

Oriah's Newsletter- Fall 2011

I am blessed to be doing so much of what I love, and hope we will connect where it feels appropriate for you. I am:

- Doing individual counselling and mentoring sessions on the phone (if you'd like more information about this please email me at mail@oriah.org.)
- Writing a new book that explores how we can expand our ability to consciously make choices (both the Big Life Changing decisions and the small daily choices) that support our deepest desire to live fully who and what we are.
- Continuing to work on a novel (which, I have discovered, a much longer process than non-fiction) about a group of lucid dreamers working together in the dream to co-create change in the everyday world.
- Posting weekly on Wednesdays at <http://oriahsinvitation.blogspot.com/> You can subscribe to this weekly blog by scrolling down the green bar on the right-hand side and clicking on "Follow by Email."
- Posting most days and participating in conversations on the Oriah Mountain Dreamer Facebook page where we share exploration and inspiration for living with open hearts and clear minds as embodied souls. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/Oriah.Mountain.Dreamer?sk=wall>. (You do not need a FB account to visit see the posts.)
- if you would like to receive this newsletter (3-4 times a year) please send your email address to mail@oriah.org

It is a busy, creative life for which I am very grateful.

And now. . . a little update on what has been happening recently in my inner life. Many Blessings, Oriah

Waking Up At Home

When I was a child I was aware of a Presence that was always with me. From my earliest vague pre-verbal memories- flashes of colour and sound coming to me through the bars of my crib- it was always there. In the daytime and at night, when I was in my bedroom or walking home from school, this Presence was with me. It was there when I prayed, but it was also there when I was reading a book or watching television. If I was engaged in something that demanded my full attention- like writing a test at school or learning how to swim- all I had to do was inwardly glance toward it to feel a sense of reassurance, the way you might turn your face to catch the eye of a someone you love who loves you at a large gathering.

But this description is misleading. It suggests this Presence was something that was localized and outside of me. And. . . . it was, but. . . . it also wasn't. It was both within me and around me. It was both a specific place I could touch if I turned my attention toward it and that which permeated everything within and around me. At times it seemed to be particles of sparkling light of which everything was composed, or an underlying hum that all things emitted, or a constant tingling that, while different in my body than in a rock I held in my hand or the cat I petted, ran through everything. And the light and the sound and the tingling were. . . .more than just physical sensations. . . . they had an intelligence, an awareness. . . . an abiding quality of love that was particular and real.

Words are truly inadequate to describe this kind of experience. When the people at church I attended as a child talked about God or Christ, I assumed these were the names for the Presence I experienced. Later I realized that there were many other names pointing toward this Presence- the Sacred Mystery, the Great Mother, Allah, Kwan-Yin, Buddha, Shiva, Shakti, the Grandmothers

The last year of my life- with my marriage ending and two parents descending into the confusion of Alzheimer's- has been one of logistical and emotional turmoil. But time is kind, and we are made for healing if we allow it to happen.

One morning about a month ago, as I watched the sun slowly slip above the horizon, I realized that my awareness of the Presence had, without my noticing exactly when, become as it was when I was a child: constant and omnipresent, around and within me without any effort on my part. It was there where the breeze touched the skin of my face, in the air I was breathing, in the hand that raised a cup of tea to my lips- in the china cup and the sweet hot tea and the lips that parted and the throat that swallowed- all around and within me. For a moment, I held my breath and sat very still, afraid I was imagining it or might break the spell if I moved. But the Presence- as strong and loving, as clear and constant as it had been when I was a small child- remained. And I wept.

It's not that this Presence has not been with me since I was a child. As an adult I'd cultivated practises of meditation, prayer and shamanic ceremony that helped me turn my awareness toward this Presence. With a full and busy life I had to be deliberate about finding ways to be with stillness, to open my awareness. And it worked- when I reached out I could always feel the Presence there with me.

Until I couldn't.

In the last few years of my marriage, no matter how I tried, or prayed I could not feel the Presence that had always been with me. It was like falling into an infinite darkness. I was lost, bereft. I became increasingly ill, unable to read or write, spiralling down into a hopelessness I had not imagined possible. Seeking guidance from a therapist it took me months to confess my deepest grief. Finally I told her, "For the first time in my life, I cannot pray. I just go through the motions. I cannot find the Presence that's always been there." I choked on tears and terror as I let the unspeakable come, my voice rising in an inconsolable wail: "I am afraid that God has abandoned me."

The return of the awareness of this Presence feels like a return to life itself for me. That it returns with the fullness and effortlessness that I had as a child is grace beyond comprehension. I will no doubt write much more about this journey of loss and recovery but, for now, I will say what I know for sure:

The sacred Presence that holds us, the essential and sacred life-force of love that creates and sustains all that is, is always with us and within us. To be aware of this Presence we must be deeply connected within ourselves, to ourselves, to our hearts, to Life and Love as they are lived in the form of one particular embodied soul, one small human being.

God did not abandon me. I abandoned myself, separating myself from my own heart and spirit to keep the commitment I had made to stay in the marriage no matter what happened. I am so grateful for the painful events of the spring of 2010 that woke me up, freed me to leave and allowed me to find myself again, so I could feel once again the peace and aliveness that comes with awareness of the sacred Presence that holds and creates all that is.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer (c) 2011