

*The Artist of*

# POSSIBILITY

BRINGING A NEW PARADIGM TO LIFE

09

*Featuring*

A CONVERSATION WITH  
THE PEACEFUL  
WARRIOR

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN  
MILLMAN BY JEFF CARREIRA

ADVENTURE IN  
ZANSKAR

AN INTERVIEW WITH AMY  
EDELSTEIN BY ROBIN BECK

THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL  
BREAKTHROUGH

A BOOK EXCERPT BY JEFF  
CARREIRA

LOUIS PARSONS

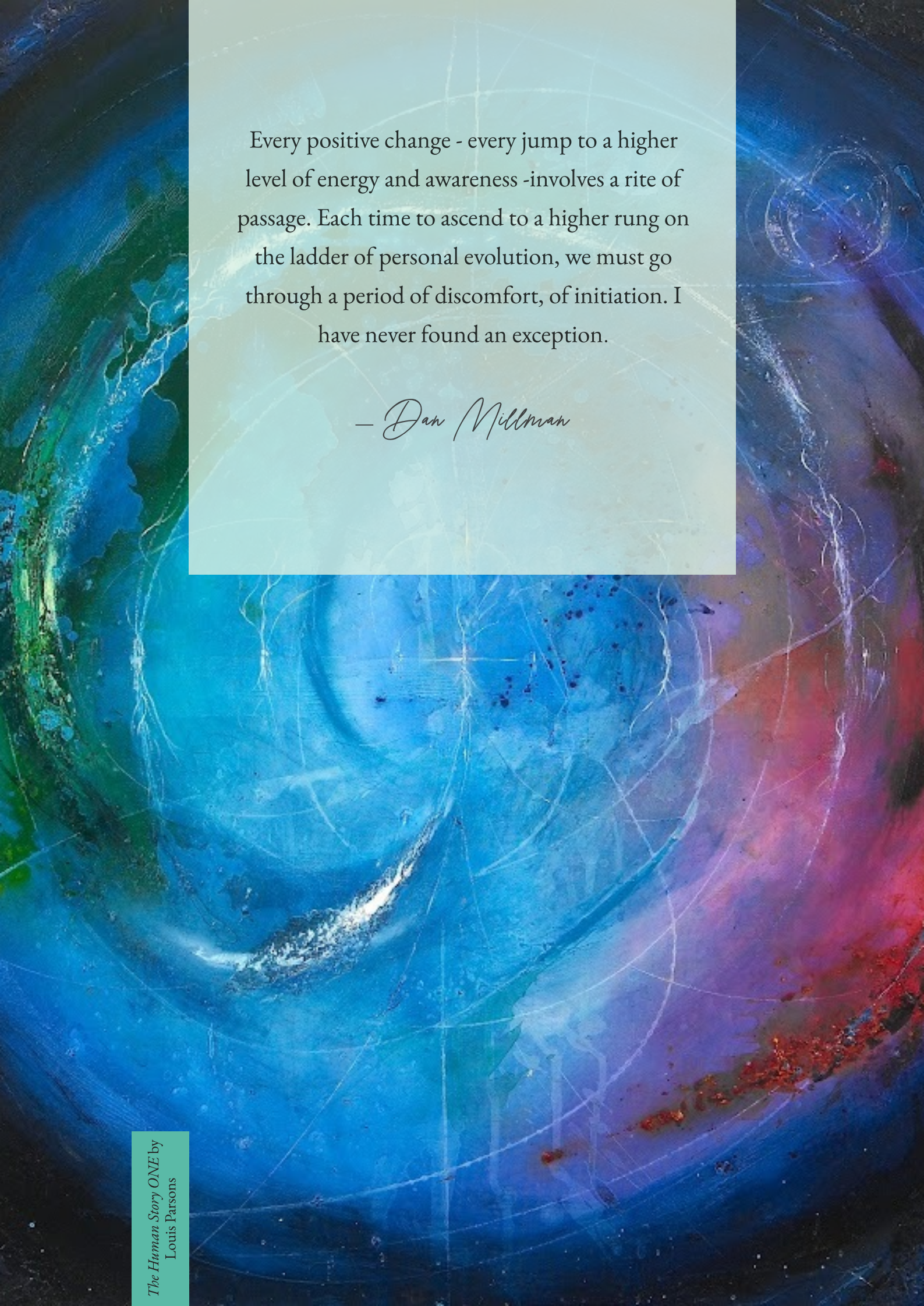
AN INTERVIEW WITH THIS  
ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTIST BY  
KATHY ANDREWS

ISSUE #9

# The Modern Spiritual Quest







Every positive change - every jump to a higher level of energy and awareness - involves a rite of passage. Each time to ascend to a higher rung on the ladder of personal evolution, we must go through a period of discomfort, of initiation. I have never found an exception.

— Dan Millman



# A Look Inside the *Spiritual Quest* Issue

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DAN MILLMAN: A  
CONVERSATION  
WITH THE  
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AMY EDELSTEIN:  
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ZANSKAR



FEATURED ARTIST:  
LOUIS PARSONS



# Issue

# Nine



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*Louis Parsons, 'Realisation of a New Beginning'*

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*Caught in the Flow of  
Grace II* by Louis  
Parsons



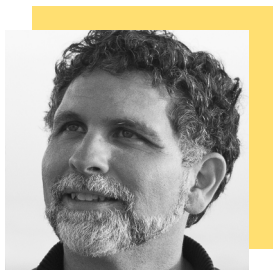
An abstract painting featuring a central, textured, warm-toned (orange, yellow, and red) shape that resembles a sun or a large rock. This central element is surrounded by vibrant, layered colors including deep teal, green, and purple. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is balanced yet dynamic, with the warm center contrasting sharply with the cooler, more saturated periphery.

*Beyond the Opposites*  
by Louis Parsons

Trust that the experiences you have - or don't have - are exactly what you need for this part of the journey.

— JEFF CARREIRA





## A Note from the Editors

It is our pleasure to invite you to this issue of *The Artist of Possibility* where we'll be exploring the modern spiritual quest. For many people in today's world the quest for material success tends to drown out our spiritual aspirations, so in this issue we wanted to celebrate the spiritual lives that so many of us have led and are leading.

We are very excited to include an interview with Dan Millman the author of the iconic book, *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. In this interview we discuss Dan's latest release *Peaceful Heart, Warrior Spirit*. In this interview, those of us who were touched by Dan's earlier books finally get the chance to discover who and what were the inspirations behind his genius.

We also have an interview with Amy Edelstein on her new book *Adventure In Zanskar*. In her beautiful memoir, Amy recounts the story of her time spent traveling alone in northern India. During that time, she trekked alone through the Himalayas, visiting ashrams and learning Buddhist wisdom from sages and adepts.

Our featured artist for this issue is Louis

Parsons. You will see Louis' SoulScaping art throughout the issue and each piece offers a window revealing a different vista of one's inner landscape.

In addition to these featured pieces, there are a number of other powerful contributions that together create a broad exploration of the spiritual quest as it is manifesting in the modern world.

We hope you enjoy the entire issue.!

You can contact the editors [here](#).

*Jeff Carneira*

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*The Artist of*

# POSSIBILITY

BRINGING A NEW PARADIGM TO LIFE

**Emergence Education** publishes an online journal containing articles, interviews, art and poetry that express and explain the emerging possibilities of a new paradigm.

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paradigm shifting luminaries, as well as contributions  
offered by our members.

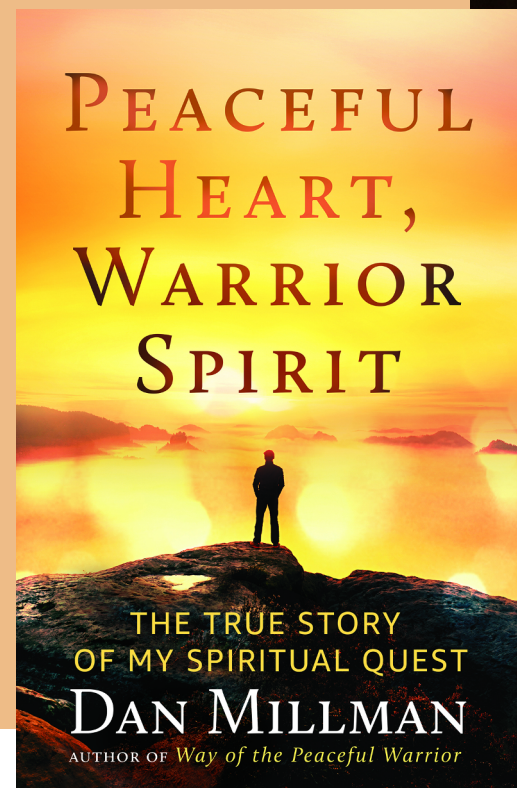


Don't miss our tenth issue, set to publish on April 15th 2022 where  
we will be exploring the topic of evolutionary spirituality.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN MILLMAN

# A Conversation with the Peaceful Warrior

*by Jeff Carneira*

JEFF: Dan, first of all, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us. I'm very excited to speak with you about your new book *Peaceful Heart, Warrior Spirit*. It's a wonderful book. You've done so many amazing things and lived a spiritual quest your entire life. That's why we felt you'd be a perfect person to speak to on the theme of the modern spiritual quest. The first thing I wanted to ask you about is how you got started on the spiritual path. In your book it seemed that it was a motorcycle accident that propelled you on a quest to discover more about what life was really about.

DAN: In retrospect, Jeff, I don't see one distinct moment that started me on the path. My journey has looked more like a dimmer switch that gets turned up bright at times and then dims a little — two steps forward, one step back. Many people love the notion of a single dramatic incident, like a motorcycle accident, that leads you to a cosmic initiation. But in reality I've had numerous initiatory experiences since I was 10 years old and discovered an old trampoline. That physical activity led to gymnastics and to a college scholarship at U.C. Berkeley. Then

one thing led to another.

But yes, that was a benchmark moment in my life — when I was at the top of my game and training for the Olympics and then my motorcycle collided with a car, shattering my right femur. I described that crash and the outcome in my first book, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, also shown in a movie based on the book. That injury opened me to bigger questions about life and about my own mortality. I emerged from the hospital a more thoughtful and introspective young man, beginning a course of events that led me to discover the four mentors that I describe in my new book.

JEFF: In my own life, Dan, there were various points when the dimmer switch, as you put it, went bright and I thought, "Oh my God, there's so much more." And then the light would dim for a while. Eventually I got to a place where I was working as an engineer and I realized I was not happy. I had everything that the culture told me I would need to be happy and yet I wasn't. I experienced a disruption — for me it was the failure to find happiness in a conventional life



that made me look for more.

DAN: I think we experienced a similar process of disillusion; a sense that nothing, no achievement or experience led to anything like stable happiness. So in a sense it was our successes that led to disillusionment. There's a common assumption that at the end of every rainbow, whether it's a better relationship or improved finance, earning respect or a more rewarding job, that we'll be happy then. You and I came to realize that we weren't happy. Which reminds me of an NFL player named Dave Meggyesy, who played linebacker for the St. Louis Cardinals: needing to limber up, he ended up taking a yoga class, where he did relaxation exercises, breathwork (pranayama), and over time, he developed more sensitivity, until, in the middle of a practice session, he realized, *This hurts too much*. That true story is a metaphor for what happens to many of us — we finally realize that whatever we're doing just hurts too much; that it's not fulfilling. At that point we start to ask, *what do I want to do about this?* These are key moments in our lives. That's the kind of initiatory moment we both experienced. And there's a saying,

"Awareness of the problem is half the solution."

JEFF: Our theme for this issue is the modern spiritual quest. Today, we're told that if we're successful, make money, get the right relationship, do this, do that, then we'll be happy. And some of us come to a point, where we realize that none of it is going to ever lead to genuine fulfillment.

DAN: Yes, it's a social lie that leads to FOMO — the fear of missing out. Many of us believe, "If only I'd gone to college, or met my soulmate (or had a better relationship), or had children, or hadn't had children, or made more money, or traveled more, or had more respect, then I'd be happy." But I eventually grasped that there's no such thing as future happiness. The only way to be happy is to treat it as a practice.

JEFF: What do you mean by the practice of happiness?

DAN: I ask people to reflect on their happiest moments. When we're happy, we tend to show more enthusiasm and kindness; we engage with other people, treat those around us with kindness. The practice of

happiness means behaving as we would when we're happy — to radiate happiness, to share it with others — not all the time or in every moment, but to the best of our ability. Just don't wait until you're in the mood.

JEFF: I teach meditation and I hear people expressing dissatisfaction in their practice: One person hasn't had enough powerful experiences, another person has too many; one person gets too drowsy, another too agitated. The same thing that happens in meditation happens in everyday life. Everything can make you unhappy because many of us in the modern world have been conditioned with a habit of making things wrong. And no matter what happens we will find a way to make it wrong, or to find something about it that is wrong. If we don't overcome the habit of making things wrong, we never find happiness.

DAN: I think it was Ram Dass who pointed out that if we don't get what we want, we suffer. If we get what we don't want, we also suffer. And even if we get *exactly* what we want, we still suffer, because we can't hold on to it forever. That's why the Guru, the second mentor I describe in my

new book, reminded me that *the search only reinforces the sense of dilemma that sent us seeking in the first place*. And so there's a point at which we need to rest in the moment and begin to accept and embrace our life as it is.

JEFF: Dan, you've been a spiritual hero to me since I read your first book, *Way of The Peaceful Warrior*, an important part of my early journey. Now, reading your new book, I'm learning your own quest and your four real-life mentors. I read that your first major teacher, Oscar Ichazo, who you refer to as the Professor, is credited with the first version of the modern Enneagram.

DAN: Yes, Oscar created a spiritual training unlike any that came before. There are Buddhist schools, schools of Kabbalah, schools of Christian mysticism, and others within various traditions, but Oscar embraced our entire global spiritual heritage. Rather than framing everything within one tradition, he transmitted the essence of spiritual development, using a blend of integrated breath work and bodywork, deep relaxation and about 50 kinds of meditation practices. . . .

JEFF: He taught nine fixations

and that was later adapted by other writers of popular Enneagram books. How much does that framework still influence your thinking about the different parts of the self?

DAN: The words "Know Thyself" are written, in Greek, at the entry to the temple of the Oracle of Delphi. Every spiritual tradition emphasizes self-knowledge, essential in everyday life. If we don't know ourselves, we end up making the right decision for the wrong person — the person we thought that we were. The Enneagram is one method of insight. Oscar developed this method within the context of a quest to deconstruct the ego structures, to know ourselves deeply in order to finally transcend ourselves. We could no longer rely on our usual strategies. So his system began an intensive process of self-observation and self-analysis.

Most modern Enneagram books include a self-administered questionnaire, but through his school, at an advanced training, Oscar revealed how to analyze the asymmetry of someone's face and, through knowledge of neural connections to the brain,

determine someone's ego fixations. He taught his original method of determining ego-fixations to the psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo, and through Claudio it filtered down to Helen Palmer and other authors.

JEFF: You also worked early on with a spiritual master you call the Guru — originally named Franklin Jones who people might know by the name Adi Da. My own spiritual work, Dan, is rooted in the Hindu tradition of Advaita Vedanta and what you describe as the 'always already' philosophy you learned from Franklin Jones, is the essence of Advaita. You already mentioned how seeking is the thing that keeps us from realizing that we already are. How does that 'always already' quality continue to be a part of what you teach?

DAN: Many of us are seeking from a sense of lack. As in, "I'm not yet a peaceful warrior. I'm searching for enlightenment, for happiness." Convinced that they need to search for something outside themselves or inside themselves. The central idea I learned from Franklin Jones, who later took on other names such as Bubba Free John and Da Free John, was how to rest in the



recognition of our divine nature and know that is “always already the case.” Even with all the problems and troubles in our lives and in the world, there exists a transcendent place of perfection that escapes our notice.

For a practical example, I define “Faith” as the courage to live *as if* everything that happens is for our highest good and learning. Of course we can’t know that everything is for our highest good, but I live as if this were the case because it seems a good, fundamental operating principle. But I’m wary of mistaking any belief for Truth — that’s the basic error of most fundamentalists, who mistake their beliefs for Truth, which then gives no one else the right to different beliefs.

JEFF: I agree. I’ve embraced certain beliefs, but I’m not attached to them. They work for me. They help me live a better life. Relating this to something we said earlier, millions of modern seekers find that we’re given an operating system for life that says work hard and control circumstances, and accumulate things, and then you’ll be happy. At some point you realize that’s just a belief that some authority

figure tells us is the truth. Now I realize it’s just a belief. But I do believe there is something inherently, always, already whole and perfect about life, in spite of all the parts that I wish were different.

People can choose to believe that hard work, diligence and self-protection define the best way to live, or they can live as if things are at some level always already perfect, enabling them to be open and receptive and free and happy. It’s just a matter of which life do you want to live?

DAN: There’s an old Serbian proverb that says, “Two men looked out of prison bars; one saw mud and the other saw stars.” We know that both mud and stars exist. If we deny or ignore the mud, we may step into it. But we want to remember the stars as well.

At this point I need to make clear that I’m not merely sharing what I learned from my mentors, or parroting their words. They somehow opened places inside me so that I’ve developed my own insights. For example, I came to understand that each of us view life from one of two perspectives — that is, we live in both the conventional world and

the transcendental world.

Most of our time is appropriately spent in the conventional world doing our work, having relationships, getting an education, making a living, maybe raising children. But there are moments of questioning and wonder, the dark nights of the soul, when we wake up at night asking ourselves, *What is it really all about? What am I here for? How shall I live wisely and well?* These questions both reflect and generate a yearning for the transcendent - a desire to grasp life's Big Picture, to rise above the mere conventions of daily life to the Mountain peak, where everything looks more beautiful in the distance. From that panoramic view, we know that everything is going to be okay — that it as always been okay.

But from a conventional view, everything is definitely *not* okay. As the Buddha put it, "Life is suffering", but from the transcendental view, life is not only beautiful, it is absolutely perfect. From a conventional view time exists. But from a transcendental view there's no such thing as time; all we have is the eternal present. From the conventional free will exists; from

the transcendental point of view, free will is a persistent illusion. Conventionally speaking we're each a separate self; from a transcendental view we are all One, the same consciousness shining through billions of eyes — paradoxical truths, polar opposites that are both true, depending on whether we're from a conventional or transcendental view. The trick is to embrace both at the same time.

I didn't learn this perspective from any of my mentors; it came later as a result of the insights generated by my decades with them.

JEFF: Although you highlight these four important mentors in your book, you also talk about other influences that affected your spiritual growth. You had quite an active spiritual life! I think readers will discover kernels of insight you picked up from different sources, different circumstances, and different experiences — how they all went through the sieve of your life and were distilled into how you live and how you teach. I have so much respect for the amount of focus you've given to spiritual life over your entire adult life. It's

a rare and beautiful thing to see someone so devoted to higher ideals and to sharing those for a lifetime.

Let's look at your third and forth mentors. One of them was Michael Bookbinder, whom you called the Warrior-Priest, who seems to be an eclectic practitioner in the Hawaiian kahuna tradition. I've done some study of Lomi Lomi massage, which is part of that tradition, and so I was curious about him. And your last mentor was David K. Reynolds, the Sage, who struck me as a behaviorist due to his emphasis on what we do, how we behave, rather than fixing our thoughts or feelings. In other words, we're not responsible for how we think or feel, only how we respond. What kernels of insight did you get from these mentors and how did they get incorporated into what you now believe and teach?

DAN: It's important to note that by the time I met the Warrior-Priest, then the Sage, I'd already studied under the Professor and the Guru. After these two world-class teachers, I believed I was done with teachers.

Yet when I met Michael

Bookbinder, I found a fascinating new mentor, radically different from the other two. How many masters of metaphysics also teach spiritual growth through knife fighting? He was a dramatic guy, an adventurer who told life-and-death stories.

Around the time I met Michael Bookbinder, the Warrior-Priest, I realized that no matter how much I improved myself, only one person benefited, but by influencing other people in a positive way, my life became more meaningful. So I was actively searching for a new set of life skills —practical ways to influence, uplift, and enhance the lives of others. At an advanced training in Hawaii that I describe in dramatic ways appropriate to the Warrior-Priest, I not only learned knife-fighting, I learned an incredibly accurate system of self-understanding I would eventually call the Life Purpose System that I shared with others in one of my best-known books titled *The Life You Were Born to Live* that has reached over a million readers.

Michael Bookbinder gave me the practical tools that I didn't find from the earlier teachers. My earlier mentors provided



exercises, perspectives, and breakthroughs, but Michael passed to me key methods that anyone could apply in daily life. He provided the tools to help me become a master life coach.

After that I met David Reynolds, an anthropological psychologist, the first western teacher to synthesize the work of two Japanese teachers. The Sage brought me back down to earth and to the simple reality that the major question in life is *What do I need to do now?* Then responding constructively to that question. He pointed out, in contrast to many new age teachings, that our lives are shaped not by our thoughts or feelings, but by what we do, moment to moment.

Like that famous cycle in the Zen tradition, after going to the mountaintop, I returned to the marketplace, to daily life, with new understandings to share. For example, I no longer define success in financial terms or respect or status. I now define success as making progress toward a meaningful goal. The Sage taught me to focus on a purposeful life, on my purpose in each arising moment. In the *Peaceful Warrior* film adapted from my first book, there's a

scene in which Dan's character, after an uphill hike, realizes that "... it's the journey that makes us happy, not the destination." A good insight worth sharing, but it's important to remember that without a destination in mind, there is no journey – without a purpose we just wander around.

I believe that we're hardwired goal seekers, so having a purpose, whether long-term or short-term, may be a key to an engaged and fulfilling life. So David Reynolds, the Sage, helped me focus on manageable, controllable things that I can do in everyday life to help make a difference and share that with other people.

JEFF: I want to finish up our interview and thank you again for your time. Your new book is *Peaceful Heart, Warrior Spirit*. Since our readers have been on the path for years, sometimes decades, I expect that many of them have read at least some of your books. If you could give advice to the modern spiritual seeker, what would you want to tell them? What final piece of advice do you have for them?

DAN: All any teacher can do is offer reminders, perspectives,

and principles. I remind people of what they already know at deeper levels, but we all tend to forget. So in closing, I'd like to offer the reminder to trust your own process, your own life unfolding. Your journey, your story, is unique; it's your treasure. There's no story on the planet exactly like it. Don't compare yourself to anyone else. When I was a young coach, I realized that some people learn somersaults easier than others. They learn them faster, but often those who took longer to learn, learn them better. So trust your own way of learning, your own life experience. Appreciate your own process and the innate value of your own life.

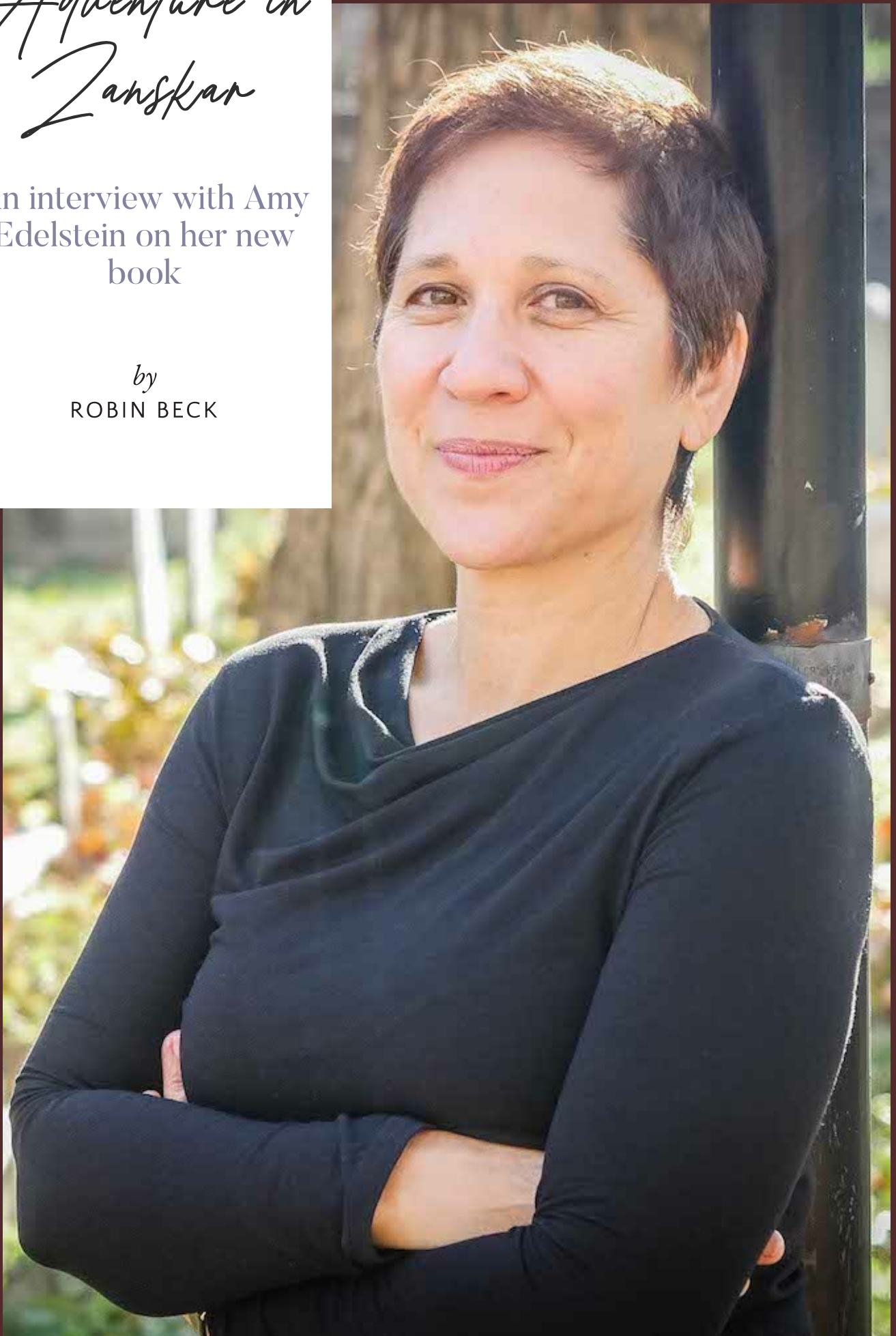
JEFF: Dan, that's a beautiful statement to close. I'm sending you love, respect, and best wishes for your new book.

DAN: Thank you, Jeff. Respect and fond regards back to you.

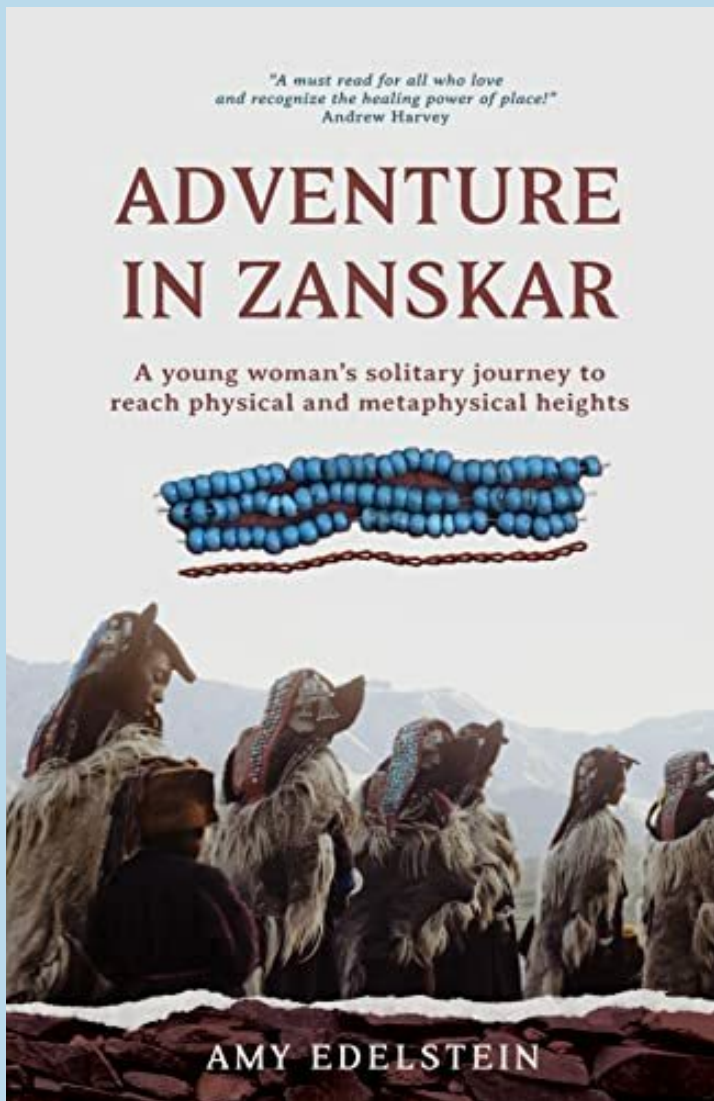
# *Adventure in Zanskar*

An interview with Amy  
Edelstein on her new  
book

*by*  
ROBIN BECK







**Robin Beck:** Amy, I'm so excited to speak with you about your book, *Adventure in Zanskar*. I got so much pleasure out of reading it, partly because personally I feel like I'm just emerging from a period of my life that you give voice to in the book.

Coming out of my twenties and into my thirties I feel like I resonated with your journey in so many ways, and I found a lot of validation in my own path. And I'm just so honored to get the chance to speak with you about the book.

To start, you mention in your foreword why you chose to write this book now, quite a few years after your journey took place. I was wondering if you could talk about why this book came into being now, given the context of the times that we're in.

**Amy Edelstein:** I'm glad to hear that it gave you validation on your own path. That was what I

hoped would happen when I was writing the book. It's a great story that I wanted to tell, I also really wanted to give people a sense that there is something worth questing for. I hoped it will help readers take their own quest seriously, to value it and appreciate it—even if it seems like your own path is meandering, haphazard, or you feel like you're not really doing it, or that somebody's already done it better in the past. I hope that this book will touch that part of us that is longing for meaning and longing for direction and longing for a sense that goodness is possible in this world.

There were a few issues that came together which catalyzed the writing for me. During COVID, I felt people became more inward. For those who had a strong spiritual practice, that might not have been that hard. It was retreat time. It was simplicity. It was a time with fewer distractions. But for people who didn't have a strong connection to their own path or who experienced a lot of grief, it's been a difficult time.

I also live in a large inner city on the east coast of the United States. I know many of our readers are from all over the world, but the context in America over the last year and a half has been one of increasing strain and social fragmentation. COVID has exacerbated the wealth gap. The whole issue of systemic racism and the harm that it continually does to a large proportion of our population has not abated. My non-profit works in inner city schools, 80% of our students come from families of poverty, and about 70% of our students are of color. I come in contact with the impact of these issues on a daily basis in a way that, during some periods of my life, I was not so directly in touch with because I lived more off-the-grid.

I guess the final catalyst to write was a leap in my own workload. During the pandemic, my organization doubled in size and activity. We started teaching 70 mindfulness classes a week to high school students via Zoom. So as I was experience

the pressures of the pandemic, and the emotional stress of our students and classroom teachers, I decided I needed to write this book. Writing is my outlet. It helps me process and release and when I write, I connect with something else—I articulate deeper meaning and express what I really care about.

So during this crazy time of the pandemic and social fragmentation, I felt like it was time to give voice to this journey. It was time to find a way to be true to the essence of what I experienced in 1983, give people a sense of life when it was simpler, of a culture that was more wholesome, and make it relevant, have the lessons I learned speak to people in our era now.

**Robin Beck:** To start, summarize a little bit about the journey itself. What is the book about, and what does it say about your own personal journey?

**Amy Edelstein:** In 1983, I was living in Asia. I had ostensibly taken a leave of absence from college to study in Japan and write a thesis on women's development in rural Japan. I flew to Asia and immersed myself in the travelers' circuit. I landed in Thailand. I had some adventures there. Then I turned left and went to Burma, a country I didn't even know existed. I went on to Bangladesh and Nepal, where I started practicing Buddhism and Hinduism and learning with different teachers. In total, I spent four years in Asia and the better part of twelve months walking in the Himalayas.

*Adventure in Zaskar* describes a two-month snippet of that time. This was a journey that I took on my own, just with a paper map. There were no

roads, no GPS. There were no people to carry your bags. There were no tourist rest stops. There were no hotels. The area had just been opened to travelers in 1976.

If you don't know where Zaskar is, you're not alone. It's in the very Northern tip of India. Technically it's part of India, but geographically it's the Western-most section of the Tibetan plateau. It's a tiny area, very remote. It's a valley whose floor is 3000 meters high, which is higher than a lot of mountain ranges in the United States. And it just goes up from there. The area is ringed by jagged mountains that protect it.

It had been a Buddhist valley, some think, since the second century. It was Buddhist before Tibet became Buddhist. They now practice Tibetan Buddhism, prior to that the locals practiced the Bön religion, which has its own enlightenment practices, and teachings about the non-dual nature of existence similar to what became Dzogchen in Tibetan Buddhism.

I'd heard beautiful things about the Zaskari people. I was drawn first because of the allure of the high mountains and second because I wanted to experience what it was like to be immersed in an environment where people were kind not because they were supposed to be, but just because that was the way they were. They live in such a remote area that everyone depends on each other, so everyone has to get along. It's an area that was so steeped in the classical Buddhist tradition of generosity, I felt like it was one of the few places I could go to experience in action what I was learning about theoretically on meditation retreats.

I was fairly new to the path. I started meditating in 1978, by reading a few books. I had done a few short retreats by this time, but I didn't know very much. As I walked in the mountains, I was consciously trying to understand my mind and questioned myself every step of the way. I didn't have enough guidance about how to see through thought constructively, and I got ensnared by my mind quite often, which I write about in the book. At one point I say that a little bit of Dharma, a little bit of teachings, is sometimes the worst thing you can have on the path because you think you know what the problem is, but you don't know enough to know what the antidote is.

**Robin Beck:** That inner conflict comes through quite often in your writing. You also directly observe the teachings of the postmodern west clashing with practices of Tibetan Buddhism. You write about being plagued with doubt and insecurity constantly, which is certainly representative of my own journey on the path, and seems to be common among westerners.

**Amy Edelstein:** Those fetters have been my particular challenges on the path. Everyone has their own. At that time, I was really investigating my mental constructs and the cultural sources of self-doubt, especially as related to a Western intellectualism and materialism, and in my case a Jewish background which is rife with those states of mind for a variety of historical, religious, and cultural reasons. Easterners generally have a different set of personality or mental fetters and it has taken some decades for Eastern teachers to understand how to best support their Western practitioners. At that time, it was all

fairly new and I was new to investigating the nature of mind, so there was a lot to explore and untangle!

In telling the story, I tried to weave in multiple dimensions for the reader and the friction they can give rise to. That friction is often what creates sparks of transformation on the path. I was reflecting on culture. I was reflecting on Western materialism. I was reflecting on the negative impact I was having as a Western traveler in this remote area, because even though I had a relatively light footprint (I traveled alone, I didn't have a lot of expensive Western gear or money or an entourage) I still had my very clumsy Western ways. I was conscious of having an impact, and I explore that.

I also try to outline some of the history of the region, so people get a sense of the geography and the natural beauty, the culture of the Dharma, what's protected their way of life, and what makes those people so special.

I wanted to weave all these aspects in, partly so the book could touch different readers—ultimately I chose to write about all these threads because those are dimensions that I always carry with me, and I wanted the book to be authentic to my own journey. It's important for people to feel that a spiritual path is relevant to all these different aspects of life.

**Robin Beck:** A common motif throughout the book is the kindness and generosity of the people of Zanskar, and how it differs culturally from the neighboring areas that you'd traveled from. I really get the sense of a place that's stuck in time and represents values that are being lost



to the encroaching West. You often comment on how the women hold themselves as equals to the men, like in the division of labor and raising of children.

**Amy Edelstein:** In Zanskar, no one is special, everyone acts similarly. There's a consistency and evenness of their display of care and kindness that is extraordinary. They have a gentleness that's also rough and feisty and bawdy.

That gentleness was something that touched me deeply, and it's really given me faith that has lasted all these decades that the world can be different. I've been to some beautiful places in my travels and been hosted by so many kind people in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Israel, Egypt, South Africa.... I've experienced so much generosity in my travels, but there was something in the culture and in the way of life in Zanskar that to this day gives me hope in what's possible.

I really wanted to share this experience with everyone because we need this. We need to know that there has been a living example within the last thirty years of a place where life is harmonious, happy, and non-grasping. Sure, Zanskaris can be competitive about horse racing and joke and tease the way that other people do, but they get along and live in deep harmony with each other and with the environment.

It's really possible. And it's possible not through external controls and endless laws and rules and regulations. We're so over-regulated in the United States. It leads to some very inhuman behavior, ostensibly to protect the vulnerable. But in the end, it makes us paranoid about our own human impulses towards care and

compassion. I understand why those rules are there, but they warp us in a certain way.

The rules I observed in Zanskar had to do with the rules of karma: you're setting good action in motion so that you perpetuate good action through your own karmic continuum. It makes a different way of living possible, and it's brought about through sincerity and study, and aspiration for awakening, through the commonly accepted pillars or values of culture. Their way of living touched me so deeply, and I'm forever indebted to them for opening their land to me, and grateful for being born at the right time to be able to go.

**Robin Beck:** I'm curious, have you been back to Zanskar or do you know how it might have changed since the 1980's?

**Amy Edelstein:** It's definitely changed. I have not been back, but as I was writing this book, I just started watching all the documentaries that I could find.

They have since built a road through the area that I walked. Now there are all these travel vlogs of young Indians describing how quickly they can drive across it – they can do within a day what took me weeks. The documentary I was most affected by was *Journey from Zanskar*, by Frederick Marx, narrated by Richard Gere. It's an account where they're taking something like a dozen children aged between five and 12 or so, over high mountain passes, south to Manali so they can attend school because there were no schools in Zanskar. Many of the monasteries that used to educate at least one child per family (and that child would come home to help with the harvest

and teach their families) had closed. In the interviews, the Zanskaris were talking about how poor they were, how illiterate they were, and how they had nothing. I found that so sad because when I was there they didn't speak that way. They were joyous, proud, and fulfilled. To me, they were some of the richest people I had ever met because of their joy.

**Robin Beck:** I wanted to pivot a little bit towards your own journey and the transformative process that you underwent, and how it seems fitting that one of the harshest places that humans can live on the earth is where you experienced the deepest transformation that you were looking for at the time.

**Amy Edelstein:** The land is amazing and challenging. It's monochromatic: you've got stone, you've got snow, you've got water, you've got sky. Occasionally you have a little bit of greenery, but that's about it. It's a lot like the mind. There's a lot of different chatter, all made up of the same elements, the same building blocks. Occasionally a little bit of breakthrough insight.

There would be days where I walked through an area that was all black and white. They were black rocks, black mountains and white snow. And days when these mountains that are striated with lavender, and gold. I didn't have sunglasses, but sometimes I'd wonder if somebody changed the film in the camera from black and white to color. It was that dramatic. The insights came, not from the landscape, but from my relationship to whatever I was seeing. Was I appreciating or grasping? Was I present or worrying about the past or future? Was I awed

and grateful or puffed up with egoic pride?

The physical demands put me through a lot too. Sometimes I was walking along the base of the valley, and it was relatively easy. The mind can get very loud then because there's nothing to push it out of the way. Other times I crossed high mountain passes which tested my belief in myself and my capacity. A few times I slept on the side of a glacier because I couldn't quite make it over and I'd have to gauge what was a question of actual limits or was my mind giving in, giving up. Everything became a metaphor for clear seeing of my own mental negativities and choosing to do the right next thing regardless.

It was hard, and also, in some ways, easier than in the comforts of home. In the middle of the mountains, alone, I had to submit to the landscape. And that meant I had to keep walking when I was exhausted or disheartened. When I was paralyzed by fear, I still had to walk, because I couldn't stop in the middle of an ice bridge. I had to develop perseverance, staying true to my larger goal over immediate feelings, and recognizing the constantly changing lens of the mind were all habits that were helpful or undermining. The lessons I practiced there became the foundation of my relationship to the spiritual path.

**Robin Beck:** You described the joy that emerges spontaneously when spending time underneath the stars and, and these crescendos of awakening that you experienced across the journey that seem to come and fill you with rapture at times, and then leave you in this state of despair at moments. There's a deep yearning for understanding and knowing why you are experiencing what you're experiencing. There seems to be

a desire to move past the doubt that seems to be plaguing you constantly, and I really felt this symbiosis in the way that the landscape itself seemed to invoke these states of mind within you.

It becomes clear as we progress through the book that you entered the valley with the intention of summiting a couple of key mountain peaks during your journey. And you summit one of these peaks, you experience a sense of awe, and you say that "my mind stopped. The fullness and treasure of it exploded in all my cells." You find what you've been looking for. The sweeping landscape opens up to you and speaks to you in a very sentient way. You have this wonderful period of self-acceptance where you don't need to climb that next mountain peak, where you don't need to figure yourself out. It's like a puzzle that has already been solved on some level, and you watch your striving disintegrate.

I really appreciated that you didn't leave us hanging after this big climactic opening that you had, where the world was opened to you and everything resolved. You stayed with us and described the rest of your journey back into the world, and I found that very poignant.

At this point in your life, what would you say to your younger self? What would you say to an individual new to the path that finds resonance with your journey?

**Amy Edelstein:** The main thing that I would say, both to my younger self and to anyone reading the book is: trust your own deepest experience. That's really what we have to go on, our own deepest experience. Our own deepest experience may be deeper than what

we're willing to acknowledge or willing to give ourselves credit for. It may feel like "How dare I? How could I?" It's not something that we need to speak about, but oftentimes we already know that we know.

And when you know that you know, you want to cherish that and protect it. Because there are a lot of people who will try to convince us that we don't know what we know. They will make us override what we already know in the name of learning, or because of their own impure motives for power, or simply because the strength of their own attainment or authority is intimidating and causes us to doubt ourselves.

Knowing is not a hard, fixed, cognitive knowledge that we hold on to, it is that sense of depth and unity and wholeness and goodness and presence and self. Once we've had a glimpse of that, even if it feels like it was just a hairline crack, that hairline crack can be enough to give us an understanding. That's what we want to cherish. There are plenty of things to learn. There are plenty of people to learn from, and there are spiritual psychologies that can really help with all the common pitfalls of the mind. We can learn and deepen while still remaining true and trusting the sacred that we've realized.

**Robin Beck:** I think that's a decent entry point into the work that you do now, and the Inner Strength Foundation. You mentioned a little bit about your work, primarily with inner-city youth in Philadelphia. I would be curious to hear more about how your work was influenced by your time in Zanskar, and what you hope to bring to a world that you've watched transform very radically



since then.

**Amy Edelstein:** I work in the public school system. My non-profit has trained more than 17,000 teenagers in a three-month program we offer in the schools. Because it's public school and it's secular I don't tell the stories of my spiritual quest in the classroom. But I try to bring to them that sense of their own innate goodness, which I observed in the Zanskaris.

That sense that we have goodness, and that we can attain a profound level of human action and human heart, and that our lives can be happy is something I try to impart to them. Not by directly teaching what I learned and was exposed to, but by making those bridges and examples, and by holding space for all the complexity of their lives and helping them find stillness and centeredness and trust.

Yesterday, I led an assembly for seventy-five 11th graders. At the end, I had them go around and say what they would wish for everyone in the room for the holidays. About a third of them wished for safety. It's telling that their concern, their hope for their classmates, for the people they love, is that they be safe, both from the pandemic and from gun violence. Some of the schools I teach in have lost four children in the last year to gun violence, can you imagine the impact on the whole community?

Teaching mindfulness, self-reflection, and insight in American public schools is an uphill battle. Not because of the kids but because of the society. They're good kids. They're also teenagers—some are disinterested, some are

interested. They're smart, perceptive, sensitive, pushing against authority, creative, and funny. But the cultural environment that we've created is so hostile, the technology so manipulative, and the means of destruction so accessible that they are surrounded by threats I could never have imagined when I was in high school. It's urgent that we teach our youth about cause and effect, about compassion, and give them real skills for self-regulation, trauma mitigation, and emotional management, because right now a 15-year-old can pick up a handgun for a hundred bucks and instead of getting mad and breaking someone's nose in a moment of anger, they could kill another, and that has deep and lasting effects on so many.

As I tell all the public officials who ask me how well my program works to remediate gun violence, "We have to get the cheap weapons off our streets first! I'm not cynical, but I am realistic.

I do believe a different world is possible. I want to change culture with this work. I dedicate my time to sharing practical tools that will help or at least plant some seeds in these young people's hearts, just like those seeds were planted in mine. I want to reach a significant number of young people so that people can grow up with a sense of different values and methodologies that work to calm afflictive emotions. I want to pass on these time-honored techniques and understandings of the way the mind and emotions work. I want young people to know the antidotes to greed and envy and retribution, so that they could be well-adjusted adults, who have a sense of how to live from our higher nature, rather than be victim to our lower impulses.

**Robin Beck:** I would welcome that curriculum in the public schools that I attended. I feel like most of us go

through our primary education without an understanding of how to treat each other. We teach so many other things than the basics about how to treat ourselves and others, and strategies to deal with emotions like anger.

In a lot of ways, this work feels like the fulfillment of some of the battles you allude to in the book. By the end of your journey you have cultivated a willingness and desire to alleviate suffering for everyone, and that's a value you have clearly shepherded into adulthood.

You've said that because of the cultural differences, this book itself may not be of interest to the vast majority of your students. But there will be some of course, that really do take this book to heart.

**Amy Edelstein:** I've been very touched when I've seen my students years after they've graduated high school. Sometimes they say, "I still do some of the tools you taught me!" and tell me about the personal development they're involved with now. The sense of self-esteem, self-value, and that they're worth it is inspiring. They're aware of their beautiful nature, and aware that they can keep cultivating themselves.

**Robin Beck:** That's the biggest reward.

**Amy Edelstein:** Yes, definitely.

**Robin Beck:** I'm grateful for the work that you're doing as a positive example to all these kids, and also for your other books, writings and teachings.

And I'm so grateful to have an account of your journey in Zanskar. Being with you as I read the book was just a privilege, and I want to thank you for sharing yourself so deeply and so authentically.

**Amy Edelstein:** Thank you so much for everything you said, it means more to me than you might realize.

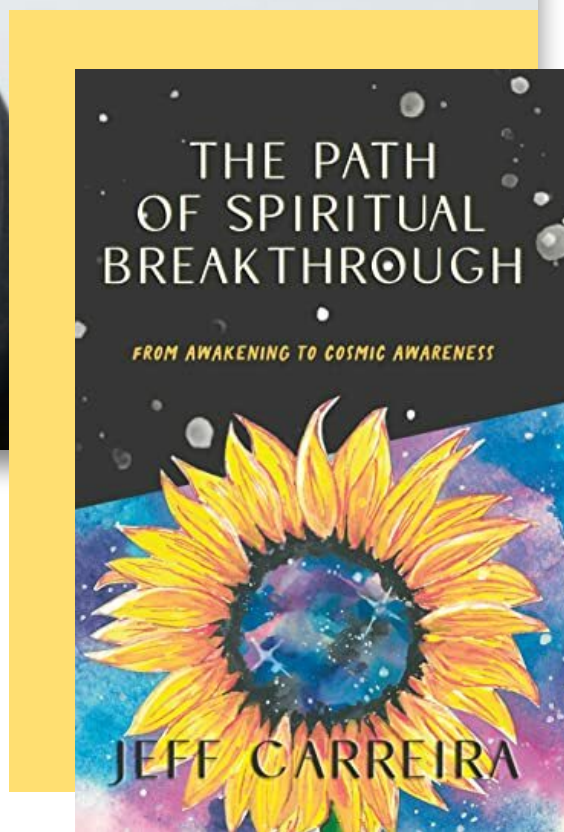
### **More about Amy Edelstein:**

*IPPY-award winner and #1 Amazon bestselling author, Amy Edelstein has a unique perspective on the relationship between the inner journey and outer change. Having begun her own meditation practice in 1978, and spending the better part of three decades practicing, studying, researching, writing about, and ultimately teaching a variety of contemplative methodologies, Edelstein now runs the non-profit Inner Strength Education, which she founded in 2014. Inner Strength brings mindfulness, systems thinking, and social-emotional tools to under resourced youth, training more than 15,000 youth in Philadelphia public high schools, and now expanding the program's reach with her trauma informed free mindfulness app for teens called Inner Strength Vibe. Edelstein was awarded a Philadelphia Social Innovators' Award for her organization's work in Violence Reduction. She is a Cornell University College scholar and the author of six books.*

You can find out more about Amy's work at:

[www.InnerStrengthEducation.org](http://www.InnerStrengthEducation.org) and [www.TheConsciousClassroom.com](http://www.TheConsciousClassroom.com)





A BOOK EXCERPT

# The Path of Spiritual Breakthrough

A BOOK EXCERPT BY JEFF CARREIRA





*Caught in the Flow of  
Grace III* by Louis  
Parsons

In Jeff Carreira's most recent book release, he uses some of the transformative moments of his own life to explore how our breakthrough experiences can accelerate our spiritual growth and development. In this excerpt, you will discover how spiritual awakening includes both a recognition of wider possibilities and the understanding that everything we do matters.

Spiritual awakening is more than just seeing greater possibilities, it also means recognizing that we are alive and in the middle of an actual life. We habitually live our lives as if they haven't started yet. We are culturally conditioned to spend a great deal of our time and energy in preparation for the future. It is as if we are preparing and rehearsing for a life that will soon begin. Part of spiritual awakening is waking up to the fact that life has already started and you are already in the middle of it. Life is like a playing field that has no sidelines. The game has started, and there's nowhere off the field to warm up, practice, or rehearse. No matter where you go, you are still in the

game, and no matter what you do, it is all part of the game. There is no way out. Every choice you make counts, and every time you delay choosing that is also a choice that counts.

The realization of this depth of immediacy can be overwhelming. Suddenly we feel like we don't have any room to maneuver. Everything we do counts, every moment has consequences, there is no place to stand that won't have an effect. On the one hand this feels overwhelming. On the other hand, it feels thrilling. It is the feeling of recognizing that you are alive. You are here. This is it! When I recognized the inherent risk of life, I felt the immediacy of the fact that I had to decide what kind of life I was going to live. I could delay the decision, but delaying was a decision too, with its own consequences.

It was thrilling because I saw how my life had always been built moment by moment according to the choices I made, even if the choice was to wait and choose later. I hadn't known that my hesitations and delays were having an effect. I was living as if delaying a decision had no consequence and I had all the time in the world to decide. Now I knew that everything was always having an effect all the time. Now I saw how to live a more conscious life by actively making choices, even if the choice was to delay making a decision. All of those choices could be made consciously, knowing that they all had consequences. I finally understood what it meant to be conscious. I was thrilled and I knew that I was going to drop everything in my life and devote myself entirely to spiritual work, so I could live the most deeply conscious life possible.

You can be awake in the sense that you realize there is more to reality than the sum total of everything you've ever known or been told about, without experiencing the immediate implications of that. For example, some people see the vastness of reality in a flash of insight, but don't feel compelled to do anything about it. Something triggered a spiritual awakening, but the implications of that awakening did not seem to be revealed, or if they were revealed, they were ignored. In these cases, the awakening experience gradually fades away. It becomes a vague memory of something that happened, and eventually it is forgotten all together.

In the wake of my own realization of the inherent risk of life I contemplated the inevitability of the end of my life. I imagined myself at some as yet undisclosed time in the future knowing that I only had a few hours until my time in this body would come to an end. I've heard it said that during those last hours of life you gain a radical clarity on things. There is no longer any reason to lie to yourself and so you find yourself being honest and transparent. I really tried to imagine what it might be like to have literally no time left. What would be important to me then? As I thought about this, I realized that what would be important to me would be that I gave everything in life. What would leave me full of regrets in those last hours would be realizing that I had compromised on what I truly cared about. I wouldn't want to come to that moment of passing and realize that I hadn't even tried to live the life I really wanted.

Everything changed in my life after that experience. Within a year I had amicably left what, by any normal standard, had been a good marriage as well as my job as an engineer and I moved into a spiritual community. Nothing was ever going to be the same. In comparison, after having a similar existential realization about the inevitability of death, a friend of mine's life didn't change at all. It was disrupted for a week or two, but then he slotted back into his old grooves.

Why is it that similar, and sometimes identical, spiritual experiences can end up having such dramatically different results? Why does one person's life change irrevocably, and another's not at all? These are the kinds of questions we will explore in this book. And given that I don't like to hold back the finale, I will tell you the short answer now.

The reason why similar or even identical spiritual experiences can result in dramatically different types and degrees of change is because of how each individual interprets and makes meaning out of the experience or experiences they have. As we will explore in this book, this is a much more profound matter than it might at first seem. In order to understand the full significance of this we will need to challenge our most fundamental understanding of reality itself.



FEATURED ARTIST

# Louis Parsons

AN INTERVIEW BY KATHY ANDREWS



## INTRODUCTION

Louis Parsons describes himself as a "SoulScaper" and he describes SoulScaping as the practice of turning energy into art. In developing his work Louis has talked with people from across the globe and from all walks of life about art and what it means to them. He's also discussed his SoulScaping methods with such pioneering luminaries as the futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard, philosopher Ken Wilber, and mystics like Jeff Carreira and Chris Bache. Louis has commented that he was particularly struck by a statement made by Barbara Marx Hubbard when she said, "the modern world was, and is still, groping between stories and images of its own future."

Louis' intent is to light the fire of creativity that is already burning in all of our hearts. In the past this has meant creating a body of artwork inspired by some of the world's leading visionaries as well as the views and aspirations of everyday people that will inspire humankind to leap from the edge of global chaos into a world of greater harmony and integration. Louis believes art and creativity have the power to transform how people see themselves and the world. The art that emerges from SoulScaping provides a "jumping off point" for each of us to explore our own interior SoulScape. Louis' experience has convinced him that the images we hold of ourselves, our world, and each other, completely govern everything we do. If we can find a way to change these images, we can change everything.

## How do you describe what you do?

I have developed a process called SoulScaping by gathering what I call SoulScaping Circles of six to eight people. In these circles we work together around intentional themes such as, the feeling of being fully alive, what is truly unique about us, or how to generate authentic resilience. After diving deeply into the theme, we make a return journey and capture the images and feelings we uncovered with paint on canvas. In this process, the subconscious elements of the self are brought to our attention. I have developed a Soul Alignment Program that gives people the opportunity to explore this process for themselves.

SoulScaping is a creative process that allows you to reimagine yourself and recreate your life. You don't need an artistic bone in your body to do it. You need no artistic experience. You may not be attracted to being an artist, you may even have avoided creating art your whole life, but you can't escape being a creative being. There's a difference between creativity and artistry. I'm excited about the work I do because I see so much value in capturing and documenting the images and feelings that come to people's minds in relation to themes of existential concern, and then inviting whatever is revealed to be integrated back into our lives so that we can recreate ourselves.

## How did you connect with Jeff Carreira and the Members Circle?

I was familiar with Jeff's work, and when I heard about a 7-day silent retreat in Copenhagen, Denmark, I decided to attend. At the time, I was

in the middle of a ten-panel project called The Human Story Collection. The theme of the paintings in the project was human evolution and at the time, I couldn't envision the ninth and tenth panels. and I knew something needed to be released inside me. During the retreat I saw powerful images in my mind, and I realized how closely related the imagination and the mind really are. One of the most direct connections I see between Jeff's work and mine is that I give people permission to make as many mistakes as possible in making art. In a way, it's like Jeff's meditation practice of no problem but in painting.

As I see it, it's impossible to make a mistake in the creative process. I believe that we are all natural-born creatives. We all experience the joy of creation if there is no attachment to the outcome. I feel committed to fostering active imagination, and to spreading the transmissions that emerge through the SoulScaping process.

Ultimately to me, the number of people exposed to the process is not what matters most. What is more important is having opportunities to articulate the ideas behind the process. Shaping that articulation is the same as shaping a piece of art. I trust the flow of evolution as I practice articulating the process, and I'm always thrilled to share it.

### **How do you define SoulScaping?**

I developed it through a series of happy accidents. My dad was and is an artist and he taught me techniques and pointed out nice things in my art when I was a kid, but I was kicked out of art college, so my methods are largely self-taught. When I was 23, I

was working as a manager in the IT department of a website design firm when I experienced a massive upwelling and realized I was here for a different purpose. When the company was bought out by a larger firm, I handed over my phone, keys, and laptop. Realizing that I was free to travel, I spent two years, visiting Thailand, Australia, Sumatra, Bali, and a number of other countries.

I worked as a dive instructor and saw the parallels between diving into the ocean's depths and plunging into the depths of the subconscious and the soul. That was when I began making art again. I also started noticing and pondering other works of art, and I realized that most art didn't have much magic for me. When I returned from my travels I began working in a bar, and I would ask people about art. I asked them to describe the experience they wanted to get from a piece of art. If they wanted to feel passionate and alive, I would ask what color the painting would need to be to express that. Then I asked people to use words to describe their interior landscape and I would go and create the art they described. I called these pieces inner portraits.

People would often say the pieces were amazing. I began to learn about personality types, and explored how to match colors to Jungian typologies, and Ken Wilber's levels of development, and that sort of stuff. As my art evolved, I asked people different questions like, "What lights you up?" and then I'd create art from what they said as an act of service. I experienced spiritual states myself doing this work and the more I understood those states, the more I could put them into my art.

Next, I began working with

companies. I created art at corporate events while people watched. Then one day someone asked if I could run an event and have the participants try SoulScaping themselves. At first, I said no because I felt protective about being the artist, but I reconsidered and agreed to try a pilot session at a corporate leadership event, and it went extremely well. I hadn't anticipated how powerfully people would react to their own art, and then I started getting hired to run other kinds of events. It was an unexpected turn of events, and the reality of what was happening landed for both me and my wife when we found ourselves at the Four Seasons Kuda Huraa in the Maldives, and soon after at the Four Seasons Serengeti. It was humbling to move from not knowing where next month's salary was going to come from, to the life we were living then. I stopped worrying about how to earn a living, and started learning how to stand in my true value while showing others the potent value of their own inner selves.

All my life outer change was always interwoven with inner changes. At 18, I was an evangelical Christian, and realized I was meant to be in service of the divine. I thought the art I was creating then was expansive, but I see how much more I am aware of now than I was then. You could say that my image of God has evolved – which might feel like sacrilege, but when I was growing up, I was surrounded by people who thought you had to worship God. Over the past twenty years it has taken sustained courage and a lot of heartbreak to shed that image. When I was younger, I tended to think that my religion was right and yours was wrong, and it's been hard to work beyond that way of thinking. In

these ways, I have experienced firsthand how the imagination and creativity that we express in our art can evolve our picture of ourselves.

**Could you say more about how the process of SoulScaping can shape individuals and the world?**

So many aspects of the world are stuck today: government, education, religion, for example. Creativity frees up those areas and allows them to flow. When the children of today grow up to be adults they will need to be adaptive. They will need to come up with new ideas, manage their energy in novel ways, and solve complex problems beyond what we can imagine. Our current picture of the world is laden with so much depression and anxiety it can be debilitating, but so much potential can be unleashed by giving people deeper access to their imagination. (For more information about SoulScaping visit [soulscaaping.co](http://soulscaaping.co).)



*Some of Louis Parsons' works*



*Realisation of a New Beginning*





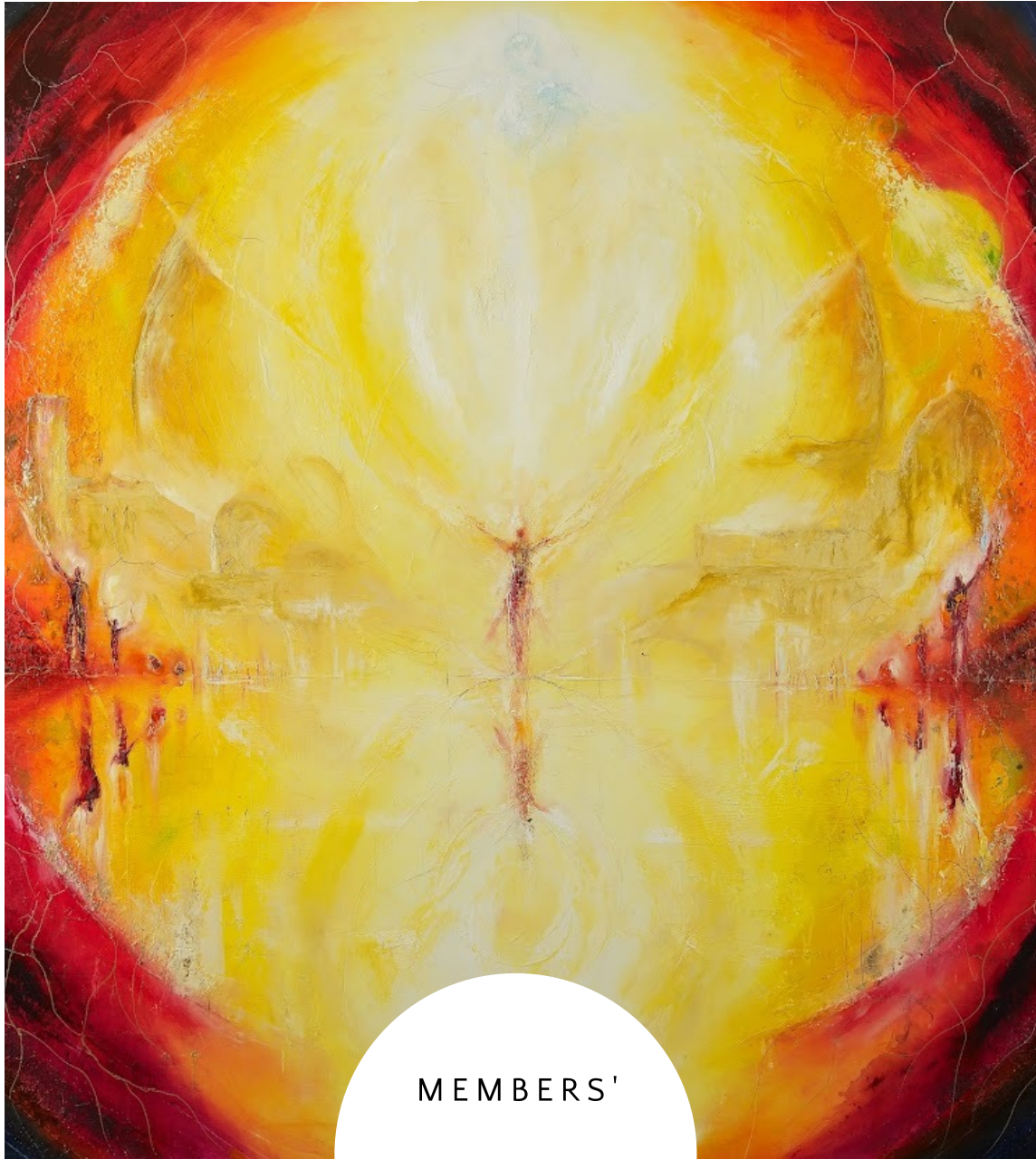
*The Human Story TEN*



*The Human Story NINE*



*The Human Story SIX* by Louis Parsons



MEMBERS'

*Contributions*

**The Artist of Possibility** includes contributions from members of **The Mystery School**, an online community of inspired individuals dedicated to spiritual transformation and mutual evolution.

If you'd like to become a member, join [here](#)!



*The Balance* by Louis  
Parsons

### **Another Way**

Distraction, pleasurable for its negation,  
Turns the eye outward for pleasure,  
Which can only be found inward,  
As the disciplined watcher waits,  
Recognizing the intent to make contact,  
Allows clear enjoying to be direct,  
As the negation of one mental event  
With a distraction leads to relative peace,  
But a greater fortune is found in allowing.

*by* **ROSS KEMPNER**





## *Devotion*

*An entry by Su Slover*

Amongst the chaotic world of perceived separation, wearily I lie down...  
my nakedness at once parched and shivering  
prima materia seeps in.

Nourished embrace like dew on grass, air on skin,  
luminous honey bee to the flower  
messengers of love.

Creating a new story of union, dissolving within,  
wordless intentional offerings  
as Source feeds All.

Wild listening the earth opens,  
sinking down unfettered and free  
this naked life lives us...

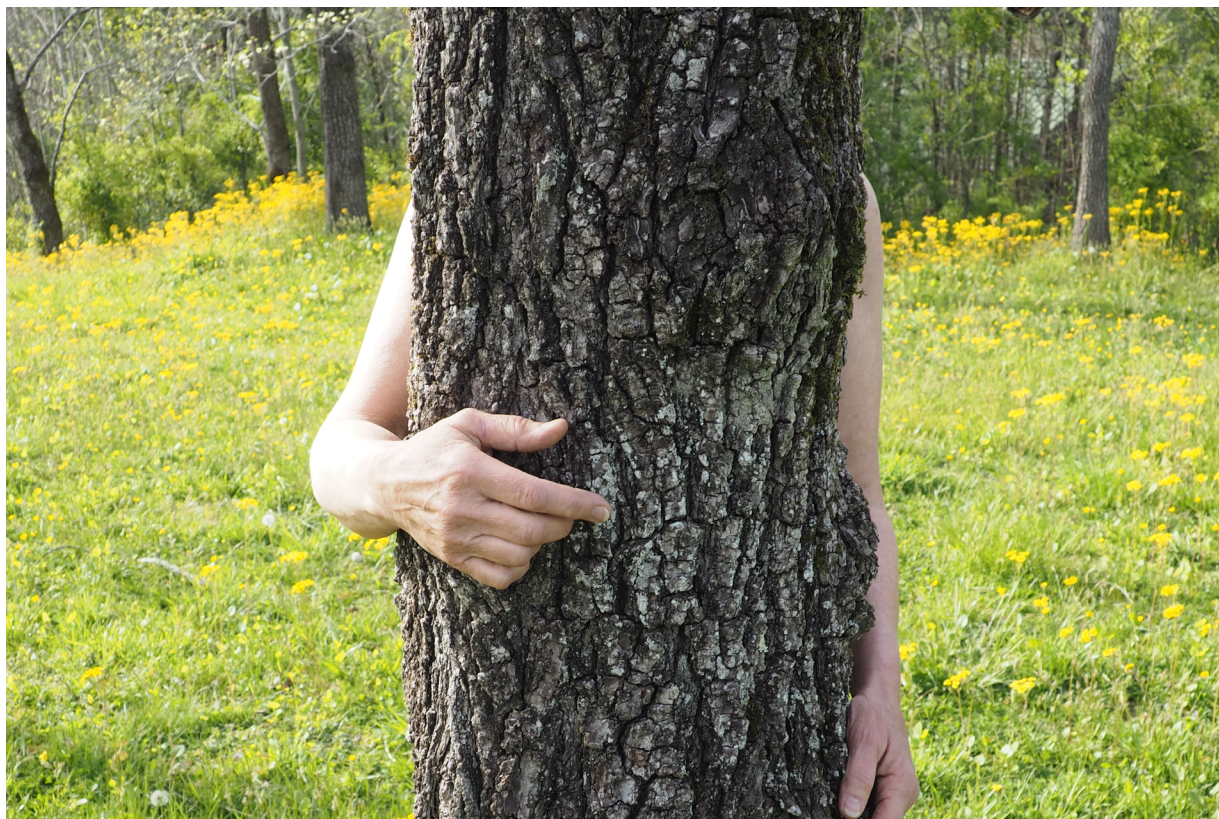




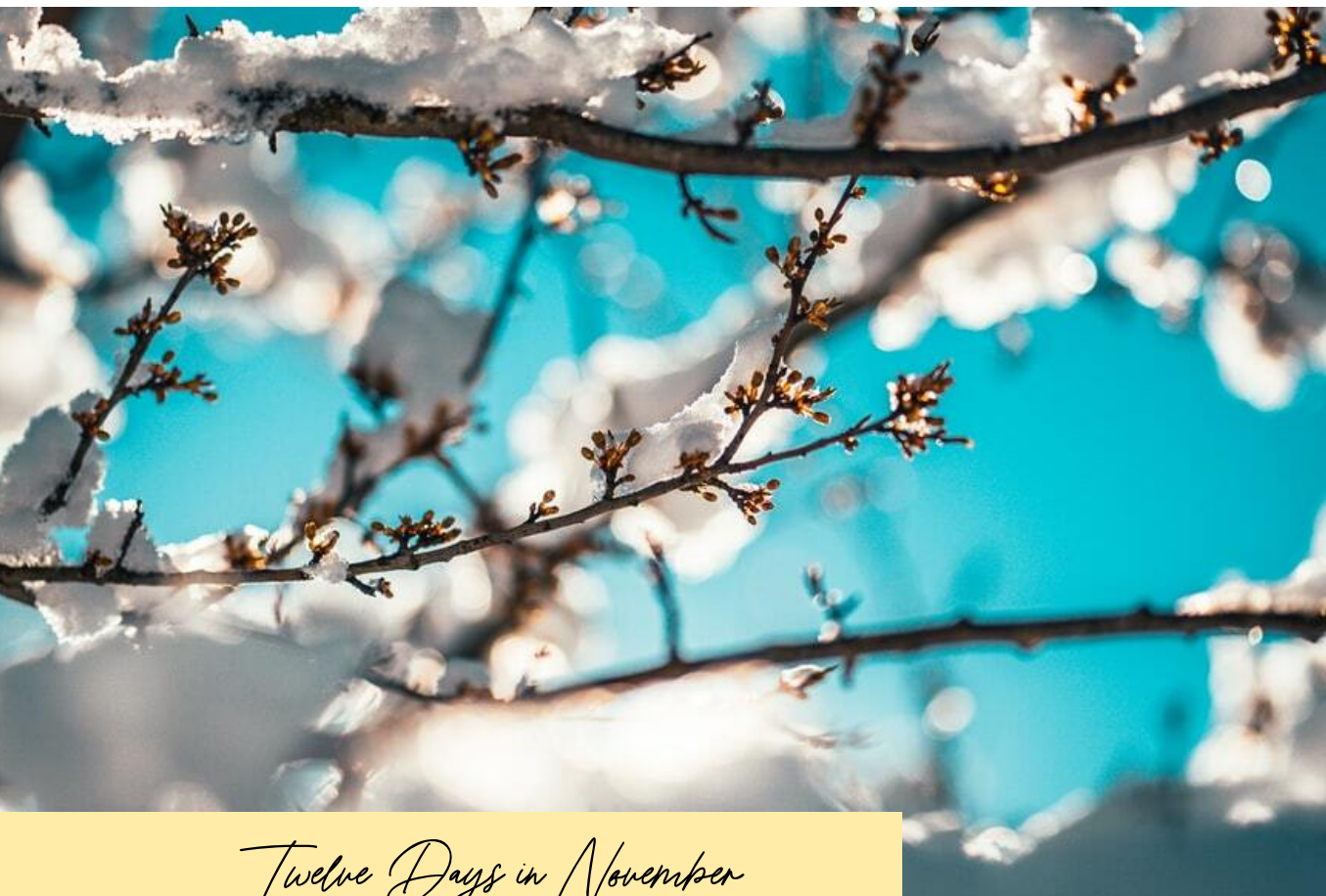








**Photo Credits:**  
Su Slover, Nature Body  
elizabeth pell, Photographer



*Twelve Days in November*  
by Nicole Bremness

One

Catching up today.  
Silly notion that.  
How do we catch up to now  
When now is all that ever is?

Quick!  
Write those then words

if ever they were  
 For Now is beckoning  
 to just be here.  
 My dear,  
 Be here.

## Two

Today those towering fluorescent lights  
 are just that – fluorescent lights  
 that brighten the Present.

Recalling they were, once, annoying –  
 glaring,  
 daring  
 to complicate the simplicity of daylight!

Now  
 they just hang there,  
 suspended.

Enlightening.

## Three

Sit.  
 Just sit.  
 Not when you have time.  
 Time has you, now.  
 Will you submit  
 And sit?

Pause.  
 No loss.  
 Wonder, ponder,  
 Saunter through,  
 Running no race.  
 Clocking no time.

Slowly,  
 Being.  
 Savoring sumptuous now.

## Four

Breathe.  
 Rising and falling.

Expand and contract  
 this and that  
 then and now  
 here and there  
 one and other  
 Breathe.

Allow space for distractions Allot them  
 their due  
 Absorb the residue  
 Breathe.

One.  
 No other.  
 No compare  
 No contrast  
 This  
 Now  
 Breathe.

## Five

Don't tell me how.  
 Don't show me the way.  
 Don't lie to me that you know ...that you  
 ever knew.  
 Just be with me.  
 In the stream of yesterday to tomorrow,  
 In the wisdom that comes to us, Be.

All doubts aside.  
 All plans beside.

Listen.  
 Follow the thread that pulls, The call that  
 beckons

...fine, soft...  
shrouded in silence, Wanting.

**Six (After a few days of no writing...)**

At last today the flood came.  
No knowing "Why now?"  
No rhyme or reason  
Why the delay  
To this day?  
But who cares?  
What is, is.

Rejoice!  
At last the words are showing  
Sometimes flowing  
Wanting to be shouted! Outed! tugging,  
winking,  
mugging my thinking,  
Heard through the pen  
And heard again  
When we listen!

Rejoice in the mugging  
if that's what it takes!  
What joy to be mugged into Love with  
words.

**Seven**

I want a frock...  
A long, flowing red frock - billowing,  
ebullient!  
  
No, make it blue...  
Red's been taken for centuries And look  
what's happened there...  
No longer the symbol it may have been  
of a dedicated, devoted heart  
in sacred service.  
Now riddled with Doubt.  
No, not red...

Blue will do.  
A scintillating, vibrant, enthusiastic  
blue...

Not the blue sky of celebratory flight  
Not the blue shallows of waves kissing  
sand  
But the deep, deep, ocean blue of  
silence, seeming stillness,

and undulating undercurrents of  
mystery,  
kisses,  
and flight.

*(Then one day in November someone  
read me this letter)*

**Letter to Someone Living Fifty Years  
from Now By Matthew Olzman (b. 1979)**

Most likely, you think we hated the  
elephant, the golden toad, the thylacine  
and all variations of whale harpooned  
or hacked into extinction.

It must seem like we sought to leave  
you nothing but benzene, mercury, the  
stomachs of seagulls rippled with jet  
fuel and plastic.

You probably doubt that we were  
capable of joy, but I assure you we  
were.

We still had the night sky back then, and  
like our ancestors, we admired its  
illuminated doodles of scorpion outlines  
and upside-down ladles.

Absolutely, there were some forests left!  
Absolutely, we still had some lakes!

I'm saying, it wasn't all lead paint and  
sulfur dioxide. There were bees back  
then, and they pollinated a euphoria of



flowers so we might contemplate the great mysteries and finally ask, "Hey guys, what's transcendence?"

And then all the bees were dead.

*(Deeply moved, this was my response)*

### **Eight – Letter to our Tears Now**

Dear, dear tears  
...to all those stirring,  
waiting, wanting to move, Please. rise up  
and fall now.

Feel the squeeze of the heart. The time to  
feel and fall and flow is now  
While we still can.

Your shedding may be the saving grace  
we're waiting for.

Begin the laundering.  
Wash away our blindness!  
We didn't mean it, ...did we?... the  
carelessness, the murdering, the  
impulsive, compulsive driving satiation  
in the dark.

We weren't paying attention to the  
Light.  
Please pour through the gates And flood  
the veils –  
the desire,  
the greed,  
the voracious hunger.

Dear, dear tears,  
Shower your grace.  
Cleanse our hearts.

### **Nine**

I could listen to your voice forever –  
and forever and forever –  
If you'll just keep your heart open  
And talk with me, not to me or at me.

With.  
It's clear we only need that word –and  
how we need it! –  
We have been so long without.

With...each...other.  
Always with.

One with,  
Only One.

Your turn!  
I will listen to your voice  
forever –  
from here.

### **Ten – Haiku for Hawaii**

No trade winds tonight! grumbling, like  
boiling lava rumbling...  
Ah, the dawn!

### **Eleven**

A new page!  
Like a new day...  
Starting over  
and over and over again.

Such extreme good fortune...  
A clean page,  
A pen,  
And you.

## Twelve

What to say now  
After all the saying has been said?  
Just a wanting,  
The perpetual wanting  
And the longing in return

And a song flowering.  
Funny that word  
Flow - er - ing  
Like there's a flow-est-ing  
Like a most flow at the very end

Renewing, growing, blossoming Forever  
flowering,  
There is no end. We can sing amen

And again amen  
For what has been,

And again - for what will be - amen,  
amen, amen.

As it was in the beginning  
It is now and ever shall be  
World without end.  
Amen, amen.



## *Yantra Series*

*by* KD MEYERS

These “dimensional/dynamic” “abstract” paintings explore and investigate forms used as power objects which derive their power from the irrational—i.e. “magic.” They are mystical forms, religious icons, mystic diagrams, relics, magical forms, and evoke essential states. They comment on the history and relationship of art, philosophy, spiritual practice, and healing, and manifest and evoke the “healing” power inherent in all forms. These particular works derive their inspiration from Hindu yantras (power diagrams) and the mystical orientation of western art from the ancient “Mystery Schools” of Classical Antiquity through Renaissance iconography through Mondrian.

These works teeter on the brink of painting, drawing, sculpture, and installation and question the categorization of forms. They embody a dialectic of illusive opposites in dynamic tension—color and form, color and line, texture and shape, figure and ground, intentionality and unintentionality, mass and energy, presence and absence—serving as visual koans.

These works are questions for contemplation. They serve as icons for imaginary churches and relics for imaginary shrines. They are religious/contemplative art for faiths and philosophies that do not yet exist, and for future manifestations/incarnations/revelations of current faiths. They are a re-visioning of philosophy/spirituality/art/ healing for this era.





Entries From

*The Spontaneous  
Writing Circle*

## The Left Side Of My Body

Breathing

The fan is just right –  
just right.

I was thinking about how everything that is numb, tingling or  
painful is on the left side of my body –  
as if I took a left turn somewhere.

I can't depend on what's left.  
Wow – that's a thought.

Being a lefty must be odd.  
Most of the world is right oriented and what's left for the lefty are  
the leftovers ...  
trying to build a life out of the scraps that nobody wants.  
Afterthoughts of inclusion.

But this is going into left field .  
Let me right myself and start again.

I'm now wondering if my right cares a hoot for my left ...  
limping along like an unwanted hanger-on.  
It simply cannot carry the whole load here.  
I do hope that the situation will seem awfully sad to my  
dominant tendency...  
(the habit of thinking that everything is all right )

Sometimes, things will just be left  
and there's no getting around it.  
Left is here to stay

and what's left of left,  
will have to take stock of the situation  
and be with what is.  
What is  
Is that...  
It's on it's own  
and don't ask right to have anything to say or do.

All is alright  
when left is OK too

*by* **DEBORAH KAPLAN**



*I joined the writing circle about a year ago, and it is a top priority for me to make it to it, because it has been a wonderful experience. When I was young I used to write papers for school spontaneously, without research and without editing, just writing what was present for me, and I always got As. Once I decided to take a different approach and do some thorough research of my topic, rewrites and edits, etc., I got a C. Most of my professional writing has required research and edits, but the writing circle has brought me back to those A papers! Thank you Deborah for providing this wonderful space for us to write and to listen to our fellow writers.*

### Lessons from the Farm

I can hear those early morning clucks of the chickens as if they cannot wait for the day to start. I felt that way today waking before 5:30. Now it is still very dark at that time, and the stars were shining brightly, and I was ready to start the day. I love that first awokeness. I can usually gage my day by that first feeling, and if I am not happy when I wake up it is probably going to be a long day. I am likely to become unhappy at later times during the day, that comes and goes, and depends on how deeply I am sinking into the core of my being. I find it still has something to do with the circumstances of the day, but less so than it used to. I am trying to do things from joy rather than obligation. Incremental progress, sometimes one step forward and two back. I remember a story that an elementary school teacher told us once, about a mule who did not want to go the field to work for the day. The mule pulled back two steps for every one the farmer pulled him forward. The farmer found a solution by turning the mule around. So when I find I am moving backwards, I can just turn around. Ok, so maybe I am walking backwards, but at least I am moving in the right direction.

So getting up with the chickens works for me for much of the year, and going to bed with the chickens is fine in June, but it is harder to go to bed with them in October. Soon I will be going to bed at 4 pm. I read recently about factory farmed eggs; the chickens never see the sun, they are just cycling their lives with artificial light, and they can be adapted to a shorter day, 20 hours I think, so they lay an egg every 20 hours instead of 24. More eggs for the farmer to sell. I don't know that I have ever eaten a 20 hour egg, mine come from chickens that run around in the barnyard and eat bugs. I wonder if they would taste different, or if they might reset my own clock. Maybe I wouldn't wake up excited for the day to start anymore.

*by* MARILYN ROOSSINCK

*The Writing Circle is true to its name, spontaneous. Always a surprise, from the readings of writers outside the circle brought inside, to the writing and readings of what emerges from each of us, and all of us each week. In such a safe space, where layers are revealed and trust is sure, I feel the time together like a deep dive with a long breath where one surfaces with wonder and heart, expanded.*

### **Baffled**

Ok, so now I feel I goofed, speaking with a sharp tongue I didn't know was pointy. Your shame is my shame and all of it welcome. Funny how connections and togetherness and an inclusive wholeness shares feelings like a ball ricocheting off walls of desire and defense and habit and love.

Who is it who is feeling all these feeling? Who meditates and writes and writes and meditates?

I suddenly feel all surface, a voice that spits blue ink onto a page of papered trees and all the insecurities of human experience tumble and clash and laugh.

I want to sit still, close my eyes, dream, surrender and allow the moment to fly by, be still, or sing. Whatever it wants. The Universe is painting this moment, throwing shapes and colors and light and air into a dance of perceptions, dance and perceptions both, dancing perceptions.

Trust without judgement, celebrate the mixture and textures of life, the push and the pull and the stillness within it all. Spill the beans, pour the color, feel the

living,

breathing,

flowing

pulse of existence.

Something is running, wants to run, scream, climb a mountain, yell at the top, take wing and fly. Skin is peeling, a rawness is exposed.

I hear crying, is it I? Something deep, long buried. This I, this doing self is stymied, baffled, silenced. Something, No thing watches, waits, holds.

Forgive me, the doing self says. I forgot for a moment.

*by* **BONITA WINER**

*Within three weeks of being embraced by the writers of both circles of the Mystery School's beautiful Spontaneous Writing Circle, I've found another home. I've written for decades, essays, theses, journals, poetry, stressed blips of fits and starts of novella, short story, collected works. Always, throughout decades, wanting publisher's galleys of my writing. The wanting turned into wasting the space I could have made for treasuring my beginnings. Very recently the years of process transmuted to loving my writings, appreciating those essential parts of the past writings and the nearer present writings that do come in flash – spirit, feeling, movement connected by joy. Kristin Kaye a professional writer, teacher and meditator helped me step up to my gifts and adorn them with vulnerability, and share an experience with other writers who can't get away and don't want to get away from writing! Since this Spontaneous Writing Circle, the space created holds my heart so I can flash a poem and want nothing more from it. Thank you Deborah Kaplan.*

### Through

I've relinquished expectations, really  
 I gestured.  
 "Really," I spoke  
 No blue laced veil hat, no rings  
 No deals.  
 Unconditional  
 Letting go  
 Will they find a hat shop with velveteen pegs and through a case glass  
 fingers?  
 Who picks it up admiring the peek through lace letting to see anew?  
 A refugee a child recovers the  
 Rings in sand buying safe shelter  
 Hearts rocking minds eye  
 Knows not will

by MICHELLE BABIAN

## The Midnight Entrance

A poem about a poem writing itself?  
Or a book that entered after a long hibernation –  
so proud of itself completely dressed for the occasion.  
That book –  
that had been on my shelf of awareness.  
Happenings and interpretations.  
All the chapters had written themselves as decades of forethought –  
collected learnings.

I'm so happy to be remembering the midnight entrance...a grand entrance  
of all the actors.

In this case ...the arm – the hand – the pen and paper  
and the breath that held waiting for space enough to place itself.

A blowing wind tore into my room  
and turned over my bed  
and threw me out.  
I saw the dawn and the pages  
and read them as if devouring a banquet of dreams.

It told the story of an Evolutionary.  
How on momentary winds of choice-less choices  
A life had been constructed.  
How trust was my Karmic grace –  
and how it mingled into life's stormy and miraculous sea.  
How there was nothing there but one continual trust –  
in an inner voice –  
that drowned out all the others.  
The book is about stumbling in the dark that is actually light ...  
and how .. as the light began to know itself in wisdom  
and learned to understand that darkness is a gift ..  
It held in it all the potential for inspiration to carry you away –  
and throw you out of bed.  
And make a book.

*by* **DEBORAH KAPLAN**





# The *Mystery* School

An online community of inspired individuals dedicated to spiritual transformation and mutual evolution

**To become a member**, join here!

If you are an enrolled member and would like to submit content to be considered for publication in a future issue of *The Artist of Possibility*, you will find our submission guidelines [here](#).