

## Freightless

By Antonia Parkes

I sense her hesitation; like the weight of a thousand missed opportunities pooling together just below consciousness sucking her life out, guzzling her breath. Her desperation, wanting to cross the void, longing but stuck like my mothers soles to the linoleum of my childhood kitchens. A paralysis that has spanned the generations of lives unlived, passions extinguished, opportunities missed, the ground itself sucking at the soles of our feet.

I know that place, wanted to reach out and pull her free, give her wings. I recognized her in so many faces and myself. Faces I have held and kissed and many barely caught in a crowd, across a room, on a bus. So I reached out and offered my hand to her and she took it, leaned into it. I nodded, closed my eyes and stood together in understanding as the image of her locked inside her darkness unfolded. A small, fragile frame shadowed by a monolith blocking out the sun.

Life can be so unkind. What is it that measures out circumstances to us like freight trains that we never see coming, have no chance to avoid and are left with the aftermath of shattered, fragmented lives with missing pieces we may never find? Where is the intervention? The protective hand, the red flag, warning bells, sirens, whistles, flashing lights, thunder clap, just a little poke?

I had to tell her to hold onto this moment of pure intention, to find a way to let it go, that she didn't need to carry it, could lay it down right here in this perfect undefiled moment.

We are the dreamers without magic coats, creating realities within these precious, endangered moments, no tricks. I hold a child's hand in this moment and dream of a life for her with no walls, no cracks, a return of her whole self unburdened by fear and indecision. A life worth living, a way forward.

Eyes shut tight holding her hand, willing her through, with such integrity of desire it burns inside. The fire and shadows of our past lives surround and attempt to overwhelm and consume our resolve. We hold onto each other and collectively grieve for our losses in an ocean of tears. We emerge weightless and buoyant as sea-cows. I feel for her small hand, the warmth of it and am undisturbed as my hand comes up empty. She has slipped through, a fledgling, no longer

caught in the gaping crack between inertia and living. Fly away little one and may life roll you, lull you and nourish you.

There is magic here in this moment of letting go and I look up as a freight train passes over me. I feel its power, its energy and find a lone eagle gliding in my sky of perfect blueness. I endure the temptation to cling, to clutch, to hold on and feel the weight of it pass through me and I am still standing, not empty, not longing, but filled to overflowing with the most purest joy. I am entirely, molecularly engaged, allowing it to seep into my bones. I also have come through and turn towards home with much less of me to carry. I am stronger and surefooted as I take the path through the sand dunes and with abandon kick off my shoes and dive into them and roll, run and laugh out loud at life until I am utterly exhausted. I continue home giggling like a child and sleep profoundly with sand still between my toes.

I wake to the most utterly beautiful day of my life and realize my fragmented and split self has gathered and woven a rich and glorious tapestry that is my story. I am at peace with my world and am grateful for it all. All of the pieces that make the whole. I wipe the sand from my eyes and remember the magic. I go to my desk, pick up my pen and begin to write and see my hand holding my pen young and soft again, unscarred and unburdened and realize that the hand I held was my own, the young girl that I held and cried with was me, free of her burden of emptiness. Clinging to people, places and possessions desperately, to fill the void, fill the cracks in her being and all along she alone held the key and remembered her absolute desire to be in this place. It is what she always desired and we are what we desire most, are we not? Authentic living, a life worth living, worthy of living. That is my wish for all who breathe, it is our ultimate inheritance, for ourselves, our children, our planet. I will live my life in the light of each day and let each day go. As surely as the sun comes and goes may this be the rhythm of my life, the dance. May it come and go, unburdened and unstuck. May the night also come and go and all the shades of gray in between.

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