

# CALLING ALL TIGERS

*Knowing through a child's eyes....  
looking back*

*A tiger lives in that house  
said the child.*

*Don't be silly,  
tigers don't live in houses  
said the woman.*

*But I've seen it  
said the child.*

*I haven't  
said the woman.*

and she went inside.

The woman knew that  
tigers didn't live in houses,

She knew this because  
every time she looked into the mirror

there was a tiger living there.

*It has been suggested that I might have a small talent for the written word. That I might have something to offer others who's lives have been touched as mine has been. I do not know if this is true, I hope it is so. I offer this for your interest, possible entertainment and hopefully and finally in the end, as a balm to your soul.*

*I write to all of those who have ever been wounded, endured and survived. To those of you who have completed your journey, are part way through or have yet to begin I ask you to read on, keep time with me, be patient and walk with me through my labyrinth. Step into the fire with me, feel the flames, let them burn through and together we'll brush the ashes from the door.*

*The following pages are comprised of poems  
and excerpts from my personal journal - a  
narrative written over many years.*

## **My Brother Said**

*be like a goat  
my brother said, sighing.  
you bring these things on yourself;  
just keep quiet.*

*but I am not a goat  
say I  
and why, should I try to be  
what I am not?  
and why, should I be the one  
to keep quiet?*

*hide your true nature  
my brother said.  
keep it to yourself;  
no one has to know*

*(no one wants to know, he means)*

*don't tell, why make it difficult?  
they don't really want to know anyway.*

*people find you difficult  
my brother said.  
but why?  
say I.*

*you're too passionate  
too angry  
too everything;  
your true nature is showing.*

*but why should I pretend  
to be a goat?  
and why should I hide  
my true nature?  
it is their problem  
not mine.  
I am a TIGER  
and I know it!*

## **The World Inside**

I believe that all of us have within our psyche a labyrinth, or some such representation of the place where our inner life resides. For some perhaps, it is a house with many doors, for others it is a forest with many hidden dens. For many of us it is a place where the doors are locked, the dens covered over, the entrance sealed. It is a place not thought of, not known, and like much that is unknown, feared. It is this fear that traps us, paralyzes us and stops us from ever entering our labyrinths, from walking the paths to our inner lives, and from ever knowing who we really are. For those of us whose wounds are deep it is a journey that we must not only contemplate, but make. For if we do not, if we do not embark upon the journey, uncover the horrific and ugly, we will never know, never discover the wonder and beauty that is also there. The treasure that is one's self.

I was one of those whose entrance to the path was sealed, who had no knowledge, no awareness of my life within. I had never been taught to look inside, to seek there the answers to my difficulties in the world outside. I had been taught to project outward, seeking cause and blame away from myself. Power was not something I had, it was something others had. I sought sustenance, hope, and healing from that which was outside of me. It was years before I understood that I could sustain myself, that hope is not gone until I destroy it, and finally that the power to heal is mine also. It is not outside of me, it is in me. As it is in all of us.

So great was my fear, so strong my resistance to self knowledge and awareness that it took me some fifteen years to traverse the landscape between my outer life and the entrance to my labyrinth. As I begin my narrative, I have been five years upon its path. My journey continues still.

## Crystalling

*inside the crystal prism lie  
imprisoned in each twinkling eye  
reflected through the prism's plane  
the precious shards of life remain*

*existing in forgotten time  
each one a misbegotten sign  
of life within the splintered mind  
revolving round each of a kind*

*each one a splinter of the whole  
fractured from within the soul  
and left to press upon the glass  
forever seeking there to pass*

*the knowledge of enduring grace  
impressed upon each frozen face  
the spiral whirls, the image cast  
the splintered shards are free at last*

*the mirrors of the crystal cage  
lie shattered by their collective rage.*

## **Into Madness**

As a young child I was trapped, unable to free myself from a situation that was for me, unendurable, yet I endured. I survived. I found a way. I freed my mind and saved my soul and for this I am endlessly thankful. I also became endlessly dissociative. Of course, I did not know this until later. Later when I was sure that I was losing my mind, had in fact lost it, then I began to know. Then I began to find my lost mind and repair my soul. So I entered my labyrinth, the darkness overtook me, and I was immediately consumed with terror, and with panic. I ran blindly, seeking; desperate to find a way out. I cannot say how long I ran. I ran until I could not, until I fell. Exhausted and defeated I finally made the choice beyond survival; to heal, to become whole.

Now I would turn and face the monsters in the labyrinth. I would seek them out and do battle with them, I would know their faces and face their pain. All of their secrets I would uncover, digging and squirrelling underground, only coming up for air and sunshine when I could endure the darkness no longer, but returning, always returning to the depths of the labyrinth and the knowledge that would give me back my soul.

For it was this that I had lost. This that had been so wickedly wounded, so cold bloodedly stolen. Or so I thought, but it was not really stolen, it was hidden, hidden safe within the labyrinth of my psyche, only waiting for me to find it and return it, whole once more, to the light.

I did not find my way through the labyrinth alone, for such a journey can never be undertaken without friends, can never be accomplished without help. Cowering, lost deep within the labyrinth I screamed my terror and my pain, and my scream was answered, and my guide came. She came as all my selves have come, out of the need, crystallizing in my mind, showing herself. She is magnificent. Peace flows from her, sanity and safety are hers. She is wise beyond all imagining and she holds, in her hand, the key to all the doors within my labyrinth, waiting only for me to find my courage, to pose the question and step through the first door.

This was my inner life and the beginning of my incredible journey into self. Of course, the introduction to she who would be my guide through the labyrinth was not simple, nor sudden, nor met with ease. No. Outside I struggled to understand, to make sense. I listened to the chorus of voices in my head yelling, bickering, vying to be heard. Intense visual images arose within my mind, compelling and insistent, demanding to be brought forth, as my voices demanded to be heard. It was a call I tried desperately to ignore, to push away, to repress and stop forever. Daily I battled to stay sane, appear normal, to hide what was happening within. It proved to be impossible, and bit by bit the voices began to be heard, the images struggled forth and my system, so carefully built, so courageously structured began to crumble. As my system crumbled on the inside so my life in the world also began to crumble, until at last the two met. I was undone and finally my journey had begun.

As my system disintegrated, as the barriers between my selves broke down, all that had been held by them began to break through. I would suddenly be overcome with fatigue; pain squeezed my body - sometimes forcing me to hold on for support or risk falling as my knees buckled. At times the fatigue was so deep I could barely lift one foot in front of the other, and so shuffled instead - resembling an old woman although I was only in my mid 30's. My bones ached at these times and hopelessness and despair were my companions. Just as suddenly these symptoms would be gone - the pain and fatigue replaced by exuberant energy, a hyper activity. Then too, without warning I would find myself abducted, thrown into a place I called the pit. Once there, fear and panic would beset me and I would reside in the dark with terror, sure that I would never surface again.

I visited the doctor, underwent tests, went to another doctor and another; they could find no physical ailment, no reason for my pain or fatigue. Finally I stopped visiting them and began to ask myself what then could be wrong? I began to look inward, understanding at last that if my pain was not caused by an outside force, then the only place left was inside. Now I was almost there, almost at the entrance to the labyrinth, the cracks in the seal were widening and as my selves struggled to impart their knowledge to me, the force of their need finally ruptured the seal, and I was faced with the knowledge of a past I did not want. The pictures slammed into me, the emotions ripped through me and my world as I had known it was gone.

## Flashbacks and.....

memories.....that terrible, shameful memory. That memory that made me know again; that made me a victim; that memory that made me a monster. I thought I would not live. I thought I could not look at myself. I thought everyone saw the monster I had always been and just had not seen. I felt such loathing and self hatred that to venture out into the world was agony. To exist at all was torment and yet I knew that I had to go on, for there were those who needed me..... I was terrified that I might have hurt them also. As I had hurt that other little girl so long ago. It did not matter that I was only nine years old; that I was only acting out what had been done to me. It did not matter that I was a victim, for in my victimization I had become the monster that I hated - I did not deserve to live. This was the first door. No wonder I ran screaming through the labyrinth. It was a truth I could not know.

## The Legacy

It gapes  
its jaws clicking  
its teeth shining  
something oozing from within  
pours out

I cannot see  
and once again  
am forced  
into the labyrinth

In desperation  
I run  
the gapping maw in hot pursuit  
screams echoing round and round  
reverberate in terror  
they are mine

Down  
each twist  
each bend  
I stumble forth  
and still it comes

Trapped  
lost within the labyrinth  
I fling my body against the last blockade  
and feel its fetid breath upon my neck  
hot and wet

Weeping  
I take my courage to my heart  
and hold it deep and strong  
and turning  
face...

My Mother's wound.

This was the first monster I faced in the labyrinth; betrayal and denial - a loss of self.

“The month is November, Friday morning, the night before I watched a t.v. movie about sexual abuse - “The Boys of St. Vincent”. I am on my way to work, on the bus, replaying some of the scenes from the movie. I am thinking about the little boy in the story who was left at the orphanage, who was abused by the priest and who later began to abuse some of the younger boys there. A terrible story. Moving on, thinking about my day ahead, what I need to accomplish. Suddenly I am transported and a scene begins to play out in my mind. I am right in it now.

*I see a little girl, about eight or nine years old. It is me. She is playing in the upstairs front room of my house. The house where I grew up. Her friend's little sister is with her, she is about five years old. They are playing house. Mother and daughter. The little girl is lying on the couch, her mother is pretending to change her diaper, she is at the doctor's - suddenly her mother turns away; she closes the door of the room; she turns back to the little girl...*

I am on the bus once again. Tears are pouring from my eyes, I can barely contain myself. I am flooded with horror, with pain, with knowledge, with shame. I do not know how to go on. I cannot go to work and somehow make my way home, calling my husband, desperately hoping that he will be there, will be able to pick me up. He is. He does.

I am flooded with memories from my childhood: the vaginal infections, the visits to the doctor, the treatments, my fear, my pain, my Mother's denial. Worst of all, I remember that I have assaulted my friend's little sister - I am a monster. I remember that she told her mother - my friends knew I was a monster. I remember that they accused me; that I denied it - I could not know it. I remember that they would not play with me for a long time - the monster child. I am in an agony of grief, of rage, of shame. I pour the story out to my husband, sobbing, sobbing. I do not tell him what I have done to that other little girl. Not then. He is shocked by my story and holds me to him; comforting me. He does not yet understand that this is the beginning of his nightmare as well. That Monday I tell my friend that I was sexually abused as a child. My husband still does not know this - I am not yet ready to tell him. It will take another punch in the gut before I will acknowledge my past further.....”

## **Past**

memory chases through,  
and overlaps  
changing present into past

pleasure, pain  
friends and enemies the same,  
the familiar becomes a yesteryear  
yesteryear today, and tomorrow  
much too far away,  
something yearned for  
only passing glimpsed,  
seen shimmering, like  
honeyed droplets of morning dew,  
evaporating, the moment  
memory chases through,  
and overlaps  
changing present into past

## **Body Knowing**

memory is  
stored in the body  
of the soul

it whispers over me  
rustling with gentle  
and ungentle fingertips

touching me in those  
secret places

it is a knowing  
that cannot be spoken  
but is too real to be only  
imagination.

## A Way Out

While my battle with self raged I painted, frantically putting brush to canvas, spewing out the images of the faces that I later would come to understand were my representations of self. *The Lady of the Lake*, the goddess Raven was the first, my guide and saviour. I loved her from the first moment I saw her image, I did not yet understand what she would mean to me. I painted all, but two, each painting named for what they held.

*Grief, for that part of me which holds my adult rage, and therefore is grief. Hidden, for she who hides still, afraid of the world and all in it. The Watcher, for she who stands guard, always alert, trusting no-one. The Secret, for Kore the littlest of us all. The two I did not paint, were already in the world, I did not need to hide them, although I did not yet fully know them. They hold no pain, or grief, or rage. They are joy and laughter. They are safety and protection, light, with no knowledge of the dark. They see it not.*

This was my first introduction to self. I was totally terrified and ran once again, screaming through the labyrinth within; hiding myself from the world without.

Once more Raven put forth her hand, beckoning me to her. I was paralysed, I did not know how to reach her, to take her hand. I was too afraid to take what she offered. To go where she would lead me. I cowered still.

Daily, I was tortured with nightmares, sleep became a stranger to me, the voices in my head screamed louder, shouting all at once. I would not understand them, I did not want to hear what they had to say. Visual images attacked me, intruded into my waking hours, bringing with them feelings, feelings that punched me and brought me to my knees. I knew they were not, could not be mine. Could not because I knew that I had never known such rage, never known such grief, never, never known such pain. I never knew what I had known at all.

I began to sculpt. I sculpted with no prior thought of what I might create, but only as a way to quite the voices, to subdue the images. Out of the clay arose Raven. I worked her, formed her, felt her and at the moment of her completion I knew her. Her peace engulfed me, her beauty soothed me, my fear fled and courage triumphed. Slowly Raven turned the key, and the first door was unlocked before me.

Yet Raven was not the only guide I would need to accomplish my journey. At the same time I was seeking my *inner* helper, so too I sought one who would guide me in the *outside* world. Someone who would watch over me, ground me and keep me safe. This was no easy task. Physician after physician could find no physical cause for my distress, and there they stopped, offering me no other avenues - no hope. As well, I sought sustenance and support within my faith, seeking, digging deep and finally understanding that these faith healers would not help me find my lost soul. They were mired in the abuse of power and betrayal of the most innocent. They did not teach nurturance and care of the soul. They protected those who ravish, those who abuse, those who exploit. I could not turn to them.

Now I was truly in panic, utterly desperate. I turned to the only place left for me, to a place I had rejected in the past in favour of those soul stealers. I went to the places where the outcast went, those whose wounds would not be seen by the society of the faithful. I went to those places that had rejected the unwritten laws of that society, to those who had dared to speak their truths. To the true healers of the unseen wounds, to the women who honoured women's reality as spoken by women, and there I found her, my guide. Her name was "L".

Together we made a pact. She would support me, keep time with me, nurture and protect me and I would keep faith with her and with myself. I would commit to the journey. Raven would keep me safe inside. "L" would travel that journey with me, and keep me safe outside. The way was fully prepared now. The labyrinth lay before me, the first lock undone. The rest was up to me.

I am absolutely clear that the renouncement of my faith, indeed, of all of my early beliefs and all that I had held as truth was *crucial* to my healing. For it was only once I was able to let these beliefs go, to understand the source of their structure, to delve deep into the past and find there not one god but many gods, and I think most importantly to understand that before god, there was a goddess, that I understood. I understood that all that is written, is *written*; that gods are the creation of men and women, just as my many parts are my creation, borne out of a need, and as such sacred to the creator, but not finite. Indeed the purpose of the gods has changed over time, as have our needs. I believe now that god is a projection of our needs and fears, our explanation of our existence, our answer to how and why and where. I also feel that this knowledge does not make the idea of god any less, it only redefines the source of power, so that no longer do I pray for his guidance or support, rather I understand that I do not need to project outward for my strength, but instead look inward. I believe the power and source of my strength is not out there in the form of a god or even a goddess, it is here in me as it is in every living creature. We must simply begin to look for it. For it is only by claiming our own power that we can take responsibility for all our actions, to claim our lives, and so choose with full knowledge to heal our souls.

## Simple Dread

head bowed  
fear presses down  
upon the mind  
a strange and portent  
dread  
abounds  
the choice is mine  
the vision told  
you are the source  
the centre of the whole  
will you seek the joining  
of the thread  
or continue caught  
within the web  
of a life  
of your own creation

the entrance to  
the labyrinth looms  
and beckons you  
to make your choice  
begin the journey  
at long last  
or seal the entrance  
and desert the path  
a decision of  
such simple dread  
whose cowardly thoughts  
convince the seeker  
not to seek  
but turning flee  
ne'er to look back  
upon the creatures  
venturing without  
the labyrinth  
whose entrance looms  
and beckons you  
to make your choice  
a decision of  
such simple  
dread.....

## “Through the Looking Glass”

When I first found out about my other selves, I was deeply afraid. I wanted it not to be true and I wanted them not to be. I felt that if they existed then I didn't. I felt crazy and was sure that if anyone else ever found out they would know how crazy I was. Well, I discovered that I'm not crazy, however, I also discovered that my fears about other people believing me to be crazy were justified. Indeed the fact of my dissociated selves is still a secret I choose to share with very few. In the world most people view me as a well functioning, if sometimes moody individual, who appears to be handling her life well. This is how I intend to keep it. For much as I once wanted everyone in my life to know, I soon found out that it was not safe for me to speak. Suddenly I was not the person they had known and liked for years, suddenly I was a something to be afraid of, to be viewed with suspicion, to watch, to be pitied, and mostly to be avoided. Thus I hide, and my selves with me. It is a great sorrow for us that this is necessary to our continued survival.

At first I felt totally out of control, as though possessed. I wondered around in a state of almost constant panic, never knowing when I might leave and one of my other selves would come to the fore. Every moment of unremembered time became a nightmare of horrific possibilities and at times I viewed myself as the monster, others if they knew, would believe me to be. What was I doing in those unremembered times? Worse still what might I have done in the past - what monstrous deeds were my selves capable of? How I hated my other selves for doing this to me, for putting me through this, for taking my life and ruining it. How I hated myself. How I begged to be released from this nightmare - it could not possibly be my life! My life was good. I was good. No! No! No! I cannot be this way because nothing terrible has every happened to me! Please! Please! Just let me be me!

How hard I tried not to know them. I would not listen to them speak. I would not write to them. They, I was sure wanted to take over my life, they wanted to be in control of me. They wanted me dead. For I surely wanted them dead. I made them other and told those who knew about them all the bad things I had learned about their characters. I would not acknowledge their worth to me, I could not know that it was only through their existence that my survival was ensured. They were terrible and frightening and ruining my life through their control of my mind and body. I knew that they controlled me totally, and I blamed them for everything. How shocked I was when I finally understood that I had created them! This knowledge was at the time devastating. I did not want to know, for in the knowing I would have to take responsibility; I would have to acknowledge all of my parts, as *my* parts and the role I must have played in their creation.

Once again I ran, nearly leaving therapy, but we had all come too far; we were all far too committed and the knowledge once given could not be taken back. I was at the threshold of a wonderful discovery - love and acceptance of self. The beginning of true healing. It took me a long time to allow myself to know and accept them. To see all that they are and all that they have been. *To open my heart to the possibility that they have worth and knowledge that I want, that not only are they parts of me - they are me. That in coming to love all of them, I can finally come to love myself.* With such self knowledge has come a feeling of enormous empowerment, the realization that I did it - I saved myself. If I could do that then, I know that I can heal myself now. If I choose to do so. Now I understand how fortunate I am and have been. For I have discovered the power to heal myself. Now my life is truly mine and no one can ever take that knowledge from me. This is truly something to celebrate! A small taste of joy.

### **Interface**

With naked longing  
upon her face  
trapped between  
a sacred space  
and horror looming  
at the gate  
she gazes at  
her passing fate  
and weeps at  
all that overwhelms  
forever captive  
between the realms.

Yet should she seek  
to free herself  
and reach toward  
that scared wealth  
to make that  
frightening interface  
and live within  
the sacred space  
life waits for her  
to seize the helm  
and ride the wind  
between the realms.

## Gains and Losses

So much time has passed since I wrote the above passages, some three years I think. Unbelievably, we are almost all one now and I find that I no longer experience myself as separate - a state I cannot feel entirely comfortable with. Though there was much that was wrong with my divided self, there was much that was right also - or so it felt to me. There is much that I miss. I miss the passionate conversations; the sense of never being alone; of peace that Raven brought to me - enveloping me in her warmth, calming, soothing me as she moved through me - imbuing me with her wonderful spirit, her strength, her love. Once I felt as though I had a magic lamp and Raven was the magical being who lived inside - my genie of the lamp. I had only to conjure her and she came. She was my secret weapon and her power was my power - healing power, spirit power, my own personal goddess - my guide to the sacred, my own touch of the divine. I know that Raven is with me still, she will always be, but I no longer experience that delicious moment of connection - I do not understand why. I am alone now as I have never been alone - it is a daunting and even frightening prospect. I wanted so much to shed my feelings of madness, but sanity - in other words, integration - comes with a price. I do not miss the chaos and fear, but oh how I would love to recapture the magic, for it is hard to comfort oneself when one can no longer feel the arms of the one who comforts; or hear the voice of the one whose wisdom guides. How will I know now that my path is true? I have only Raven's poem to remind me - it comforts me.

### *Raven's Flight*

Black beauty  
soar,  
wings beat,  
a silent  
almost  
streak,  
across the midnight sky  
unto  
the moon and back.

Raven calls.

A trail of twilight, starlight  
dust,  
shimmering  
into the netherworld  
betwixt  
the psyche  
and the soul,  
rarely glimpsed  
seldom seen  
the secret inner workings  
of  
the dreamer's dream.

Night owls screech.  
Wings  
rise  
in full sweep,  
the spiral dance  
t's Raven's feat,  
oh sweet seduction  
unbidden,  
on the wind  
floating feathers  
through thick  
night air.

Raven calls, and  
Night owls screech.

Dark shadow cast  
ever to the earth  
and whispers  
through  
the dreamer's dream

come to me  
my love, come to me

## **Disinherited**

I know you  
your wounds pierce  
my soul  
cries out against  
such clarity of vision  
cannot be borne  
must be endured  
until

you know too  
your wounds pierce  
your soul  
cries out against  
such clarity of vision  
cannot be borne  
must be endured  
until

we pass the threshold  
beyond all endurance  
and only then will we be free  
to bathe in the fire  
and walk out  
cleansed,

and I will help you brush the ashes from the door.

## **Found Treasure and Gifts.....**

I came to know, accept, love and embrace all my dissociated parts. My journey was long, too long, the dangers many, the losses enormous. My grief, I felt at times, would destroy me, yet I went on, and in the darkness I found the most wonderful treasure - I found myself. The other day I was speaking with an elderly gentleman, a gentleman who lives outside of society's graces and society's vices. An individual whose inner beauty shines forth from his face, whose gentleness, compassion and complete acceptance of the gifts that we are all given, compelled me to confide to him my creation of Raven, and my feelings of loss for that connection, now that I no longer experience myself as divided. He looked at me and said.....but she is you, for when I look at you I see a being just as wondrous and beautiful as the one you have described.....It was perhaps the most beautiful gift that anyone has ever given me.....

*First we dive, then we soar.  
Safe journey to you all!*