



how many times have i sat by this river?

a collection of connections

By Prahas David Nafissian and
“Julie”

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First Edition

Designer: PDN

Introduction

Julie (every name changed save my own) and I attended a personal growth workshop in 1993. We bonded. Afterwards, we had dinner together -- a beautiful, melting connection. What follows is a compilation of letters we exchanged after meeting, edited for public consumption.

When I asked my beloved friend if I could post the writings, she replied, "Please share in any way your like. Pinned to trees and swaying in the wind like prayer flags would be my suggestion..."

Pinned to trees and swaying in the wind,
like prayer flags.

This is how Rumi transports us. How Rilke dances with language.

I am blessed to have encountered this magnificent woman.

Enjoy the results of our outpourings!

The Letters

August 2nd, 1993

I am breathing the mist from the falls,
falling into your presence

(pre-sense)

I feel the Love of a Perfect Interaction lingering
lingering....

more to follow....

david.

August 2nd

Julie,

My head is holding it all right now. Now that that is said, it's moving -- thank god, to my liver region, my right shoulder... I don't have to hold it all. It's not my job to hold it all.

I just came from a meeting with Paul, the facilitator of my improv workshop. He wants to work with me on my one man show; on his production of a greek myth; on who knows?

On the way out, he stopped the fucking around, and was straight -- dead straight -- piercingly, lovingly straight, and said "I can make an awesome performer out of you. I am a brilliant fucking director." After fourteen of the most exhilarating hours in recent memory, after watching him work, and watching ME work, I think he may be right on both counts!

Just saying that brings up so much -- I'm being conceited; my critic, donning mother's voice, swiftly puts me down (you can't be a performer); fear -- fear of success -- of putting all of me out there.....

Ultimately, what it comes down to is: what do I want?

Do I want to be molded into an awesome performer? To what end?

I also had a conversation with my friend and ally at the State Department of Education. He wants me to present at a conference at the end of August. Do I want to be molded into an education reformer?

I who? Who is this I? I know this "I" to be a Council of Voices. And by what procedure does the Council act?

The council sits around a round table, haggling, negotiating, nit picking, discussing pros and cons, but in my new Parliamentary Rules the Council does not have Decree Power. That is to say, it cannot move the Being that is I into action.

What is required for action to emerge from the negotiation is a clear bolt of light from Spirit, channeled through Soul, to pierce straight down from the Heavens and illuminate the Council Round Table:

I can see it clearly -- the light, mostly white, with lavender and gold and green glitter, forms a wide soft powerful beam of light. I can't see where it starts from -- my Higher Mind (the facilitator of the Council) is unable to look above its eye level (the council sits below Higher Mind) -- but I do see the beam fully illuminate the table -- the spill from the piercing light bathing the Voices in magnificent glory.

Where I get lost is translating this beam into worldly knowing. Which project do I commit to? What is my soul's work? I'm still stuck on this idea that there is a right action. That Step A brings me closer to my path, and Step B pulls me away.

But today I had a glimpse of another image. Whatever step I take is the step I need to take. If I choose A or B than I must have needed A or B to burn some karma off the inside of my plumbing so that the water can flow more fully.

But back to the question at hand. Why say no to any project which brings in the light? Fear. Stamp it out. Say yes.

I think of you -- my mirror -- my comrade in arms, fellow disciple, teacher and learner -- we have much to give each other -- I hope we find many and varied ways to do so.

Signed with a loving power radiating out from my guts,

--David

August 3rd

David,

Greetings from my head and heart.

Thank you for the letter and the call. It felt good to feel you on the other end of the line. I did not need to say much, just the connection was calming - warming.

I ended up not being able to sleep last night. The moon had too much to say, and I was too preoccupied to listen.

Your letter explains my own preoccupation. What next, and what for? It is funny how this question, coming from my mouth, seems to surprise so many. People tend to look at me as if I am one of those rare individuals that were somehow born into a known destiny. That my path is clearly drawn. And while this might be true, I often feel I am traveling it without the aid of my traditional senses. In fact, when I try to use them, they inevitably fail me.

My challenge lately is to listen more fully to the moon, to the still quite voices of my intuition, and artfully twisted ones of my dreams. Their guidance is always rewarding -- in the long run.

Today it is trust I need. I seem to be abandoning all that I have worked for and achieved over the last 8 years. My gut is tired of the old. It promises to rebel if I push myself into some intellectually clean and infinitely bland corner again. My spirit is not meant to tolerate blandness. It is not meant to communicate only through the waves of intellect and ration. It is not meant to repress my passion, my vision, my anger, my love. My spirit is meant to express these things in LIVING COLOR, for others to feel deep in their groin. My spirit is meant to awaken the flame of life and, like a serpent, push it through the pyramid of our being.

Next question - like yours - HOW?

I have notions, but only notions. With the notions, I have fear. Damn the fear. Yet, lets see, yes it is here. Hello. A fear that actually, when you come right down to it, I am nuts. A talented woman driven to follow ghosts. This is what my family would say. They see me as one with a destiny. (Do all parents do this to children?) For them, I will change the world. The route, however, is clearly attached to my previous role in society - a teacher, mentor, lecturer, facilitator. They like these roles because they can imagine them, and because they made me financially "successful."

Now, I stand at a gate, and I say, no. No more of this stuff. If you want me to work with you expect the absolutely unexpected. Expect to sing and dance, to act, to play. Expect to be stirred, deeply. Expect me to laugh at your intellect and make love to your passion. I do not think this will sell.

My gate has a sign posted on it: do not look back, move forward, do not open your eyes, feel your way into this garden. Do not smell the flowers, listen to them, do not taste the fruit, sleep with it, do not till the soil, plant your body deep within it.

I do not know where this leads. I do not know where I go. I wish I had someone to say -- I will be your mentor -- I will shape you. This seems a comfort. Instead people just say - your powerful, your lucky, your a gift, but I do not know what they see that I do not.

I need a river to walk along. I stand alone in a desert. I feel raw, lonely, and highly vulnerable. I feel, earthy, tribal, capable of changing tides. How can I feel both, how do I choose my next step?

Then there is you. Yes, my mirror.....What do you see today?

Can you feel me? I send you my love...julie

August 3rd

I can't absorb the love

don't stop

I can't absorb the power behind the love,
the blinding force of your passion
not much dampened by translations:
spirit to
soul to
thought-form to
not-yet-uttered language finally to
electronically-transmitted text.

I can't absorb It so It spills out all
over me -- sometimes warming me like
sun-drenched honey,

other times scorching me as the Sun
singed Icarus' wings,

and then I gather it, for a moment, into
my belly, and the sun pulses within.

"And while this might be true, I often feel I am traveling it without the aid of my traditional senses. In fact, when I try to use them, they inevitably fail me."

Yes, and

they not only fail but obstruct, obscure, confuse, and now it seems my senses misused can lead to great internal harm....it feels literally DANGEROUS to lose control of ego mind, Mr.

Child, and the five senses. (I lumped thinking into the basket of senses you offered.)

"My challenge lately is to listen more fully to the moon, to the still quite voices of my intuition, and artfully twisted ones of my dreams."

This is beautiful, Julie.

The moon was full here too Monday. I am so over-exposed; over-open to the spirit world -- I am working to create and maintain a white cloak of peaceful defense draped around my pyramid.

So the moonbeams in the darkness bring to me a mixture of seductive transfixation and fear of the unknown spirits which may choose to ride the moonbeams into my naive, unsuspecting soul.

I am so wounded, which is to say I have so many openings for the Wedges of Darkness to penetrate, wreak havoc.

Your statement of your need to abandon the intellect, the rational, and to bring singing and passion into your interactions (work and otherwise) is stunningly eloquent, and right on.

Julie -- it must be done. A playwright wrote in a newsletter, "There's a dragon in my gut that roars when it doesn't have an outlet. So I write scripts. But this does not satisfy the dragon. No. I must work with others in sculpting what I write so that scripts transform into plays. But the dragon always wants more....."

It is truly insatiable. I have written music, lyrics, scripts... I have directed, and music directed, and fund raised, and advertised. I have been interviewed by AP and NPR; I have received bomb threats. I have facilitated Act III, when angry Jews reacted to angry Arabs reacting to our words and images and sounds.

And still it does not sleep. No -- it only grows stronger, threatens to consume me. And funnier (crazier? NO!) funnier still is that I want to be consumed by him/her.

Coleman Barks and John Moyne write about Rumi: "When the approaching presence calls out, he says, the first word spoken will coincide exactly with the last word of his last poem. For Rumi, poetry is what he does in the meantime, a song-and-dance until the greater reality he loves arrives: A melting tear-gift eye-piece to look through, while it and the scene and the eye dissolve."

Yes, and

then what? We've done the monk-thing, Julie. It is not for me to retreat from the world and make love with Dionysus all day. No -- I was born into the late 1900s -- I chose a family who educated me, nurtured in me worldly ambition and skill, provides for me a network of influential people....no, I cannot run off to a rural commune much as parts of me would like it. It would be running from my deeply personal unseen calling.

No -- I am to be fully who I am *in the world.* I am to create, no doubt, but perhaps for my psycho-spiritual growth only -- I may not need to go public with it. Then again I may.

I am to be consumed, and then I am to impersonate, go under cover as it were, to effect change. The Buddha would not leave until all were enlightened.....he needed to survive in a world hostile to his teachings, as do you and I. We need our cloaks, our disguises, our worldly power bases and financial stashes.

AND

we must never forget the dragon -- we must cultivate our ability to hear the "still quiet voices."

I must too open further to absorb the passion....this means burning the crud off of the inside of the tube -- so that the passion may flow more fully through me....

I love. I feel love. The burning. Mmmmmmm.....

I cannot resist Us, Julie. The work piles up around me, and still I am driven by That Which Unites Us to continue the outpouring.....

But I've given a voice to He Who Is Responsible, and he has leveraged it into a strong minority position within the Council. I feel myself as Facilitator being swayed away from Rumi, and the dragon, and your deep deep eyes....

With Mr. Child adding his "take care of me" fear-based vote, I find the Council moving toward resolution.

This outpouring is hereby closed.

(For now. The filibuster is planned.....)

--David

August 4th

how many times have i sat by this river?
who was i then?

a mother
a child
a lover
a friend?

how many times have i looked into those eyes
and seen my world reflected?
a knowing beyond mind
a relating beyond blood
a loving beyond grasp

there is little i know

only this:
we have something to learn from each other.

If we do not learn it this time -- it will come around again.

I am not here to overwhelm you, only to reflect you.
To give you a picture of yourself that you can trust,
one you can bring to your council, one you can love
and grow with. That is all.

In the big picture, now or later may not matter.
Perhaps now has been enough. The dragon will always be there
and so will I.

...julie

August 9th

David,

The phone...wonderful but tormenting. So much is lost. Smiles, eyes, touch.

We must master the art of telepathy -- I would love to visit you while I sleep -- unencumbered by physical reality we could fly high over the mountains, the oceans, the rivers of our lives and move beyond the realms of remembrance to the world of knowing.

Yes?

Such a shame the message in my previous letter was not adeptly conveyed. Look deep into the words. Yes, they are cumbersome tools, but like crystals can refract light into many different directions depending on the time of day, and the direction of perception.

My sleep was not deep. I thought of you quite a lot. Saw you and I as spiritual guides for one another, pressing for truth, and the raw quality of honest intimacy.

I am off to the red-woods. I love to breath in the rich moisture of those deep woods. It stills me. Have a good week with Dionysus.

With the spirit of life and love,

julie

August 10th

Julie,

Yes my old, old friend: I will meet you over Portland, at 50,000 feet, high above the Boeing air-lanes! (Oh, to have achieved such mastery!) Look -- even my imagination is still so limited -- can I not imagine spiraling through the heavens, among the stars, playing between planets?

Enjoy the redwoods, their soft wisdom and fragrant breath.

--David

August 14th

A friend is dying. He has used up all his energy
and now is on morphine, and oxygen.
I do not know if he will be with us tomorrow.

We wait.

What are these passings?

I sat beneath the red woods. Ancient women, with craggy faces telling me stories about life, and death, and life again.

I watched the waves on the ocean, each lifting itself from the mass of water to, for just a moment, shine in the sun.

I watched the meteor shower.

The fog lifted from the sky revealing pieces of light falling through infinity,
- sparking magic, and a lost instinct for wonder.

Oxygen tents, IV's, a sterile hospital room.

I would take my friend to the redwoods. I would lay his head on my lap, I would stroke his tuffs of hair, and I would let him pass.

Just like the trees, just like the waves, just like the stars.

You have been in my thoughts, like a beautiful piece of music that moves me through difficult waters. I will write more later, David.

I hope you saw the falling stars,

Julie

August 17th

Julie,

Your friend, perhaps, has fulfilled his soul's work this time around....perhaps, he is preparing for a wonderful stretch of the journey: a time to gather wisdom from his earthly experience, integrate, rejuvenate, and then create for himself a new human condition, to gain more experience, and move closer to his full potential....

All this for your spirit and his....

In another realm my heart sinks when I empathize with his pain, and yours. I send you human warmth and strength.

Reading your words (pointers to dancing devas), while listening to Stravinsky's Divertimento for violin and piano was bliss beyond duality: not joyous nor yearning, just energy engulfing my being.

I did see falling stars, streaking across the sky, leaving trails of greenish white which lived longer than I might have expected. The tide approached our feet, waves providing gentle underscoring.

My heart is full with you...

--David

August 20th

I woke to thunder and lightning. Rare gift around here.
I went outside. The trees were bending with the wind.
The wind chimes clattered. And the sky rumbled.

I miss storms. Miss them like someone from the west might miss
mountains if they were to move to Illinois.

Storms are the midwest's mountains.

But I stay here. Sometimes I do not know why. I think perhaps it is the gray.

Tomorrow I say good bye to my friend. Your words, and energy
are in my heart. I feel blessed by them, and you.

With wind, and thunder, and rain, and the sweet smell of soil in the morning,

love, julie

August 21st

Julie,

A quick note:

Blessings to you and your friend.

I miss you, and in a way I can't explain, I feel more distant from you. For what it's worth...

I keep you in my heart, and thoughts.

--David

August 24th

You know, of course, that I am hiding. Hiding from the storms,
hiding from the daybreak,
hiding from myself, hiding from you.

I do this because of fear.

I love to watch storms, to play in them even.
To run outside while lightning stabs the ground,
while the wind wraps its invisible threads
around every living thing and pulls.
While the rain pelts, and drenches, and floods.
But this raucous, childlike, fervent, and passionate play
can be dangerous. One day a bough may fall.

And you.

I would love to see you -- love to spend hours talking with you
and watching your face turn into mine.
You do not know how much I thought of you, how still you occupy so much of me.

All I have is my will, and I bend it to form a
fortress around my life, protecting me from falling boughs

Do you see?

A friend of mine has birds. Small birds in cages.
They are colorful, and they sing from the first sun to the last.

Occasionally these birds escape their cage, and fly around the house,
darting from place to place like prisms of light reflected off a crystal.
Once a few of them even made it outside.
All this comes at great risk, of course.
There are the walls, the windows, the cat.
Most often, though, the birds are simply caught and put back in their cage.

I do not know this, but I would venture to guess that those particular birds,
after tasting life outside the cage,
never do sing again.

This summer I tasted life outside the ordinary.
Taking my chances I let myself experience the earthy texture of life,
unencumbered by fears and cages.
In that world, anything was possible.

But I am home now, and
I find myself surrounded by walls that no longer seem to
serve any purpose. And, more importantly, I find
I am not singing as much any more. Instead,
I spend my time trying to figure out how to
dismantle the walls.

I am intolerant of pastels and sweet dreams, fragrant
letters and pithy sayings. Intolerant of hugs that have no heat,
and friendships that have no meat.
And stifled with conversations that beat to the methodical
rhythm of the obvious, the visible, the deliberate, and the planned.

The work world you say you are happy I've created is a torment to me. More of the old. More of the shell. More hiding me from me.

I hunger for the extraordinary. And I realize that will only come through the full expression of my being.

I thought I had an extraordinary life:
excitement, challenge, freedom, etc.
Now I see I am just beginning -- again.

My hunger is deep. It will not be satisfied.
It asks me to find a new way to do things. To dismantle the walls.
It scares the hell out of me.

I dream a different life.
In this life I dance with a tenderness and fury that transcends fear.
In this life I learn to express myself, and through expression pave roads of communication and understanding.
In this life I am surrounded by music, art,
and the most sublime learning's of science.
In this life I can drink the clear water of intellect,
and still watch a heaven of mysteries reflect in the eyes of my friends.

In this life, I can spend more time with a friend named David.

You speak of dragons, and councils, and tubes that need clearing.
I speak of hunger, and cages, and fortresses that need buffeting or blasting.

Perhaps we will help each other understand these things...

blessings and love,

~~julie

August 27th

Here I sit, in a royal blue seat,
thirty thousand feet
above your beloved waves.

The boundaries are so thin,
so changeable.

Fear, fear. I search my databanks and come up with:

Fear is the pain before the wound.

Fear is the opposite of, the antithesis of, Love.

Fear is what clogs the tubes I speak of.... :-)

Upon perceiving the first glimpses of fear, one must STAMP IT OUT.

Shoot first, ask questions (if you must) later.

Fear is an alarm clock.

When the alarm sounds, TURN OFF THE CLOCK.

Then stay aware, alert, look around, see what might bring you "real" harm.

Have I crossed from sharing into preaching yet? Perhaps....

I honor your fear. I honor your courage in sharing it...

I used to think that by shielding my eyes, I was invisible, and therefore safe.

Will your cloak woven of will protect you?
What does your Aikido training tell you?

I believe that the Universe does not present us with challenges which, when accepted from a place of inner alignment, we cannot meet gracefully and successfully.

The powers that we are playing with are so awesome! I work so hard to "clear the channel" so that the "light" can flow freely, and yet when I have experienced moments of relative "clear-ness" I have been completely awestruck by the power that surges through me. Surely my system will overload, ego thinks -- surely I will vaporize in a puff of steam, sweetly smelling of charred flesh.

And yet it seems we are built with natural inhibitors -- if we approach the power with humility and an open heart, our nature will not allow us to self destruct.

All this to say, open to the storms until the ecstasy overwhelms you -- then rest, withdraw, nourish yourself, and prepare for the next flow, ebb, and flow, ebb and flow...

If you need to withdraw for a time, do so. If you need to slow down the pace a bit, so be it. Honor the scared parts -- they are part of you, and me.

I'm feeling preachy today -- I don't like that much...

You talk of the risk to freed birds.

I don't see it that way. The bird simply experiences a shift in context, in boundaries, and the accompanying feelings of disorientation -- whoa -- the world is bigger, more lush and unknown than I thought!

Yes, there is risk -- life is a risk. Certainly self-imposed imprisonment carries risk as well, in the karmic context.

Perhaps my unrelenting zeal comes from my afterglow of a talk I gave last night, and the accompanying strokes I got. Perhaps it comes from my strong urge to not lose a playmate of such extraordinary intelligence, wisdom, heart, power, and beauty.

I share your impatience with lackluster hugs, et al. The best I can do, it seems, is to become a subtle teacher in those moments...in Aikido, working with beginners can be a drag when I am in a spurt of learning....but often I can find great joy in watching my new partner see a piece of the truth, and too I can learn as much if not more....We are at once teachers and learners.

The hunger will not recede....like the plant in the Little Shop of Horrors, it will only grow ("feed me, Seymour!").

If we do not feed it, it will eventually consume us. Which is the better outcome?

What also seems true is that the life transitions cannot happen over night. We must subsist. We must honor all forms of existing relationships, commitments. It takes time to realign the outer manifestations with the inner knowing, particularly as the inner knowing shifts so rapidly....

Patience is a virtue I struggle greatly with...

Your statement of your dream life is at once eloquent and stunningly beautiful. You are a writer, Julie, a brilliant, passionate, heart-full weaver of words, a poet.

I feel honored to know you and to share with you.

--David

September 7th

A clear light strikes the empty space of time and pre-memory -
calling...

More than melody, more than song, more than the
sweet sound of morning drawing her first breath.

More than the arch and ache of the mother giving birth to yet another
cinder of ash.

More...

There is an anatomical relation
and recognition that occurs.
And the deeper, unknown, and unexplored stirs saying
know me -- i am you.

I know your words,
hear your questions,
feel the narrow planks you walk,
see the clouds that envelop your island,
and know the glowing light that shines through
the window of your eyes.

You are both child and sage -- walking a single path
through an infinite retinue of symbols and dreams.
Trying to sort, to make sense, to carve, to live.
To make the many into one,
the one into all.

Fear is my devil friend. A measure of my own
lack of will.
It is the knower and the seer.
It is the blind, deaf, and dumb.
We embrace. We war.
I have been called fearless.
This is not truth. In truth I dance,
capitulating one emotion for another,
circling the ember of soul -- the potential of life.

Courage is the pause in the dance.
When feet stop moving,
and eyes stop wavering,
and I become locked in a gaze
that penetrates all camouflage, and shields, and fear.

Your words gave me pause.

We walk a sacred path.
And we have walked it before.
When atoms talk you listen, or you die.

These notes we share have unhinged a door to a recollection that is
vibrational, and not translational.

I look forward to time spent in your presence.
I look forward to the laughter, and the energy.

For you, I will be here..always and again.

julie

September 7th

This morning I am shrouded by a not-so-heavy
yet somewhat impenetrable doubt,
leaving me feeling unable to create new words,
new dances.

"In truth I dance,
capitulating one emotion for another,
circling the ember of soul -- the potential of life."

Yes -- yes.

Why do I feel prissy when you say you know my words?

"You don't know my words," He squeaks, indignant and feeling five years old. Ah, the need to feel superior rears its gruesome, hard-to-love face.

It feels like too much time has passed between letters -- no pressure, Julie, I know you juggle many balls -- I'm just sharing a feeling.

And more -- you write you will be there for me, always and again.

Beautiful words, both true and false.

True at the soul level.

False elsewhere, and elsewhere is thick around issues of being there and leaving.

The sentiment almost didn't penetrate.
Read once, it bounced off my shield with nary a dent,
read again it pierced, forcing me to
turn away, with a grimacing, devilish grin,
painful almost, energy burning up the sides of my face,

but I know now that this sensation means look again,
so I did,
"For you, I will be here..always and again."
and finally I felt the beauty, the truth, the Love.

There is more, so much more, but the linking technology is wrong. I need the old-fashioned in-room link.

I need to touch you, to feel your presence, to gaze
into your eyes, your eyes which radiate bits of information
faster than the fastest supercomputer (a techno-geek love poem!)

So I end this note, feeling terribly un-sated, longing for
your beingness.

I read of Rumi and Shams, two mystics in love, dancing, and
I think of you, my mirror, mySelf, my partner....

--David

September 9th

david..

it is dawn.....a thousand years ago
or two. For in either we would find the same thing:
morning, again, waking to daylight.
We rise, stretch, walk to a piano and begin to
ascend and descend the white ivory as deftly as gazelles leap,
or lilies lie, serenely on the waters edge.

And we wait,

and while wait dream.
And while dream notice the smell of the air
as it wafts its way through the parlor
and into the hallways.

Smells of sea air - and fresh salt - and eroding rock.
Smells of driftwood drying and shell fish decaying with coral and kelp.
Smell of a storm on the sea, riding west of Morning's blue sky.
Smell of the yellow sun and emerald water.

And we notice the texture of the glass,
that separates us from the trees, and the texture of the clouds beyond.
And we note the assortment of rocks that make up the walls,
and the mortar that lies between.

Our senses become an acute receptor to the sequences of life around us,
and all the while we are carried like a leaf
on a breeze that is blowing nowhere.

Heavy today. Heavy with things to do, places to be, expectations of the
matter of fact. Heavy with thoughts of you.

"impenetrable doubt"

I too doubt, and in doubt -- destroy. Can a leaf doubt? A branch, a twig?
Can a squirrel, nibbling on one nut,
doubt that there will be any more?
Can a seed from a giant sequoia look up and doubt that
it will ever reach such heights?
If not, they are blessed...They are free...

What is it we speak of here? What is your doubt?
What is your unseatedness, what is this thickness that
calls my feelings false? What is this courage to look deeper and
find meaning that does not quake the devil?

I do not speak sentiment. I speak roots, I speak memories, not yet recalled.
I speak of blackberries pressed hard against the flesh until
the skin is stained - and blood pales against its richness.

You understand these things, because you have learned them over and over again.

We have learned much together. Much over time.
This time is not different.

Yet, I falter in the face of such knowledge.
I falter, and doubt, and destroy.

I try to remember the lessons of the breeze.
Who knows where it is going?
Whose hair will it touch?
Whose tears will it wipe?
Whose limbs will it caress?

My unseatedness comes from desire and fear. Partners in
an obtuse war of the mind.

"You don't know my words."

Your words are wider than you. That is all. Like my face,
blending into yours. Wasn't it you that said "the boundaries are so thin."
Like the shadows beneath a summer dress -- your words are familiar yet,
suggestive, compelling...

Often, they shake me. I read them again, and again, and then again...
Should I be embarrassed to say this?

I don't give a damn..

Some things ride tides that run deeper than we know.

julie

September 16th

(whispered)

Imagine my excitement,

as I flip through the
hum drum envelopes,
a bill,
a statement,

what's this? The color so rich,
the writing so familiar,
Denver?

And the un-identified whiff of you becomes stronger,
the excitement becomes physical --
gentle, sparkling rivulets of zap,
defying the laws of gravity,
moving up from my center,
tickling....

Ah, Rumi.
Ah, the fine, fine particles of your hand,
your being,
dusting the page like
mist on a leaf....

And so unexpected.
"Out of touch" becomes a lie unearthed,
as opposed to simply a lie
lying dormant in my memory,
carelessly read into your last communication.

For can we two (or any of us) be out of touch,
or only out of sight. Out of mind. Out of reach
of the underdeveloped memory tools we use to
reinforce the thick walls which occlude us
from the Real.

The brief searing pain,
experienced upon reading that my doubt
damaged you by finding your feelings false....

Yes, the doubt destroys. The doubt is
the charred remnants of destruction of eons past.
The doubt obstructs the Real --
the Real, not about to cease its noble flowing
on account of specks of dust in its path,
rushes forth.....

To my Little One, the meeting of The Rapids of Fire
with dust-sized pebbles creates friction,
burning,
pain or pleasure....
when parsed as pain, it becomes
fear, doubt, running,
the thoughts start up again,
do this, do that, hum this, write that,

all an escape from the meeting of dust
with the Root,
the Rapids.....

Stay in me. Stay in the cleansing fire. Stay.
The flames are followed by a misty meadow --
a clearing -- cooled by whispering mist.

Where the Real roams free, and known, and not alone.

--David

September 16th

david..

I sat on a hill and watched a herd of Semitar Horned Antelope
run through the grass, hide in the trees.
The sun was setting, a storm was coming.
They say that the Texas hill country closely resembles the African "bush."
Maybe one day, I will know.

Things went very well in Texas. I was able to move within a more sacred flow, channeling
a more open and loving energy. It is powerful stuff.

I will call you when I return from my wanderings.

I love autumn - the folding and closing of life, the quiet clarity of unsung dreams. It seems
such a poetic closing.

I hold you in me, my friend

.julie

September 21st

Julie,

Here is a curt, business-like note.

Thanks for the news of your travels. Great to hear you are learning to hold the bubble of energy as you move through the world! As I struggle with this, it gives me a boost to know it is actually possible!

I look forward to your call.

With the warmth of a thousand suns beneath the clipped exterior,

--David

September 23rd

the maple leaves are beginning to turn in Vermont.
the state's soul suggests it can provide a quieter life:
the snow, the winding roads, the long nights with the Northern Lights.

Others also ask me to consider moving there.
To try my hand at living the dream with them.
They are good people - people committed to community - their children,
the earth...but are they people who will join me in the other journeys?
Join me as I open to the Flowing, the Everlasting, the Unknown, and Precious?

Are they people who will challenge me to blast my fears, and open to the Real?

I weigh the possibilities. Problem is, the measures are so unstable.
Fluctuating with different winds, different whims.

The earth turns.
I learn from each place I put my feet, each person I touch,
and each cloud that sails over,
blotting the thin etching of life.

Each place could be home.
The Prairie, the Mountains, the Ocean, the Rivers,
living among mangroves, or the endless sands and dunes of the Sahel.
I sit on the land and a palpable energy shoots up my spine,
welcoming, calming, thanking, loving, and always, always, beckoning...stay....

The Real calls from all directions, all dimensions.
It shoots through my small shell, and unfolds flowers of a
million colors straight out the crown of my being.

Stay.... I hear it in the wind.
Come.... I hear it in the Rivers.
Give....Unfold....Fly...Burn....
Burn cool. Burn Hot.
Selah -- Burn Deep.
Always welcome the pain..the pleasure..
the ecstasy that tastes like nothing
but the stars...

You are in those oceans -- rivers -- and skies.....
Your voice sales in the wind.
Shaping dunes, and rippling the face of the most calm waters.....

Familiar and ever present.

julie

September 29th

David,

waking again...
another Morning---brighter eyed then ever life was.
Morning so absorbing -- we run together to the pond
and throw ourselves in.
And laugh, and scream, and shake out hands in the air, and laugh again.
The dogs have chased us to the water's edge, and play and bark on the shore.
A few dive higgly wiggly into the water.
And all our eyes are opened as wide as they can
trying to see all the new colors.
And all our eyes are squinted in laughter
And Morning dives to the bottom of the black ink pool
and comes back up again -- immediately -- with a
yellow finch on his ear
-- a gift --

Gifts.....
Yes, what we share is a gift.
A door, an opening to world's of pure magic.

I wake...dress...and go outside to visit Ivan and Igor.
They run up to me.
I go into the barn and grab some Sheep gorp: a mixture of oat, barley, rye, and molasses.

Igor eats out of my hand, Ivan just watches.
Later, we sit together and watch the sun rise.

Yesterday, I sat in the pasture and read Tolstoy to them.
They seemed to like it.

I will not be going to India in November.

I had a thought regarding our having some time to play. How about meeting for one day half way between us...

I keep you in my heart my friend, in peace...julie

September 30th

Julie,

Excuse my lack of writing but I've been crazy.

I just heard about the earthquake in India -- on top of my general concern, I am concerned you have family in the affected area. Please do tell... Why are you not going in November?

Things are bubbling here -- looks like some of my music will be performed at a benefit in mid-November.

Meeting half way sounds like a good idea...

My thoughts and spirit are with you, my mirror.

--David

October 11th

There is a single space between the edges of the circle. And in this place the All exists. To step in is to fall,
to step in is to fall...

to step in is to fall
and never land.

deserts haunt my dreams.
dunes, and dune grass that rustle in the dry wind,
carving circles, upon circles...

there are snakes
and scorpions
and cool dark caves.
and all are my friends
and all are my demons
and all are my food and shelter and warmth.

and in this place
water is the color of blood
and blood the color of opals
and they pour from my hand
and cover the ground
dreams more real than Life
Life more surreal than dreams

Why am I not going to india?....i do not know.
the wind has not yet spoken Whys...

Why is the earth shifting under the feet of so many?
Why are there so many tears...
so many grains of sand in the desert
waiting for the wind?

Why can't we embrace and stir
the knowing that is All?

a breeze that lifts your hair in the morning....holds your scent
carries it far...

i celebrate you, sing songs to the wind,
and carry your friendship, like a smooth stone, deep in my pocket.

julie

October 18th

Julie,

Something feels shut down.

Now my throat feels as if a boa constrictor is visiting.

That passes.

My swings in emotion/feeling/energy/motivation/awareness are more and more extreme --
violent, at times.

As the energy rises up from my "hara", wide as a young tree trunk, I feel as strong and solid
as Paul Bunyon....

My therapist/mentor gives me a wonderful meditation to create a context for what is coming through me.....the power is so full, so strong, it feels like I can hold it forever, not hold it, but channel it through me, and out my heart, and into the silver sphere that is my soul body; it feels endless....

And then I wake one morning in a fog, confused, dizzy, with dark, greenish circles under my eyes....

"What? What?"

The fog doesn't pass -- I know I didn't sleep well, and yet I shouldn't be this tired.....

I am a tiny sailing vessel at sea amidst natural forces so awesome they defy description. Now I feel my sails full, chest out, full of mySelf, myself, life....

And then the wind dies down, my sail collapses, and I am left feeling raped, abandoned, shriveled, frightened, exhausted....

"What? What came through me? Why did it leave me?" I am lost....my body hurts -- physically hurts -- my spine unaligned, my muscles sore, points in the base of my skull singed -- burned-- on fire -- in pain from the energy coursing through, un-forgiving.

Yes, it is self regulating -- yes, I won't self destruct -- yes, my intentions are ALWAYS to serve the highest good -- yes, I ask for unfoldment -- yes, I often remember to ask for gentleness, for mist instead of torrential down pour (up-pour).

But, Christ, it is SO AWESOME. I am nothing. A fragment of a leaf on a redwood in a stand of redwoods in a vast magical forest unbounded by earth's tiny boundaries.

Have mercy on me. Leave and come as you will, but leave me with some shred of remembrance -- don't let my ego forget that in the absence of Tao, I am still but a leaf, a small sail, dormant.

I have been afraid to write you, I think. Afraid that our last talk damaged what we had.

Something changed inside me...perhaps when I suggested that we publish our edited letters...I feared you would shut down, but of course I was just projecting my own fears.

The Self is so fragile -- look at her/him directly, and s/he vanishes!

Perhaps now that I've 'fessed up, forgiveness will be bestowed on myself by mySelf.

This letter reeks of exhaustion, self pity, powerlessness. Add self-hatred to the list.

Oh, well, so it is.

I will write again soon with more uplifting words.

--David

November 11th

Julie,

Inside wisdom, a bright-flowing, analytic power.
Inside love, a friend.
One a psychic source, the other plain water.

Walk out into the indications
of where you must go.

Christ is the population of the world,
and every object as well. There is no room
for hypocrisy. Why use bitter soup for healing
when sweet water is everywhere?

My ego is stubborn, often drunk, impolite.
My loving: Finely sensitive, impatient, confused.
Please take messages from one to the other,
reply and counter-reply.

Thank you, Rumi and Coleman Barks, for these breaths of fresh air.

The exhaustion returns;
my swollen glands stopping up
an already-clogged throat.

It's nearing winter, cold, grey,
rather dark even in day,
and I think of you from beneath the fog.

A dim recollection of the fire that burns brightly between us
brings momentary warmth to my ashen belly.

Numbness. Clamminess. The Waiting.

Waiting for the call to arms
(the images cry for military metaphor)
sensing an impending battle amongst long-standing foes,
foes seeking mercenaries to come to their aid;
amongst the mercenaries, factions subdivide,
none of us really knowing who's fighting for who,
what the stakes are,
where the light ends and the dark begins.

Stay as I may in my silvery cloak,
invoking the Light, and Love, and Highest Good,
I am haunted by the thought that I am but a pawn,
a puppet whose strings are pulled
by God, Satan, Apollo, Dionysus,
WHO?

No answer to a question I dread asking.

Information is given on a "need to know" basis
and besides, I don't want to know,
I don't have the capacity to hold that knowing.

So the work has been to keep the channel open to
WHO I AM,
my soul,
which I conceive of these days as a silvery sphere surrounding
my bodies. I progress.

And the work is to wait, contain, be still,
resist the wound-driven urge to act willfully in the world,
make something happen,
JUST DO IT,
shoot first, ask questions later,
our culture, my heritage, my schooling all demand this of me.

And yet the Zen swordsman just IS, still, a mirror,
until the exact moment is upon him and then

KATZ!

the action is precise and total and possessing of force
un-knowable to me.

And then stillness.

Ah, the impatience of youth. I feel as a race horse must
feel confined in the starting gate, every fiber poised
to spring out and explode into glorious motion.

Wait. Be still. Hold the power. Breathe.

The foot soldier in the barracks, night after night,
waiting, cleaning the barrel of his tiny machine gun
(compared to jet fighters and cluster bombs and razor dart artillery shells)
waiting, bored, waiting,
training, cleaning, waiting,
training, cleaning, bored, smoking, waiting,

and then --

"A TEN --- HUT! Move out!!"

"Where are we going? What's happening?"

"Just do as you are told, son."

"But I want to see the big picture--"

"QUIET. One more word out of you, and its the slammer for you."

In the battles to which I refer, I shudder to
imagine the architecture of the slammer employed!!!

Keep training, maybe promotion comes, and then
you get to see a slightly wider swatch of the big picture.

But even Bill Clinton himself, at the top of one pyramid,
even Manly Hall, Theosopher Par Excellance,
Ueshiba himself,
see just a fragment of the big picture.

No, we are resigned to play our parts,
mostly in blindness,
staying tuned into Soul, acting from Love,
preying that what seems White is really White,
and not Black in clever disguise.

And still I am stuck in dualism,
feeling demoted,
seeing that linear hierarchy (of rank and station)
and giggling inside,
caught again by mind's illusion.

So it goes.

I send my love;
tainted with fear and the shards of battle,
the best I can give.

With warmth,

--David

November 23rd

son of naf..

It is late at night and I am burning.
fires rim my skyline, the skyline is red like blood.

red like a million billion mercury lights
in anacortes the sky wavers with the heat
a burning
a flame
a waste land
a field of oil to make the
cloths I wear and bring me the food I eat.

a friend tells me there is god in all i touch
and all that i am

and often
i know this

see this like one sees a window
separating one thin reality from another.

there are certain things that attract my attention
certain notes played in certain ways:
Copland, Stravinsky, Grieg...

other things, like smiles, and also most certainly -- eyes.
and animals,
or people finding their own animal nature.

this holds me
holds me like a flame holds onto a wick
licking, and clinging, and always always hungry

i know my animal.
my nature which slides back and down.

back to the ground, down to the underworlds

where words are foreign
and touch more primal

this is my god
my crawling, sucking, moist and predatory god

god of earth, of soil, of light, of dark.

this is my occupation and preoccupation:
finding god underneath my fingernails....

i miss you.

i think of you and think -- i miss you, and that's neither good or bad.

it just is. julie

*** ***

February 14th, 1994

David

Yesterday, somewhere around the Klamath River, I pulled off of Highway 101, and I began to walk among the Redwoods towards the coast. I felt on the edge of something. No, it was more than that. I felt I had crossed something, and that what ever lay behind me, was gone forever. I felt melancholy, tearful, vibrant, alive. I was in an energy and space that I could not put a face to. Its color was darkness, tinged with gold, strung with stars and moonlight. And it beckoned, asking me to follow its path. I sat for a very long time, and I welcomed the pain, though I was unsure of its source.

I was returning home from a conference on creating a sustainable future, where I had been asked to give the keynote. This conference had caused me a great deal of angst, because I did not feel emotionally, physically, or psychically prepared to give a talk. I had just returned from abroad a few days before, and had not yet made the transition home. In spirit I was still sitting on a hill, watching people and herds of animals fight for the same water. I was still making my way through overcrowded and filth laden streets, where the ecological realities of our economic parodies play dice with life every moment. I could not transcend the voices of my blood, my cousins reciting with dispassionate obedience, the laws by which they, as women, must live and die. I could not leave the world of my ancestors, where the ancient, co-mingling with the modern, has somehow retained an element of sacredness. In comparison, my life in the USA seemed infinitely wasteful, bland, and lonely. Lonely beyond dimension. Lonely in a way that could not be filled with faces, only knowing.

Yet, all certainty is shattered abroad, and I returned not knowing what to say about anything to anyone.

So I went to the conference fearful of my lack of knowing, but trusting that something would replace its emptiness..

And something did. In a torrent of passion and love words came from somewhere beyond me -- beyond my physical, conscious, and lateral reality. Words came that drew emotion from the ground, and light from the eyes of the audience. I know this feeling, this holographic feeling of being and reflecting everything and nothing simultaneously. I know this shared space, where I am a vehicle for something much more important. The conference was blessed.

I know what I heard yesterday, and it is something I have heard before when I have been among the Redwoods. There are spirits out there that call for our awareness. Spirits of trees that speak volumes in history, spirits of people who have wisdom to share, spirits of life calling to the living to do more. It was they that spoke threw me on Friday -- spirits of old friends and new ones not known.

My work has always been about broadening the horizons of mind and soul so that, together, we can better understand the potential of life. It brings me great joy to know there are people like you doing the important and difficult work of living with intention, attention, and quiet and simple integrity. I honor opportunities like these: opportunities to

communicate and exchange the flow of ideas, the raptures of soul with someone who embraces the dance of life.

I think of you, and often miss you. I look forward to the opportunities the future may bring.

julie

February 22nd

(The next writing is a bio which Julie wrote for a professional group. I include it to share more of her beautiful prose/poetry.)

The problem with bios is that they imply that somehow the amorphous qualities of character can be defined. And of course, the problem with a definition is that it tends to limit. A meaningful bio, therefore, must transcend the cosmetic affects of our personalities, as well as the limits that words create. I do not know if I am up to the job.

(done in third person for distance and discovery)

I picture her as unfiltered juice, or possibly, the whole fruit (not yet ripe.) Which fruit? Something hand picked, unwaxed, blemished, unusual exterior, wild and engaging interior (the looks of a pomegranate come to mind,) and an elusive, but somehow intoxicating flavor.

She would make a good wine in her old age...

She could also make vinegar.

As a tree, she would be deciduous - something that would change from season to season. I see her clinging to a cliff edge, looking out over a wide and open view, a view often blocked by fog. Many of her roots creep down the cliff face, exposed and ready to move on.. She has been shaped by the wind, and clings ferociously to the stone, the rock, her mother, the earth. She is a hard wood, not good for furniture or shelter, but she burns well, and has a mossy scent.

As an animal she is both predator and prey. Both seeking and being sought. She creeps through tall grass, and pounces on her kill with relish and glee. She hides high in the trees, surreptitiously surveying her hunter.

As a human she is evolution personified. A Darwinian dream. Both ape and sphinx, child and elder. She seeks meaning in science, history, art, images, dreams, words, and the infinite embrace of Love. Her work is her life, a sculpting of activities that nourish her mind, and give to her community. She plants seeds year long, some of her harvest for the body, some for the mind, and all for the spirit. She loves life, and celebrates it. She loves art and immerses herself in it. She loves the squish of mud, the taste of grass, and the temperament of the untamed.

Her work is about wholes. Whole people, whole cultures, whole communities learning to surpass the norms of a mechanistically stylized culture. She teaches in many places, and helps communities redefine their future based on principles of holism.

She is a dancer, a feminist, and a believer in hands.

and this is all, and this is nothing...

*** End ***

Epilogue

May 12, 2017

Dear Julie,

Long time no link! I hope this finds you good and well.

So I was having dinner with a good friend the other day. We were blah-blahing about this and that, when suddenly out of the blue I started telling her about the series of emails we exchanged so many years ago.

After seeing my friend's eyes light up, I had the idea to edit and compile the letters, and put them online. Please understand I would never do anything with the letters without your full throated support and approval.

With care,

--Prahas (David)

May 15th

Please share in any way you like. Pinned to trees and swaying in the wind like prayer flags would be my suggestion.....

Other than that, I think the letters come from a place people go when they dig into an essential core - a subterranean river. A flow.

I used to be a spelunker. The entrance to my favorite cave was in the middle of a cow pasture—a bucolic scene of green grass and black cows calling for their calves. I would climb the wooden fence - wizened bows of Osage, and traipse by cow pies till I came to a hole no more than a foot or two across -- a slit in the earth, a sly smile.

I would adjust my carbide lamp and then get on my belly and start scooting backward into the hole until all that was left of me were my hands clinging to the grass, legs dangling into

the earth. Then I would let go of the grass and drop a good three feet. Immediately it was dark, and immediately I no could no longer hear cows. Instead, there was the whoosh of a river flowing. Quickly, I'd adjust my headlamp. I had landed on a ledge overlooking an underground river. Black water moving to a blacker distance. It was pure magic, that hidden underworld -- a place where water flowed darkly until it found it's way to the light.

Those letters came from a deep well.

julie

May 16th

The sun,

because it is abundant and unconditionally giving,

does not become envious when it notices the brilliant luminosity emerging from my Being, catalyzed by reading your magnificent prose-poetry.

You haven't lost your touch, Julie. If anything, your writing has even more depth and subtly.

I am blessed.

Be well, and Love,

--Prahas

About (one of) the Author(s) - Prahas

What is essential to say? I have worked in the arts, technology, and business. I spent nine years in a school of meditation, and I am a Certified Life Coach. Love.



Afterwards

You may reach Prahas (David) at foundpra at yahoo dot com.

Or on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001745257519&fref=ts>

You might have a look at my other book: Meditation Q & A. On Amazon and elsewhere...

If you value this work and wish to support it, please write to me and I will direct you to my PayPal account. I will divide equally the proceeds between myself and "Julie."

You also might leave a review at your favorite retailer.

Thanks!