

Dark Night...
2002

By 1999 the paths of my trainings had converged and merged into a seemingly endless tunnel of shadow excavation.

Outside the hours of my day job, I spent every waking, and most of my sleeping, moments in the trenches of my own unconscious mind. As chunks of my ego began to slough away, I processed constantly. With each release and rush of clarity, I was drawn seemingly deeper into a whirlpool of programs, patterns and pain. "The personal shadow is finite", I had heard my teachers say. During that time it felt endless and I, alone traversing hell, unsure of finding my way.

At what I now know to be the point of greatest intensity, hindsight being what it is, I reached outside for help. Every reading, every retreat I tried to schedule, was canceled or blew up in my face. Every effort to connect outside of myself turned me back within.

On my homeward commute one day, the breakdown tsunami hit me. I began to weep. I had been holding this back for weeks, at work, in meetings, one time barely escaping into the ladies' room before the oncoming tears. This time I could not hide it. I could not stop it. I pulled the hood of my coat close, in order to hide my face from strangers on the commuter train. I used every ounce of will to make it to my car, where I slid into the rear seat and began to wail. Inwardly I raged at the Divine; " I don't know where to go! Tell me what to do! I have deleted and dissolved and surrendered everything I can think of! I have offered up everything I know how to feel! I have begged and cleared myself, until there is nothing left of me! I have opened myself and consistently said 'take me'! I am committed to making it through this! ...There was silence as I sobbed into my clenched, constricted chest. I thought it would stop or lessen. It did not. I began to be afraid.

Four days later, I finally slept, physical exhaustion taking over from emotional, and allowing my body to sleep.

"... The phone rang, the assistant for someone who had canceled an appointment. A slot had opened up and it was mine the next day. Lakshmi had a message for me. Healing was on the way..."

I woke up, knowing I had been dreaming; yet the transmission had been real. And, sure enough, there was a message on my voicemail from a healer I had contacted who had a reading open the very next day.

Curled up next to the fireplace, I am watching the clock inch closer to the time. I have a reading scheduled, finally, to try to get some help. For months I've been sliding into the dark. Every time I schedule a reading or healing or try to get help, it backfires. The healer reschedules, there is confusion about the time, and the person I called gets sick. I am finally desperate... and exhausted. Oh, so very, very exhausted.

Depression. Despair. Work is a mess. My body chemistry is raging out of control. Every morning I set my intentions to be kind, to be professional, and every day my 'evil twin' goes to work and acts out. I am acting in the very ways I so despise in others! I am spending too much of my energy protecting my team. I can't hold the energy of the company anymore. I can't control my anger at how cavalierly people's lives are being thrown about. I am acting unprofessionally and making my co-workers afraid of me. This is exactly the energy of domination and control I have always stood against.

These are exactly the energies I have been processing for years. I work 10 – 15 hours a day, then do shadow work for 6-10 hours. I am literally 'working' 18 – 20 hours a day and spending my entire weekends processing. Everything seems to become darker and darker. Have I done all this for nothing? I accept source's guarantee that the personal shadow is finite, but THIS... nothing could have prepared me for this. Finite? Right. This is endless, terminal, hell. And there is no way out but through... I am determined to move through this - but I am flailing. I am beyond the fear of falling or of failing, and if I must let myself 'drown' in this, then 'so be it'. All is pointless, meaningless, and doubt and hope and fear are merely concepts in a completely exhausted mind.

Time. I dialed the phone. Lina answered. "Hi Mary, how are you?". I burst into tears. "Oh, ok," she said. "I guess that about says it." We both laughed. Through barely controllable sobs, I say, "I don't know what this is, I can't see it. I can't see anything for myself, only when I do work for others". Lina began to laugh. She said, "The guidance is coming in so fast I need to get comfortable and begin." Lina is one of the cleanest channels I have ever encountered. She puts herself completely out of the way and allows your own highest aspects to come through, so 'you' are speaking to 'you' with Source as the connection.

The guidance flowed in immediately, and so fast, I could not have taken notes had I wanted to. "This is your dark night, beloved. You are not insane. You are not alone. And it IS finite. There is an end to this. It WILL be over, if only you will persevere." One of my favorite lines in the I Ching is "perseverance furthers". Ok. (Deep shaky breath) "When?" I am thinking, knowing it won't do any good to ask. "Soon," my guidance answers. "You are almost through. Lakshmi has some guidance for you."

"You are in the dark night. You know it well. You have done this many times - you know the structure of hell. "

{Lakshmi! Lakshmi is the Hindu Goddess of beauty and abundance, and so much more! She is associated with status, wealth and sovereignty and the various qualities of light. Her name means 'sign' and she has always been that for me. My favorite quote about Her comes from Kala Trobe, author of Invoke The Goddess, Llewellyn publishers, 2000. "It is Lakshmi's blessing that makes of an incarnation a delicious morsel of consciousness". More personally, Her archetypal energies have been a guide and support for me in some of my most challenging dissolution processes.}

Into the centre of my heart and mind, unfolding from the heart of the darkness, shone her brilliant, all-encompassing light. Cupping my hand over the receiver, I sobbed as I heard Her message. "Be still in your heart, and listen. You are descending into the dark of your own creation. You will descend, a step at a time, through every version of hell you have ever imagined, into each state of mind you have ever judged as unworthy of the light. You are building a stairway, an ascension pathway, paved with aspects of your soul. At each level, you will pause until you can acknowledge and accept. Then, when you are ready, you will take another step down, until you reach the bottom. When you do, you will see. "

As I held my breath (not recommended btw) I listened. " Little by little you are building your path Home. When you reach bottom, you will have built a beautiful stairway that you can simply walk up and be free. You, yourself, are designing your ascension tree." The tears flowed down my cheeks, my shirt, as my heart broke open once again.

Her guidance continued. "Take one step at a time. Be patient with yourself. Work through your fears, then ask for the next step and the next... at some point there will not be another."

At some point there will not be another. I did not know what to make of that information, and had not the strength to ask. As we ended the reading, I realized that my tears had ceased and my heart was comforted. " I can do this," I thought. " It *is* my only option, after all."

Two weeks later, I walked back into my tech job, happy to be back, happy to be functional, to be working, to see my team, to regain my balance. They sacked me that morning. As I packed my personals to vacate the building, I felt the chute close around me. "Here we go"... as the depths of betrayal closed over me and I entered the dark 'for real'.

For months, I walked, I meditated, I sat with my fears, learned their names, their vibrations, observed them while they acted out, diminished and finally dissipated, only for the next step to appear. Over, and over, and over again. I would feel a level complete itself, and say to the Source within, "I am ready. I am willing. I will take the next step down". One step at a time I surrendered inward.

'I am willing' became my whole practice. Nothing more. I would be still in the darkness until new movement found me. Down, and deeper, through the hell worlds of my own self-hatred and self-loathing ~ through each and every state of mind I had judged as unlovable. Through each and every corner of 'I am NOT that'. Each and every thing I had judged as 'other' I now recognized. I owned. I accepted. I made peace. I moved forward, as quickly or as slowly as acceptance would allow.

Until one day, in meditation, I felt the readiness within, the completion that had, for so long now, meant another step was coming... I had learned not to brace myself against the inevitable, to relax and let go and observe...and this time I felt – nothing. Numb. Empty. I had grown used to my seeming inner blindness, but this was suspension in non-being. The dark void of non-existence. Suspended in 'the nothing'. Nowhere to go. Nothing to be. I felt the fear come up. Felt it ebb and flow and fade away. For the thousand and tenth time I invoked the fear litany from Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* "Fear is the mind killer. Fear is the little death... *oh who cares? !!!!!!*" And yet, this time, there was no wail from within. Only silence without presence, without tears.

I paused again. "I am willing." Nothing. No step appeared. I felt peace begin to flow into me, wave after wave of it, filling my soul, making the darkness poignant with its presence. No tears, no laughter, only stillness and this *peace*.

"I am ready, Source", I said. Show me the next. And nothing. Nothing for what felt like moments or hours and I still have no reference point for when. Then *light!* Blazing, blinding, gentle gold-white, blue-white light; the light I had longed for, despaired of ever finding again, and finally come to peace without...

...and in its centre, Lakshmi, her loveliness filling my heart with liquid light and Trust, so gentle, so complete. Drawing me into her heart, as mine broke open completely. There are no words to describe the feeling. Not ecstasy, not joy, not even love. This was BEING; total immersion in Source. Peace beyond measure or comprehension. "Turn around" she said to me. "What"? I thought, in a state of complete dissolution. Suspended in nothing, as nothing, the idea of *direction* was incomprehensible. "Turn...where?"

"Turn around".

She was gone. I was there, in the 'nothingness' yet filled with her love and lightness. Drunk with it, overflowing with her golden light of love.

Echoing in the void were her gently spoken words. 'Turn.'... 'Around'.

Suspended in nothing, I thought myself 'around' and suddenly found my feet beneath me. There, in front of me was an immense staircase, each stair lined with shadow figures, some solid, some not, some children, angels, demons, star beings, and otherworldly aliens, some beautiful, some grotesque. All aspects of myself I had encountered on the way down, aspects of personal shadow I could now embrace, befriend, integrate and release. As I gazed upward, curious and completely amazed, the image of Lakshmi shone down from the topmost stair. "Come up now", she said, extending her arms to me.

I supposed I had expected that I would bolt up the stairs at light speed. I certainly wanted to! I have no sense of time in the meditations that followed, but in reality it took a few weeks of slowly ascending – one step at a time, at each level, welcoming the being or beings there into my heart, only moving forward when the integration was complete. I remember one small 'male child' shadow who took my left hand, and walked up three stairs with me, until finally, with a mischievous little grin, he melted into my heart. When I reached the top of the stairs, one day, I stood there, with my whole life, my future in this incarnation, spread out in front of me. I had no idea what to do with it. The landscape of 'my life' was a foreign new country. And there She stood. Welcoming once again. "It is complete" Lakshmi said to me.

Ever the skeptic, I asked her "What is complete?" After all of this, a part of me was wondering what dimension the 'other shoe' would drop from! She only smiled; her enigmatic smile, and said, "You will see".

From that moment I have been different. The 'Mary' that I was, had ceased to be.

~ Stay tuned for the whole story.... Ride the Moon! ~