. —○—



## THE HIGHER THING

Fear of loss magnetizes us away from Truth: loss of acceptance, loss of friends, loss of reputation, loss of home, loss of position, loss of dreams, loss of preconceived ideas, loss of beliefs, loss of traditions, loss of the world we've spent lifetimes building up in our image, loss of our ideas about God.

The Truth Byron tells is one I've always known but didn't trust because I'd never met anyone who lived it consistently. I feared it might be a mistake. Who wants to let go of everything for a mistake? I look at her and see that we never let go of anything that doesn't bring in something higher. She calls it evolution. It's the natural movement of being—toward the higher thing. We cannot make a mistake. What was manifest in the last moment is lost now. The present moment is. Whatever the present moment brings is higher, more complete, filled with more potential. Byron says, "How do we know? Here it is." The pain, the beauty, the hope, the blindness, the tightness, the generosity, the tears and laughter and birth and death—life itself—brings each of us to the moment of Truth and, though all those former things have evaporated like mist in the sunlight, here is the Fullness of Being, the higher thing.

I continue to be amazed by the turn this woman's life took. Conversion: A turning within the self, a turn towards Truth. It's a barely perceptible shift in consciousness that transforms the world. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," cried John, the author of the

*Book of Revelation* when taken up into the same experience as Byron's, "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . . there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:1, 4). Byron's experience and John's are the same. John goes on to say that in this new heaven and earth God and the people are one being. Such is Byron's constant cry. Know who you are. Even if it seems you will lose everything. Even if it seems you will lose your life, your sanity, your self, don't be afraid. The old world will disappear. And you will awake to the realization of God-with-you, to the experience of the One, the Alpha and the Omega, timelessness, the Beginning and the End, out of time.

Before the old world disappears, that world of tears, sorrow, and death, there's an apocalypse. There's a battle. The sea turns to blood. The sun is darkened. John constructs the story as an epic. It's personal. It's also universal because the personal and universal are the same. In the epic everything is lost. The old world is destroyed. And nothing is really lost because the old world was a construct of our little minds. God is and has been with us all along. There is One.

The old world disappears and yet there is no loss. There is only the higher thing.

Byron Katie's apocalypse, her battle of Armageddon, climaxes in 1986 after years of collapse.

Who can tell this? Who even understands? She's not the only one for whom there are no words, maybe because the pain precedes the words in the first place. Because the pain is always there, beneath the money, popularity, and power, beneath the beauty and all the friends, beneath the knowledge of it. She can't even

call it pain. It is a seething. It erupts in tears, in cries. It wriggles in her guts and she sees it coming in windows, breaking through locked doors, attacking her in her sleep. She buys a gun, loads it, makes ready for invasion. She thinks she'll kill it.

There never is enough to keep it out. At first she sings and the music drowns its cries but can't reach from end to end of the emptiness the silence leaves behind. She runs from everything that hasn't worked: Bob, the river house, the town that thought they knew her, the women who had envied her, the men who wanted to find out how good she was in bed.

She takes her children and she runs to Nevada and then to Barstow and pain takes on the taste of dust. She starts over. Buys a business. Works. She doesn't know another way.

Paul follows her. He takes an apartment in Barstow. She can talk to Paul; something soft in him receives her voice. She began to talk to Paul back in Needles when she felt her life like loosened clay breaking away from the banks and sliding into the swift river current. They sat on the boat dock. They drove upriver to stand above the canyon walls and Katie wept and Paul held her.

He promises to take care of Katie and the children. She figures she can use some care. He does what he knows how to do, buys properties, becomes her partner. She settles in a house in Barstow, moves into it with the children. He comes over every day. He is a godfather of sorts. He is a lover. He tries to save her life but she is dying.

A wild thing lives inside her and claws at her heart. She works at looking normal. She sets her teeth. She keeps the savage howling from erupting

into daily life. She swallows it. It echoes through her emptiness. She buys more buildings. She sends her children to school. She sends out for pizza. She joins her mother and sister for Thanksgiving and for Christmas according to tradition. She laughs and sings as they expect her to. Paul holds her hand.

Her need for him becomes a whirlwind. In its eye is all of life that will hold still. He is her only calm. She goes with him to Tahoe, to one of those little wedding chapels by the lake, and marries him.

He feels her slipping. He'd seen it before in others. Nervous breakdown—a friend's wife had one. It looked like this. It looks like someone climbing a sand dune. Grasping. Slipping. No firmness anywhere. Earth caving in. Tumbling, sliding, out of control. Exhaustion. Sand in eyes, sand in hair. Tears. Screaming and then silence. Vague stares. Limp fingers, dead almost. The constant need for sleep.

She doesn't want to leave the house. She needs walls. When she goes outside, the pressure changes. She thinks she'll come apart, like someone with the bends, someone disintegrated by a depth charge, someone falling from an F-11 streaking above the desert fifteen miles high, someone exploding in the thin air. She feels the fragments of herself falling, plucked out of the sky by birds, scattered over a wasteland where no one ever goes because there are no roads.

She isn't big enough. Her flesh feels tissue-paper thin. Anything might tear through. She needs more of it so she won't disappear, implode, collapse into the vast space underneath her skin. Alcohol. Pasta. Wine. Rich sauce. Chips and dip. Drugs. Candy. Anything. Sometimes in the kitchen Katie works all day to make a feast. She focuses on the food as though

it could deliver her from hell. She eats. She grows. She becomes round. Unmovable. She sits on her bed. Ross curls at her side. They eat together. They fill themselves. They vomit. They eat some more.

*Why are you so fat?* she questions the body in her mirror. She orders up some diet pills. She melts. Then she eats again.

The pain is in her blood; it travels everywhere. It clots in her knees, throbs behind her eyes. Her body burns with it. The pain is alive. She has to kill it. Paul says codeine will kill the pain. He brings codeine and she takes it from his hand. He calls her "my girl" and kisses her and says the pain will go away, but it stays. It crawls around in her like worms.

She curls up in her bed. She dies for years. She is Job on the heap of ashes picking at her mind. Paul takes care of everything. He keeps the house; he keeps the children; he keeps the business. He has four heart attacks. Katie drags herself to the hospital and begs him to get well. Without him she can't live. At night she curls up into herself and stares at the dark. The house is falling down.

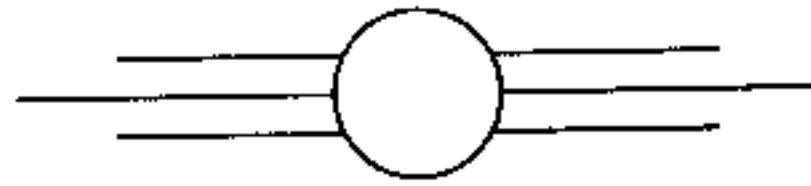
At last he reaches the end of all that he can do for her. He bundles her up and takes her to the beach just outside of Los Angeles, to the halfway house. He leaves her there with therapists who tell him they can only try.

Katie cries out in the desert of her mind. Katie lies down underneath the bed in her locked attic room and dies.

Then a cockroach crawls over her foot.

Byron Katie is awake. She lives. —○—





## HELL ON WHEELS

Byron Katie is awake but her family cannot turn from its own pain—the fallout from Katie's masquerade. Her children describe that time before and during her awakening in words that rip and tear. It felt like hell. They grew up in it. They knew no other world.

There was a time when her daughter, Roxann, still a young teenager, feared to disturb Katie's sleep at night. "I was so afraid of her, so afraid of waking the beast. I would tiptoe on the stairs. My ankles creaked. I thought if I woke her up, she'd kill me. She kept this half-cocked gun under her bed. She was so paranoid."

Roxann is a young mother herself now, married to a man she calls "wonderful," one who "naturally lives the Truth." She sounds awed as she tells the story of her childhood. "My mother is completely different now from the person she was as I was growing up. Now she has all this freedom. She doesn't have bad times or bad days. She wakes up every morning smiling, happy; she's calm—carefree. This is not to say she doesn't grieve. She does. But it's not self-pity. She never gets involved in self-pity.

Roxann describes the masquerade in her own way: "She didn't used to be free at all. She was driven toward money, beauty, and success—a hell on wheels business woman. She had several businesses: a clothing business, a gas station. I remember her out there pumping gas. She and my dad, Bob is my dad, both of them—money and success. He has his own electric company and has big clients, *very* big, casinos and

everything. He's extremely well off.

"My mother worked three jobs to set up his business. She was a real control freak; you know, order, perfection; she had to have things right.

"There was lots of fighting while I was growing up. It was daily. Lots of verbal violence. There was my mother with a cigarette in one hand and alcohol in the other. And food—she loved food. She took major diet pills to look good.

"Money was everything. Money was a god.

"Twenty years ago she took us kids and split, left home, divorced Bob. She took nothing else (it was the only way she could get away from Bob), and he let her go. We ended up in Barstow. We were totally poor. I remember eating lots of macaroni and cheese with chunks of tuna in it.

"She and my stepdad, Paul Rolle, became business partners. They'd known each other since I was a little child. He was in construction. They bought a bar. Mom worked in the bar and was gone a lot. She was still driven by money—consumed by it.

"She and Paul were married on July 9, 1979. They continued to buy property and rent it out. They were very successful with money.

"Then came the period that I block from my memory. It was so painful. I was about thirteen years old and my mother got incredibly sick. She just laid in bed and wouldn't move. She weighed well over two hundred pounds. She was massive. She laid there with her food and her alcohol and her cigarettes. She laid there and then, without warning, she'd get up and rage—this huge woman, raging. She never smiled. She was dying. She was being eaten alive from the inside.

"There was so much abuse between her and Bobby and me. The three of us acted out the pain. I did it with drugs. I'd be stoned and then I'd go off. Violent. As a child Ross escaped—tried to be the perfect child. He buried it.

"Like I said before, I was so afraid of her then. I remember one time vividly. Mom had cooked this wonderful meal with strips of beef (we are all vegetarians now) and other foods, hand rolled. It took lots of work. I was stoned—actually just coming off drugs, in a kind of buzz. I was carrying the dinner on a tray. Between rooms the carpet ended against the smooth flooring and I tripped. The food crashed to the floor and spilled all over everything. She came after me. I walked away from her but she grabbed the back of my hair, kicking me, punching me. Now, I was a violent person, too, in those days. I carried knives to school. No one would fight me—I was crazy. Anyhow, I turned so furiously against her that I ripped a chunk of hair right out of my head.

"I'll never forget her face. She said, 'You even touch me and I'll fucking kill you.' I knew she meant it. She actually wanted me to fight back so she could vent on something or someone.

"The other person who was in on all of this was my stepdad, Paul. He was the caretaker. He had a hard time, in fact, when my mother changed because she didn't need him anymore. It's like with people married to alcoholics: When the alcoholic gets well and they don't need to take care of that person anymore then they lose all their meaning, all their power.

"Back then Mom would lie in bed and he'd come to her and she'd say she wanted something and he'd get it for her. Anything. He loved making her happy.

Her happiness made him feel like the greatest man on earth. At the same time he was wearing himself out, working all the time. He took care of all the businesses as well as all the housework, cooking all the meals, cleaning, everything.

"About this time Bobby left to live with Dad. My mom couldn't even look at Bobby; she'd see Bob, my dad. They looked so much alike. Just having him around drove her into a rage.

"Finally she went to a treatment center—I don't know the name of it. At the treatment center no one would sleep in the same room with her; she was so frightening. As for me, I didn't want to go near her. As far as I was concerned, my life was finally perfect. She wasn't there to hurt me anymore."

Byron says, "What happened was that I quit. I couldn't be filled and so I quit. I just laid in bed. I became so angry that I couldn't step outside my home. We had a motor home and thought it would help and I remember just lying in the very back of it screaming in terror '*You have to put me back in the house!*'"

"Another time my mother and sister insisted on hauling me into a car and driving me three or four miles out of town. I only made it three or four miles before I was in agony, sobbing in terror. To leave my home was something very difficult to do. When people saw me like that I felt instantaneous loathing—they loathed me and I loathed them. Now I know that wasn't really the case, but I couldn't know that then. This is what gives me an ultimate respect for the sickest of the sick. We are innocent. We are so innocent. Compassion.

"The last two years of that seven years of pain I spent mostly in my bedroom lying on the bed. My clothes stuck to me because I couldn't bathe. I

brushed my teeth when I could. I went months just hoping that sometime I would want to brush my teeth. It was not a possibility. My hair stuck to me. I couldn't bathe. I would if I could. It seems that my pain then is in direct proportion to my Joy now."

She says she was insane. Her middle child, Ross, remembers that he joined her in that tiny mental room, cocooned there, needing her, willing to do anything to ensure his connection with her even if it meant living off the same pain.

"The only way I'm able to really know about her is through my own experience. Through my own feelings." He speaks softly with a touch of humor in his tone as though he's amused that he didn't understand his life all along. "She was a total rageaholic. And so was I. She was insane and I was insane. The only way I'm able to see something in someone else is if that is me. We are so linked, like joined at the hip; everything she's gone through, I've gone through a little later. She's my teacher.

"I was nuts—so sick I couldn't move—when I was twenty-three. And at the same age she had been able to act, do anything; she was the spirit of the whole family—the party person, the person everyone flocked to, the one everyone wanted to be like. I remember she had a ukulele and would sing and be the life of the party, the energy, this incredible spirit, but at the same time she was sick, sick, sick. She and my dad would just brutally go for it, fight."

Ross is now a successful Hollywood music producer and musician. When he talks of his childhood, he reveals the presence in himself of that heightened sensitivity characteristic of artists.

Only in Ross's earliest childhood did his surround-

ings match his temperament. He escaped the brutality of his home into the wide space of nature. Everything about Needles, the land itself, nourished him.

"We lived on the river in the desert. It was a God-place." This is his beginning. The beginning was short. "I had the dogs, the desert, the water—everything was right there. But when my mom and dad divorced, when I was in third grade, it was all gone, and my God became a television set and food.

"We moved to Nevada. It was brutal. The first day of school I had to be the coolest, most perfect kid. That's one of my defects. I challenged a couple of kids at the school. For the first time in my life, I cheated on a test. It was the first time in my memory I learned how to lie, cheat, steal—everything.

"The next year we moved to Barstow. Mom began gaining more weight. I became more and more angry. She was over two hundred pounds. I was just—I was so scattered I just couldn't study in school, I couldn't get it. I had to be the perfect kid, so I learned how to work the teachers and I would get into their grade books. I would put in different grades and do anything I could to be perfect. I did it any way I could. If my mom wanted ice cream, I was the first one to go get it, me and my stepdad—he was a great eating partner too."

Ross's need to be perfect and his need for connection with his mother were one and the same. Perfection was whatever he needed to do to be acceptable. More than anything, he feared losing her.

"I remember one of my first memories of being afraid she would be gone: She was barefoot and she ran straight into the desert with my dad running after her, and I was just a little boy and I thought she was never coming back. I thought she was going to be dead."

"I started out," he explains, "with my older brother doing something really horrible to me and blackmailing me." He began to construct the "I," the person that he would become.

"I became ashamed," he reflects. "I believe that because I was the center of attention, Bobby just had it in for me. He wanted to get me or something. So I became my mom's caretaker. I shut down. I didn't talk. All I did was to be the absolutely most perfect kid in the world.

"It was a mind-set that kept taking me over. Her distorted thinking was also getting worse throughout my growing up, and whenever she was in pain, I was there. Whenever she wanted to talk shit, I was there to talk shit. We were in this together, full, hard core. When she ate a half gallon of ice cream, I ate with her. When she got up to go to the bathroom to throw up, I did the same thing. We had this amazing path together.

"We both went to extremes. Revenge was a big thing as far as fucking people up—she would destroy people to get what she wanted. She destroyed them not by physically hurting them but by getting her way. It was when her way stopped working for her that she began getting immeasurably sick. She almost died. I remember she would be laying in bed and my dad would say, 'Oh, you need a number three. He'd take her codeine #3 every single morning. Then the ice cream after that. He'd give her more codeine. Every single night it was codeine and ice cream, codeine and ice cream. Massive food, drugs, and alcohol. Just massive.

"By the time she went to the hospital, I was completely out of control. I was afraid of being abandoned, afraid of being without my mom, afraid of being without my god. Up to then I thought all of it was nor-

mal. I didn't know. I thought, this is what people do. I thought that I was supposed to eat enough food to pass out. I never got fat but I remember in fourth grade buying school clothes and looking at myself in the dressing room and saying, 'I hate you.'

"I was in denial. I didn't think she had a problem. What she was seemed normal because it was my life experience; I didn't know any different.

"There's a picture that sums it all up, the one where she has the beer and the cigarette and the motor home. She was huge! And I was sitting next to her totally pissed off and miserable. She carries it with her. It's pretty awesome. Oh my God! I look at it and flash back to where I was and the feeling is—all that craziness."

Byron Katie's eldest son, Bob, Jr., sees his mother's transformation and ponders it. "I don't know much about what she's doing now," he tells me when I talk with him on a Sunday morning. I'm sitting at my kitchen table in Martinez. The phone connects us.

"I know she's doing wonderful things," he tells me, "not just for herself but for other people. I ask her for advice about things. She seems so truthful and clear. It's like being able to ask somebody who's right. She gives an opinion that groups all the ramifications around a central point. She can give you the whole playing field and still not miss the central thing, the exact point that is so nice to hear. It's everything in one. I really enjoy that. I don't know where it comes from, but I'm so glad."

When he was growing up, he thought his mother would die. He saw that everything she wanted would never be enough. He saw her anger over that. He saw her depression and her rage. He says her pain was eating her alive.

"She just stuffed it down with crummy food and alcohol. She would kill me, I thought, if I did anything. I was not comfortable, ever. I'd go into the house, and I just knew I was going to get blasted. When she got to Barstow she got bigger and bigger and meaner. She put so much on me; she had so much resentment toward my dad: 'That son-of-a-gun took everything,' and her wording was colorful. Very, very mean. She said every cuss word you can imagine. She'd come out and rip me up one side and down the other. Back in the early days when she was with my dad, everybody who worked for them knew not to cross her because she was that mean—getting into union strikes and . . . I mean she could kill somebody, absolutely kill somebody.

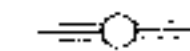
"Around 1986 I could begin to see her as she really was on the outside. By then she was sick and very, very heavy. She got so sick she could have died. I don't know who changed it, or who did it, or what happened, or what was the catalyst. She started cutting through the distortion and slowly getting her mind into what she really is. Every visit with her after that I could see her progress into a lighter person, somebody who's very nice to be around.

"You know people you may have met in life who are really ugly and vicious and you can tell that they've gotten what they wanted in life, all the time, at other people's expense? That's basically how I saw her before. Somebody you might instinctively dislike. They have it all and they are just going to push you out of the way because they are the most important. That kind of person. Me first. Thank goodness, now she's unrecognizable as that same person. It's quite a relief for all of us because she was a real battleship!

"She's blossomed into this person who's unbelievable. She not only has the energy she had when she was young—when she had the killer instinct—but now it's wonderful. It's great to be in her presence. She's a kind and happy person, the person I always loved underneath all that crap, the person I considered my true mother—not that hateful person. Every year she's topped herself, over and over."

Bob, Jr., and I talk for a long time. By the end of our conversation, he's become pensive and in some ways, intimate. He thanks me for ferreting out this story, trying to make sense of it, of the pain his family endured. Just before we say goodbye, his mind plays a bit of a trick on him, expanding his personal experience into a cultural paradigm.

"Everybody says the good times were back in the seventies," he reflects, "but don't you feel like, even with all the turmoil today, that twenty years back everything was really out of control? Everybody complains, but I feel like today is full of great new experiences. My God! We are enjoying the best of it right now. We have some sanity."

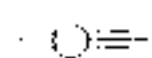


That first evening I spent with Byron, someone asked about her children. We were listening to her speak about the kind of Love that makes no distinctions, a Love that cannot say, "I love this person more and that one less." You love the One in front of you. You accept that Love. It might be your husband or your wife. It might be your child. But it might just as easily be an addict in a dark alley who's got a knife to your throat.

"But your children—" someone blurted out, "surely you love your children more. Surely if you

were confronted with a choice, it would be your children you would choose."

She said, "I can't know what I would do; it's not happening now." I recall the deep compassion in her eyes. She told us how she hurt them, not the whole story, but enough. She said how they had feared her, how they had every right to go away. They have their lives. "I let them go," her voice was strong and her eyes determined, "they do not belong to me." Then she leaned back on the sofa, raised her eyes, put her hands over her heart, smiled, and whispered, "I love them that much!"



Years passed before Roxann and Ross learned The Work.

Ross's healing began when he called his mother and asked for her help. She said yes. They went together into the desert and she gave him The Work. Through The Work he began to unearth his deepest fears—the fear of abandonment, the fear of being without his mother, the fear of losing his God. One day he was writing The Work about a girlfriend, someone he knew to be a mirror of himself. "I wanted her to call me and tell me she loves me," Ross explains. "Then I turned it around from 'I need her to call me and tell me she loves me,' to 'Ross needs to call me and tell me he loves me.'"

"I did that. I called my answering machine. It was one of the hardest things I've done in my life. When I heard my voice asking for my love, I experienced an unbelievable spiritual awakening. My life turned around so completely and so fast.

"Once before this awakening I was in Tower Records, and I stole a tape even though I had two hun-

dred dollars in my pocket. I don't know—maybe I was trying to fill a void or maybe I was even trying to get caught. Anyway, they caught me and handcuffed me and walked me through the middle of this store on Sunset Boulevard.

"Now I don't lie anymore. I don't steal. I don't have to suffer these things anymore. I don't have to abuse my girlfriend by embarrassing her to make myself look better. I don't have to use anyone. I don't have to hurt myself anymore either. It's incredible.

"Through The Work I found God. That's the core of my mother's work—finding God. The mental weight keeps dropping and my body keeps getting stronger, my brain first and then my body follows. I get to drop the mental weight. I don't have to abuse myself in any way anymore. And now my career is totally creative. I'm doing exactly what I want to do. I'm living exactly where I want to live and working exactly where I want to work. I have exactly what I want. I surrendered and gave my lies to Truth and didn't force it. I got it, finally.

"Through The Work I see what's really true. This work is—is God. There are so many miracles. Every day I experience miracles, every single day."

Both Ross and Roxann made workshops with their mother and healed the wounds of the past. But for a long time after Byron Katie's awakening, Roxann could not believe her mother had changed. During this time Roxann held to a despair that rose from her belief that she had not had the mother she deserved. This Roxann almost died.

She drank heavily. She hated herself and wanted to die. She turned against herself and the attack manifested itself in her body. She stopped producing prog-



esterone and the blood flowed for a month without stopping. Roxann poured her life out. She was bleeding herself to death. She lay in a treatment center. Byron sat beside her; she didn't interfere.

"She let me be sick." Roxann says she hopes she can explain this adequately. She says she knows it's difficult to grasp, to understand the Love it shows. "I was dying. My mother said she loved me so much she would let me die. She watched me. I was suicidal. Still she didn't step in.

"So I was in the treatment center and I got to thinking: I want her freedom! That was the beginning of my healing. I went to Twelve Step meetings. I wanted more. I still didn't have enough happiness, joy, freedom. That was when I began to attend her workshops and do The Work combined with her raw food cleanse."

It was a high-powered workshop. Roxann and Ross attended along with numerous doctors, therapists, and spiritual teachers. There's a phase of The Work during which people allow the three-year-old ego child within them to say whatever they want another person to do. In Roxann's and Ross's work it came down to "Mother should . . ."

"We really went after her," Roxann says. "We were doing all those 'mother shoulds. . . and mother shouldn'ts. . .' and I got so angry I had to go into the next room. I'd listen to her talk but I couldn't look at her face without feeling sick and enraged. All of the needs I had as a child came pouring out. Finally she came up to me and got into my face and said 'I will never be the mother you want me to be. I'll never be able to do that for you, Roxann. It's not my job. Can you mother yourself?'

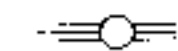
"All the people there, all those therapists and

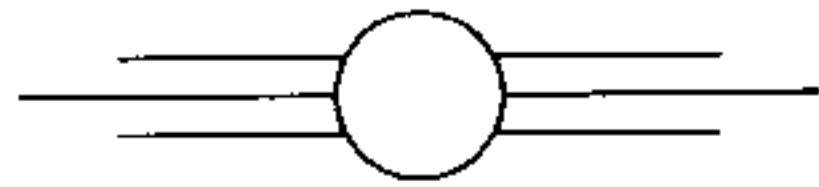
everybody, were astounded by the idea that even she couldn't make up for what was lacking in me . . . in anyone!

"That was the moment of my healing. I knew. It's mine, my work. She sat there, so clear. I could see, everyone could see. There's no difference between me and the others. That was my healing."

Byron suggested that all the women at the workshop mother Roxann. One woman took her in her arms and sang to her. She cradled her like a baby and sang a lullaby. The mother is where we recognize her. "I accepted the Love that was in front of me. And do you know what is really wonderful? Two months later I got pregnant. I accepted everything I needed about mothers and then I became one."

No one is sick alone; no one is healed alone. The mother and her children are one. That One is awake.





## THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

Just as I am putting the finishing touches on the manuscript Roxann calls.

"Last time I talked to you I was pregnant, right?"

"Right." Byron had shared bits of her grandson's birth story with me. "I watched the baby come in, my hands ready to hold, and the thought was, 'Here's this wonderful little ego coming in to undo itself.'" She also implied that the birth experience brought a deeper awakening to Roxann.

"Well," Roxann continues, "people call here, you know. When my mother goes out of town she leaves my number as a reference. They ask me, 'What does your mom do?' and the most common question they ask is, 'Why would I come to a workshop?' I tell them the story of when Race was born."

"Yes?"

"This is what happened. I went into labor. It was a really long labor and it was premature. After I labored for thirteen, fourteen hours, he finally came out and he wasn't breathing at all. It took four minutes for him to breathe. The people in the room were me, my mother, my mother-in-law, and my husband. And when the baby came out not breathing, at first it wasn't a big deal, but then all these nurses came running in to assist the doctor and they took the baby away and put him on a table. The nurses panicked. 'Come on, baby, come on, make a noise; come on, just breathe, come on and breathe, come on. . . .' They were all coaching the baby.

"I started feeling anxiety. My first response was, 'Oh my God.' And then I felt myself losing myself. What I did next was to close my eyes and go inside. I asked myself, 'Will I be okay if the baby doesn't breathe?'"

"And I went inside of that place, and I said, 'Yes.' And I opened my eyes and looked at the people around me and saw my mom who was smiling—not a full smile but that content smile she has. She was watching, just observing. She had her hands clasped. You know how she is when she's working with someone and they suddenly get it? She clasps her hands and kind of grins? She was doing that. She was experiencing the same peace as I was. What I realized was that it was absolutely God's business."

I'm profoundly touched by her faith. The memory of many deaths of people I've loved pass before the eye of my mind. "Yes, Roxann," I murmur.

"We both stood in that, watching the whole world go crazy around us. Then four minutes later he finally started breathing."

I'm being given a gift here and I know that. This is the story on which the book balances, a fulcrum. In it the entirety of Byron's teaching finds embodiment in her daughter.

"But when I tell people this story," Roxann continues, "they go, 'Oh my God! Oh my God, how could you do that?' Once when I told this story it horrified a whole roomful of people."

"I've seen that reaction," I tell her. I'm thinking of the people at Carol Lynn's Gathering. I'm remembering what Sam told me about some people not wanting to encounter Byron again after their first experience with her. "I've seen people react that way to your

mother's stories, not just this one but others as well. It's so interesting to me—they're horrified. . . ." I have some theories about this but I want to hear what Roxann has to say.

"It tells them that all there is is God."

"Yes, I suppose that's it."

"There's just me and God. If I don't know that and somebody confirms that Truth, I'm horrified. If a person thinks that the most important thing in the whole world is family and jobs and taking care of other people and I tell them that I'm okay if my baby dies, then it horrifies that person. Horrifies . . . . I've been in rooms with lots of people and I've told that experience. The first time I told it, I had a friend with me and a man singled me out afterward and said 'People who are as high as you get loaded!'" She laughs a bit, remembering. "It just horrified him."

I tell her about my conversation with Sam—his perception that some people are afraid of Byron Katie. "I think that if you accept that your mother is what she says then it follows that your whole life can change. Everything you've worked for all your life can fall away. It seems as though some people interpret this falling away as devastation. But actually, when it happens, the only thing left is God and that's everything. But people don't know that until they know it. So to let that happen is an extraordinary grace, something we cannot do for ourselves. It just is."

"Yes, yes," Roxann agrees. "She used to get hate mail . . ."

"She did?"

"She used to go to Twelve Step meetings and share. People hadn't asked her to come and that was the difference. They'd be people who were tradition-

al—bound by their traditions. And my mom would show up and share her life with people who really weren't ready to hear it. People wrote to her and quoted the Bible and called her a witch!"

"Katie never told me that happened to her." I think of how she's changed. She never answers a question that has not been asked.

"She lives in the present and this was quite a few years ago." Roxann is laughing with the memory, a deep laughter that so resembles Byron Katie's. "And the funny part of it is that Mom would take the quotes and display them as a cherished gift. She'd go, 'Oh, look. . . ' and put it up. . . you know, like 'thank you for sharing...'. This is one way she came to know herself. She sees and hears all as Love."

"She's such a honey." Both of us seem wrapped in her innocence, delighted. "That's something I find so wonderful about her: Her responses are so unexpected in the work-a-day world. At one Gathering a man called her an anarchist. . ."

"I suppose she said, 'I can see that!' It's really funny. One of her big teachings is that, you know, 'He's right!' Because we've all been that sometime—somewhere, somehow. She's done that; been an anarchist. She's a riot!"

What kind of anarchy would Byron's be? If we all lived as Byron lives, our "fighting out of control" would be over who could serve the other first and completely unselfishly. This is the anarchy she teaches.

Roxann suddenly changes direction. "I've probably told you this—maybe not. Anyhow, when she first woke up, bums would come up to her on the street and ask her to hold them. It was the wildest thing. I'd say, like, 'Mom, you're hugging a transient.'"

"That's a beautiful story," I comment. "In the book I'm trying to show how well your mother fits into all of the ancient spiritual traditions. She's not out of sync with the ancient wisdom. The story of hugging the bums is ancient. Jesus embraced the leper. Saint Francis kissed the leper. Many Indian saints did the same. It seems as if these great beings who understand who we really are don't have the prejudices and fears that the rest of us have—the fear that says that contact with the poor, the sick, the person with AIDS, the prisoner, the outcast will somehow contaminate us."

"Yes. And my mother has embraced the person with AIDS from day one." Roxann moves again, back to the baby. "I wanted to tell you something else about the baby. Through my pregnancy I spent about an hour each day meditating with him. In my meditations we went every place I loved. Every place that ever gave me joy, we went there. I always brought out how wonderful it is here. That was my meditation. And this baby is the most content person! Some people who have held him have told me they've never held such a calm baby. He rarely cries. He sleeps all night. He naps during the day. When he wants something now he 'talks' in a certain tone of voice and I know I need to change his diaper or feed him. In a month's time he might cry three or four times. Usually it's when my husband and I are roughhousing and our voices are too loud. We're really ticklish and once in a while we just attack each other. We'll be squealing and Race will cry because it's too loud."

My writer's imagination picks up this information and tries to make something profound from it. "It strikes me, Roxann, that you promised him peace during all those meditations. And in the delivery room,

when he still wasn't sure, what drew him in was your decision for peace; then there was your mother, in peace through all that turmoil that he saw in the room. And peace was his choice."

She interrupts me. "That's really none of my business," she brings me back to earth. "That's all a projection of what he thinks. What I think is that his ears aren't developed!"

I break out in laughter. There will be no drama here, no masquerade.

"What I do know is that he's totally content, and that's all I know. But on the other hand, his ears probably aren't developed. He doesn't like to look into the sun either." She becomes quite sober. "I think about the generations changing. I have an opinion of what *he* has now. He's good. He's so good."

I ask her for further explanation.

"Well, I believe that every thought I have—" she pauses, changes direction. "I do a lot of body work with people. People manifest on their body what they think. I can tell a lot about people's lives by looking at and touching their bodies. I know where they hold pain and stress and emotion. I had all that, myself. As I become more enlightened, I don't suffer from things as much. I've become calm; I'm not free of all pain but I'm calm."

"I have friends with babies. They tell me how good their babies are and I ask, well, does he sleep all night and they say no. And I ask if he's calm and he isn't, he's screaming and throwing up. They're telling me how wonderful their babies are and the babies are screaming and discontent. The babies are wired. I believe this is due to the mother's thinking beforehand. Even in the womb we accept certain things. If I'm scared my baby feels my fright and he comes out

knowing fear. If I'm angry he comes out knowing anger. So when I was pregnant I became the pregnant queen. We had difficulty paying our bills so I handed the checkbook over to my husband and said I'm not doing it. I didn't do any drama whatsoever. If my drama level threatened to go up I just," she makes a little puffing sound like blowing away smoke, "got rid of it. I kept myself totally naive. I just walked out of the room. So Race didn't experience that kind of stress. When he came out he was free."

Roxann goes on to explain her continuing attempts to stay honest. She waits for the deep inner voice of Love to move her toward her baby each morning. She never goes to him in resentment or anger. "I go because I *want* to see him; and he smiles and coos. He's at peace."

This child's creation story has the potential of serving him through all his life. We all have the stories of our birth and those stories play a part in our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. Byron's story of birth at forty-three years old, a 'born-again' story, set her on a path radically different from that which proceeded from the birth story on that icy winter day in Texas when she was born and named for her millionaire orphaned aunt. I suggest this to Roxann.

"What a wonderful creation story your son has," I say.

"Yes, he really does. Because I come from where I did, that's the most concrete and specific gift I can give a person: to let him know that I don't do drama."

We're at the end of our conversation. I tell her that I'll be in Barstow soon to go over the entire text of the book with Byron Katie. I'd like to see her.

"And I'd like you to meet the baby too."

"I'd love to meet the baby!"

"It should be interesting to see who he is and how he grows, being in the environment my mom shows us how to bring about."

"He's the new generation. His birth is really the event with which the book about your mother should end. The book should end with birth."

She agrees with me.

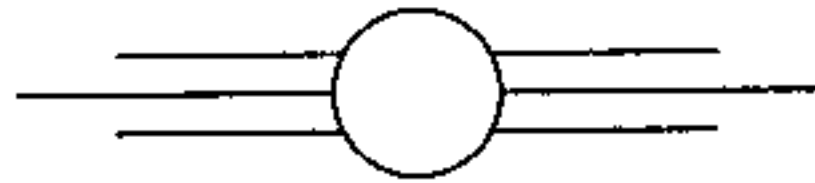
"Who will be the children of these people?" I ask.

"The people who are getting it now . . ." She's with me.

"Yes. What will these children be like? That's the next question, isn't it?"

"Yes. That's right. I've got goosebumps just hearing it. This is what we have to give. . . not the message that we simply aren't afraid of death. On the other side of death is birth."

"Yes," I sense that the two of us are seeing clearly now. "Always." —○—



## THERE IS GOD

Who is Byron Katie? And what happened to her in that attic room in 1986? For almost two years I have asked this question, done The Work, listened to her own attempts to explain what, for her as well as for the rest of us, remains ineffable.

The difference between Byron and most great teachers in virtually all the spiritual traditions is Byron's experience of what Christians might call a radical conversion or metanoia. Most spiritual teachers have followed the practices of a specific tradition from their youth. Transformation comes clothed in the symbols of that tradition and that transformation is understood because of a lineage of spiritual teachers.

Byron knew nothing. If she was preparing herself for transformation, that preparation was completely unconscious. She lived forty-three years with a dualistic consciousness, striving as most of us strive, wanting more and more, thinking that happiness could come to her from something and somewhere else. She couldn't find it. The constant attempts wore her down, disintegrated her. When she awoke it was as a new creation. Separation gave way to the Oneness of the Godhead.

And she had no words, no touchstone, no philosophy, no spirituality, no religion, nothing to explain what she is to us. Now when she says, "I am what it is like on the other side," does she mean that the transformation of this human species is underway? Does she mean we are, right now, evolving into something new?

— THERE IS GOD —

Is she a herald of the "new earth" of which the Christian scriptures speak?

In my Christian spiritual tradition we call the movement she experienced "grace." It is a gift. No amount of work on the part of any human being can produce it. It cannot be purchased; it is free. It is the awareness of the touch of the Divine.

Byron lives in the step beyond what my Roman Catholic spiritual tradition calls the Unitive Way. Once we thought that union with God was the most complete state of existence available to human beings. But union implies a duality: God and I, united. This is the meaning of Unitive Way. Because of the inspired work of Bernadette Roberts, we are now able to identify a further state of being. The Being of Oneness in which anything that could be called "self" is eclipsed by the absolute Being of God. It is a state in which "I" no longer exist in any way that can be experienced or acted from. God alone is. This state of "no-self" seems to come closest to what Byron describes. However Byron did not have the language of that spiritual tradition, nor of any spiritual tradition, available to her in her descriptive attempts. She needed to develop her own language; she continues to develop it.

Each spiritual tradition has its own language and symbols. Since Byron belonged to no spiritual tradition at the time of her transforming event, she's been understood by differing persons in the language and symbols of their own backgrounds. She was called *walk in* by many in the New Age community. In Arizona she was told that she was the return of Lester Levenson, a spiritual teacher whose life paralleled her own. By devotees of Eastern traditions, she's called an enlightened one, an avatar, a *mast*, and one of the



Mothers. "I thought you might want to meet a true enlightened being," were the words that introduced Byron to me, "one of the Mothers." Some say she's an angel. Other people call her a saint.

Still other people say she's crazy, an airhead or flake. "It's simply impossible for people to be happy all the time," comments one woman. "She's in an ongoing fugue state following complete mental collapse. That's all!" The woman's voice is angry as she makes her judgment.

I remember my own initial resistance to her. "If what you say is true, then everything I've worked for all my life is nothing. Everything will change." And she said yes. Who would I rather be, I ask myself, the one I used to be, the one caught up in the tangles of my mind, or who I am becoming now? Now, is my answer.

My spiritual tradition has a saying: By their fruits you shall know them. Byron walks through a room distributing what I learned as a child were the fruits of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Sandra suggests that only those of us who have experienced some kind of devastation can hear the message Byron brings. There's a chink in the armor of our constructed reality. We know that our safety nets don't hold. In a breath everything we depend on could collapse, disintegrate, and be gone. In her we see what is on the other side. She is hope.

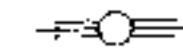
I respond that I suspect everyone has a glimpse of this at one time or another. Some of us, though, just work harder to construct defenses. When we do that, a person like Byron terrifies us. We'd burn her at the stake if we still did that sort of thing. We don't and so

we call her crazy woman instead. We find in the language of popular psychology or skeptical rationalism terms that permit disposal of her experience. We construct a stronger defense against our fears.

I think that Byron's life demonstrates the next step beyond simple goodness. Perhaps she embodies an evolutionary change, a quantum leap in what it means to be human. Byron Katie is not the first to experience such an evolutionary advance. Mirra Alfassa, called Mother, who worked with Sri Aurobindo at the ashram in Pondicherry, India, spent her life in an experiment to discover the next stage in human evolution. She kept journals of the transformation not only of her consciousness but also of her very cells.

Byron Katie teaches "body has to follow mind. Cells are accumulated thoughts. To see mind *and* cells is to see with duality. Body, which is cells, is the reflection of mind. One. Not separate. Not two. To change the mind is to change the cells. They are the same."

During all her experiments, Mirra Alfassa questioned whether evolution of our human species would be a series of mutations or a sudden leap. In Byron Katie the leap was sudden and without conscious preparation. This is why she can say she was "born" in an attic room when she was forty-three years old. She is one of the twice born. A new creation.



Carol Lynn tells me she wants Byron to speak more clearly about her experiences. Sandy says, "She knows what she is doing even if she can't explain it." Byron herself tells us she is "a baby. I was born nine years ago in time and I live in that first moment of awareness, ageless." She has no touchstone for what

she is other than this moment. She looks to us for words. "I only know myself through what you tell me," she says. And, "I'm here to show you what it looks like on the other side."

*Show* us, she must. Words cannot carry what she is. Pure Being is so ineffable that it is incommunicable in language. Being speaks to being beneath all words and the Being is One. Every attempt to express the ineffable in language limited by a subject-object structure falls short. Such attempts are baffling at best. At worst they sound senseless.

Byron waits for the shift. She looks into our eyes. She sees it when we see. She says, "You've got it!" It is said that the mystical consciousness understands itself. Language doesn't stand in the way of understanding for those who experience this transformation. It is an existence of pure subjectivity. The one who lives like this has no object-consciousness at all. Individual life is totally eclipsed by God.



When I become philosophical, I know it's time to quiet myself or my mind will get in the way and obscure the Truth. I try to end the book. I write, "I love Byron Katie." I can't help loving her. I am more free to love since she became my friend and taught me her simple work of telling and living the Truth. I am no longer afraid. I experience an abiding joy. And I can now return in a wholly other way to my own Catholic Christian spiritual tradition. I've heard Hindus say the same, and Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mormons, Congregationalists, practitioners of *A Course In Miracles*.™ Truth is One. It leaps out at me, now, from everywhere. I recognize the essence

of Byron's experience in my own scriptures, in Buddhist teaching, in the earth religions, in the revelations of Indian Avatars.

Byron Katie rose up from the dust of the California high desert, from the American dream of personal achievement, from experiences of success and failure, to speak of what we are in an American language we can understand if we only will open our hearts and become willing to expand the limits of our minds; if only we will accept that in all of being and eternity "there is no end of God."<sup>4</sup>

I believe I am finished with the book. I print out two copies for Byron Katie and mail them to Barstow. I close the reference books and put them back on the shelf. I file the questionnaires and tapes. I gather up the glasses and cups. The papers littered around my chair I crumble and throw into the waste basket. I dust my desk. I'm finished. I go into the back yard and sit in the sunshine.

Mary calls.

"There may not be time to get this into the book, but I have something more to tell you about Katie."

Mary speaks again about recognizing Byron Katie in Sedona. She tells me that she knows now that Katie is so much more than a *walk-in*. She remembers that in Sedona she asked Byron Katie, "Where do you come from?"

"I come from the highest place," Katie responded.

"Are you that close to God?"

It was then that Katie told both Mary and Carol, "I am Love and Joy."

Mary's spiritual teacher taught her to question anyone who claimed to have spiritual authority and to keep questioning until that person's identity was

absolutely clear. For two years Mary has continued her questioning. "What is the light in your eyes? Are you a *walk-in*? Where do you come from? Who are you?"

Mary tells me she posed her question to Byron Katie once again. Yesterday.

"If you could look upon me as I really am, you would not be able to look at me." She heard Byron Katie tell her.

"Who are you, honey?" Mary pressed on. "Why did you say 'if you could look upon me'?"

"Because if you could see my Light, you would not be able to look upon me. My Light is your Light."

"I am a universe unto myself?" Mary questioned.

"Yes."

"Everything out there is in me?"

"Yes, honey."

Mary sighs. "That's what she told me, Christin. I'm comfortable, now, that I know what she is. Katie is so high she does not belong to anything."



All day I am caught up in Mary's experience of Byron Katie and the Light too powerful to look upon. I think of Moses in the crevice of the rock waiting for God to walk past. "I beseech thee," Moses prayed, "show me thy glory." And God, the I Am of the burning bush replied, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. . . There is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by" (Exod. 33:18-22).

I wonder if our bodies are the hand of God. With this wonder I close my eyes and try to sleep. But

something haunts me. In the middle of the night I awake remembering something from my first meeting with Byron Katie. Those eyes. Something I repressed. Something I didn't dare say aloud even inside my own mind and heart. Something too powerful to look upon.

I know what it is. Early in the morning I call her.

"Byron, I've been awake thinking of you all night."

"Yes, honey."

"There's something I must ask, something that's been in my mind and heart since our first meeting. . ."

"Ask me." I can hear her smile.

I circle around. I start to cry. I know what she will answer.

"What are you feeling, honey?" She murmurs. I hear compassion.

"Byron—you and Jesus . . . ?"

"Are One."

My heart explodes. Here is a dimension of Byron Katie I merely touched. Despite my Christian background, I only made comparisons of her experience to what we call Christ-Consciousness. I didn't ask her the question until now, so the door to this exploration didn't open until now. I have no idea where this path will lead.

"And you also are that One," she continues.

"But there's a difference," I insert. Christian theology is flooding my mind. But Byron Katie doesn't talk 'theology.' She doesn't get caught up in theological tangles. Byron Katie awakens to Truth. She realizes.

"Yes. The difference is that I am fully conscious of who I am. And you are close, honey. You are very close. Much of the time you are awake."

My mind knows she could have said she was one

with Buddha to a Buddhist; she could have said Krishna to a Hindu; she could have said The White Buffalo Woman to a Native American; or she could have referred, again, to the Lady in the paisley dress. All human religions rise from the variety of human experience intersecting the Divine. I *know* this, but my heart is burning with unknowing. I am Christian. She said Jesus. I'm not ready to write about this. It is a whole future book.

Is this the Mystical Body of Christ? Is it the Communion of Saints? Is it what Jesus meant when he addressed the One he called Father? "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:21-23).

This is the One Eternal Being. This is the One Fully Existent. This is the One remaining when the shadow of ego is dispelled, when even self is distilled into the Eternal Essence. The One without separation; the One with many names but never divided. And when all the names have evaporated—Byron, Christin, Sandra, Sam, David, Carol, Mary, Roxann, Ross, Bobby, Paul, Sharon, Marion, Bob—that One Is.

"The time for symbols is over, isn't it Byron?"

"Yes. Reality is now. Be That that you are. Reality is prior to I Am. To think and then to say "I" is to move into a world of symbols."

"All body, all earth, all language moves us out from God."

"Yes. Even to say 'God' is the movement away."

"So I write. I speak. But it's a paradox, isn't it

Byron? I try to find words for what is prior to I Am, and there are no words for that."

"There are no words. I, we live. . ." Byron laughs. "We *think we live.*"

"I love you, Byron."

"I love you too, honey," she pauses momentarily, "and honey, there's one more thing. I talked to David. His cancer is completely gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes. David's healed. He's out in the desert collecting cactus, all kind of cactus, preserving those plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. David's out there healing the earth. We call him the cactus man."

I want to shout, to sing, to cry an Alleluia! There are new cries echoing through the desert now, and they are cries of life.

"He's creating life," I say to her.

"He is the Life."

I put the telephone on its receiver. I am wrapped in mystery like a cloak. The hand of God covers this glory. I go back to my computer. This book will never be finished. I have just begun. ☉

- <sup>1</sup> Soiku Shigematsu, trans., *A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters* (New York: Weatherhill, 1992), 87.
- <sup>2</sup> Byron Katie Rolle, *The Love Letter 1* (Sept.-Oct. 1994).
- <sup>3</sup> Neil Douglas-Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994).
- <sup>4</sup> I thank Bernadette Roberts for this expression. Her words *there is no end of God*, stimulate a strong response.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

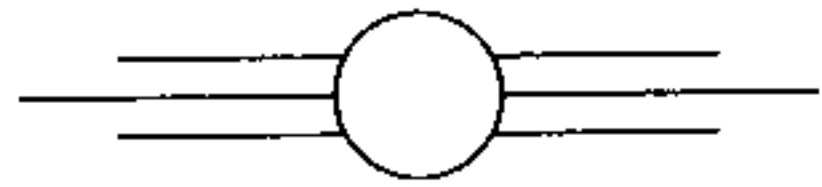
Christin Lore Weber is an experienced author, religious educator, spiritual guide, and lecturer. During fourteen years as a Roman Catholic nun, she grounded herself in spiritual practice, which she enhanced outside of convent life with a Master of Arts degree in theology and later a Doctor of Ministry degree in religion and psychology.

She has taught literature, drama, and religious studies, served as director of pastoral care at a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents in Minnesota, and was director of Wisdom House East, a center for spirituality and creativity in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Her writing career began in 1983 with the publication of her first book, *Caring Community* (Loyola University Press). Her subsequent books include *WomanChrist: A New Vision of Feminist Spirituality* (1987, Harper San Francisco), *Blessings: A WomanChrist Reflection on the Beatitudes* (1989, Harper San Francisco), *A Circle of Mysteries: The Women's Rosary Book* (1995, Yes International Publishers), *Finding Stone: A Quiet Parable and Soul Work Meditation* (1996, LuraMedia).

She and her husband, John, live in the Pacific Northwest. ◯





## READER REFERENCES

### OTHER BOOKS BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER

*Circle of Mysteries: The Women's Rosary Book*

YES International Publishers

1317 Summit Avenue

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