

2006

WITHOUT A NET

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Okay, I've finally figured out that the struggle I face daily and endlessly is to live and write truthfully. So now, in the immortal quote from one of those early Hollywood pioneers, I've just got to "word it in".

I've been on a spiritual path for over 40 years, searching for truth, from Silva Mind Control to Marcus Pulsifer, from hatha yoga to Bruce Joel Rubin's kundalini yoga meditation, from Freud to Eugene Gendlin to Jung, from Jewish meditation to a flirtation with Buddhism, from Pilates to Tang Soo Do to Billy Blanks. At least I've done the meditation thing every day for many years, but I've dug and researched probably dozens more dead-end trails along the way that I don't even remember. I've been there, done that before any of these things registered as a blip on public consciousness.

So how come I haven't a clue?

The only thing I've learned, *maybe*, is that you face the same situations over and over and over in different guises, and you're supposed to deal with them from a higher, more evolved level. Oh, sure.

I'm no closer to answers, to who I am or what I'm doing here, than I was when I sat in front of a hundred people after a week of Silva, and I was the first one the teacher picked for the 'graduation' exercise. Each of us was supposed to go into a deep meditative state and diagnose someone's pain or illness, someone you didn't know. He chose me to sit in front of the room first because I was the only one with my arms crossed in front of me. Another lesson learned – watch the body language. So there I was, deep in meditation, 'reading' the son of the dark-haired woman, Darla, who sat in front of me. I found out then and there I wasn't cut out to be a psychic, and certainly not in front of a group. Oh, I nailed the diagnosis all right, immediately. I saw the word 'cancer' float across the screen in my mind on a banner, then heard the word 'throat'. Right, like I'm going to tell some woman I've never met in my life that her 14-year-old son I've never met in my life, has throat cancer. I punted. I said I didn't know, I couldn't see or hear anything.

Of course, he *was* in remission from throat cancer, so in front of all those people with whom I had just spent an intense week, I didn't tell the truth, and I looked really, really stupid. Bad choice.

I may have learned the wrong lesson from the experience. I wasn't clever enough to keep my insights to myself among people with whom I was close, so it took a long, long list of painful experiences for me to figure out it's not a good idea to tell my friends the truth if I think their boyfriends or husbands or lovers are assholes. It does not go over well. And

although I may be proven, eventually, to have a clear view of the boyfriend or husband or lover, it doesn't matter. It reminds them they were blind and I saw.

So how come I have such clarity, such vision, about other people's lives, and I feel like my eyes are wrapped in white gauze when it comes to understanding my own? Why is everything I should know and do know hidden away, to be accessed in nanosecond increments? A feeling here, a glimpse there. That's all I'm allowed.

And how do I reconcile my deep optimism that there is a spiritual path for me, for everyone, with my natural bent for sarcasm, instantaneous judgment, and basic skepticism? It's a clumsy pas de deux and usually I stumble over my own feet.

I remember Lillian Wechter giving me a birthday card, eons ago. Lillian was then around 65 and brooked no hypocrisy. She used her little old ladyhood as a weapon to speak her truth. The card she sent celebrated me, comparing me to the sun, capable of both exquisite warmth that you could bask in, or rays that practiced a scorched earth policy. I was always somewhat proud of that ability, until I got into the 'biz' and realized that scorched earth left everyone parched, including me. The next two decades weren't exactly spent wandering in the desert, but rather in an attempt to practice detachment and make conscious choices. Less judgment, better karma, lots of compassion. I think of that as a good thing. Like when my very-ex-husband's then-current mistress, Alysse, called me out of the blue to let me know he was being indicted by the U.S. Attorney for money laundering. Did I respond with anything but the utmost compassion and concern? Not unless *I knew it, I knew it!* counts as compassion.

The judgment of my ex, and of his vindictive mistress and Prozac-filled current wife, didn't surface, because my dearest friend had managed, over the previous 15 years of our best-friend-status, to convince me I was...negative. Not a good thing in this best-of-all-possible worlds. So my eruptions or anger or sarcasm or feelings that were other than Miss Fucking Sunshine Pollyanna had to be dismissed and let go. And they were.

So what happened to all those spontaneous feelings and opinions? I'm lucky I don't have an ulcer or worse. Did I turn into someone passionless, with a flat affect? One of those smiling Moonies, ever kind and understanding? I'm really bored being so nice all the time.

When I was in Seattle recently, staying with Lilli, she showed me a magazine cover pontificating about what is 'too thin'. I had just finished my meditation, so my gut fury came as a shock. They call these women lollipops, but I call them talking heads, because that's all they are. They claim they're not *technically* anorexic. Give me a fucking break. What else would you call women who starve themselves, fuck up their periods, look at the 98 pounds reflected in the mirror and think they're fat? I maintain this cultural disease was created by designers who think women should look like adolescent boys, and perpetuated by male and female entertainment executives who hate women in general.

And here is Lilli, musing about how the men in her life always criticized her body. This is a gorgeous, exotic woman, most men's fantasy of a size four Eurasian beauty, and she worries about her hips being too big and her boobs being too small, because Steve and Jacques and George told her so, because *they're* losers whose only way to dominate her is to make her hate herself.

Well, I went off. I started yelling about it, in welcome anger, in righteous indignation, those feelings appearing like friends I'd left behind years ago. I screamed that these men, the ones who say honey, that five pounds seemed to have landed in a couple of unflattering places, or that dress is okay, well, maybe just a *little* tight. Liposuction might help. Yeah, you do have a couple of crow's feet, but nothing a little peel wouldn't fix. Love handles? Plastic surgery. Yeah, big boobs are a real turn-on, how about implants as a Christmas present? Who cares if they float in the bathtub?

So, I said to Lilli, do you know *any* woman who has *ever* said to a man, honey, your balls aren't hanging quite right, one side's a little smaller than the other. Honey, it's too bad your cock isn't a little bit longer, wider, straighter? There's always penile implants, liposuction, plastic surgery.

After we wiped off the tears of laughter, I realized how good that felt. The anger fueled me, focused me like a laser into acknowledging the world isn't an easy place. It's not nice, not kind. Life is a struggle in this agreed-upon material reality we live in. I can't see the other realms I know are there. They hover around me, tantalizingly out of reach. I'm stuck here in the muck and mud, maybe finally catching a glimmer of realization that I can't rise above it unless I let myself live in it. I just have to keep remembering that the lotus flower blooms and thrives in the ugliest of sludge, in those shadowy places that need to be illuminated, recognized, acknowledged. And spoken. Or, better yet, 'worded in'.