

## Pressure is Love

by Jody Levy

I'm a writer who has not written for a long time, and in the hopes of propelling myself out of my stasis I find myself sitting in a workshop called, "*Letting the Crazy Child Write.*" For our first writing exercise, the teacher asks, "What does the wild child mean to you? What can you learn from her? Paint a word picture." I close my eyes and feel for the wild child inside of me. I can see her with my inward eyes; my imaginal eyes. She is in a cave and it is almost completely dark. There is stone everywhere and it is cool and wet in some places along the wall and on the ground. Her heart is pounding; I can tell because I see the vein in her neck pulsing and her body visibly rise and fall in a quick rhythm. She is all blood, the rhythm of blood in her body. Her body is this drum of blood, her head is a drum. She cannot feel her feet and hands for the roar of blood in her head.

She touches the wall, she remembers her fingers. The wall is wet and in this connection of water and earth she is given hands; moving across the wall like insects. It is solid, it is textured; rough and smooth and wet. Her hands crawl slowly across the landscape of hieroglyph - crevices and bumps, smooth in places, now sharp. It is language. She wonders, and in this moment of wonderment, there is an abatement of fear. She wonders what a blind person would read in this communion of fingers on stone. And in this intimacy of thought and finger and stone something arises greater than the fear. And it is gone. It is not so bad in here she muses. If she keeps her mind in her hands the fear disappears.

Now she presses her face, her left cheek and the left side of her head against a smooth place she found on the rock wall in the dark. She rolls her face slowly back and forth feeling the cool wall of the cave. It gives me pleasure to watch her. I who sit here in this so-called real world, with fear in my belly and chest and head. There is the same pounding, and trepidation, there is constraint and restraint. So, I open my mouth and make sounds like a cobra and a big beast - air pressing out. I raise my arms and stretch and wonder if I will choose to enact this during the reading.

When Clive, the instructor asked, "What is the crazy child"? My first pure impulse was to jump up, run around the room and tickle people, touch them, gently placing little flecks of touch on their chin, behind the knees and ears. There was a time, not even a year ago when I would have done this. At least had the courage to make the animal sounds. Now I hesitate, smolder, then just smoke and do nothing at all.

I go back to the inside world, the wet cave. I see that there is a crack in the ceiling and that the sun is overhead. There is a shaft of light that has made its way into the darkness. The child stands directly under this light. Her eyes are closed savoring the darkness and the gifts it brought her. She lets the light warm her, enter her everywhere - meaning she is in relation to the presence of light., the physical sensation of it. She opens to it. She gives it entry and it moves within her.

And so I do the same here, at this table filled with Clive's rocks and crystals. Did the image of the cave come from the images of these stones strewn before me on the table? I bring my attention to the top of my head and I let the loving gaze of my attention hover there. I bring attention to my spinal column and I feel the fear in my heart center and chest, the top of my throat. I feel an energy which I label fear. I breathe deeply and return to the imaginal child.

She is radiant. She has let the light fill her, like child's hands making a hand cup for fresh water in a stream. Her eyes are still closed and the head is slightly upturned. She is calm now, regal and poised. Her breath has evened out. She loves this light, she trusts it as a physical phenomena, as a presence which, when connected to her is greater than her fear. She trusts it as a language which has spoken to her, immediate and without intervention of the judging mind or of a culture which places interpretations and constant distractions upon such communion; this interaction of forces, or any force which is invisible, ineffable and therefore somehow is suspect and cannot be trusted.

I am remembering walking along East 86th street in Brooklyn towards the East 83rd street bus which I am taking to my Junior High School a few miles away and in the neighborhood from which we had just moved. I am thirteen. The temperature is down in the single digits and the wind is blowing hard. It is carrying pieces of snow, pointed and fierce, like little shards of glass and my thick wool scarf is wrapped up around my face and almost covering my red, frost burnt cheeks and nose. There is ice on the ground, snow that has frozen and turned dirty and black as coal in some places against the curb and on the *steps* of houses or the *stoops* we called them in New York. There are a few patches of pure white unadulterated snow that pop out of the dirty piles like crystal cities. I take great pleasure in these small patches of glistening white.- the hardened crystalline top layer of frozen snow catching the sun. In Brooklyn like all other unlikely places, the material world presenting endless, small pleasures to a child.

I reached the bus stop and stood still. I closed my eyes and felt the wind and icy air all around me. I was contracting from the cold; pulling in my shoulders and pressing my legs together in my short mini-skirt (this was 1968) and hating the weather. My white faux leather go-go boots hard and frozen on my feet.

And, then I had an idea. What if I relaxed? What if I let the wind just move through me- inside my coat and through my sweater and into my skin and bones, and right out the other side? And I noticed that as I opened to this idea, I opened to the wind. I didn't fight it, hate it, spend the time wishing it was other than it was -wishing it was warmer or that my mother could drive me to school. And, as soon as I did that, the wind and my idea about the wind - the wind and my mind, the wind and my attention became one. What remained then was *simply* a field of energy. I thought, maybe for the first time, I am this energy, simply this energy - although I don't think I actually called it that. It felt like space or an opening and I saw that from this perspective it had no qualities. It could be cold or warm. But if I stayed with it in my awareness there was a feeling of victory or freedom and I didn't have to call it anything at all.

This revelation was thrilling to me. What fun, what delight. And instinctively I knew it was more than just a trick to keep warm. It was a key to something, a power, a doorway into the mysteries and workings of great things. And, now as I sit here and am in the presence of memory and this instinctual, child-like wisdom, I notice there is a constriction, a tightness in my shoulders and neck, like last night. So, I sit here and go into this pressure - to go into it with my attention and breath. And in an instant, as I invite myself to be with my Self, I begin to think of the goodness of pressure.

I know that in basic physics, without resistance there is no current, no power or juice. We need this tempering, this alchemy and force, like a piece of coal is grateful for the pressure it requires to achieve its diamond strength and clarity. I think of Rilke saying that, "This is how we grow, by being defeated, soundly by greater and greater beings." Referring to Jacob wrestling and being taken down by the great primordial force of the angel, the awesome muscles of the angel. Jacob who will not let the angel go until it gives him a blessing, a gift. And, I desire one too!

I see that I've equated pressure, contraction, constriction with something negative, a defeat, a sort of beating down without nobility- being held in, held back, constrained without the context of the magic and possibility of alchemy as a powerful force of creation. I rob the apparent limitation from any of its inherent power. I think, what is tempering me? How are we tempered? How do I court and invite this pressure in as an agent of transformation rather than as an enemy or as a polarizing force? Can I hold it in a more creative context- like the pressure of the birth canal?

My mind now moves to thoughts of Tibetan gongs and cymbals and singing bowls. They are made of a rare and unique blend of metals, called five-metal and they are made by Tibetan monks and nuns. Only so many are produced each year. And, only so many are made each year because it is such an intricate, subtle and mindful process by which they are shaped.. And these years they are mostly made in Nepal and India, the craft and intention moving from its place of origin with exile.

As the metals are blended, as the metal is cooled, as the metal is tempered and shaped - all during this physical process of metal and air and water and flesh and intention moving together- the holy men and women chant the sacred Om. They chant, "Om mane padme om", over and over as the prayer wheels spin around them in the wind. This ceaseless song of creation, this vibration of sound moves through the mouths of monks and is carried by air and penetrates the metals. Now the metal is the holder of the intention of the prayers, the sounds, the language, the clarity, the focus and love.

I have read that Mickey Hart who used to play drums with the Grateful Dead, was touring with the Gyuto Monks; the same monks who make these metal instruments. He took some gongs and singing bowls into the Warner Brothers Digital recording labs and there

employed a machine called a tonoscope; a device which graphically displays a visual representation of sound. And he played these instruments; lovingly tempered by holy names and the blessed intention of monks and nuns, and what appeared on the screen was a mandala - the Sri Yantra, the most sacred of all yantras. A yantra, being a visual map of a particular state of consciousness, of the primordial organization of reality, and of expanded dimensions of existence. The bowls held the OM- the force of creation. The invisible was made visible and I felt such a thrill in finding this out.

Well I wish to be tempered in the same way as those bowls. To offer myself up to the Divine as so much raw metal in exile. To be beaten into shape so lovingly, to be molded by secret seed syllables and ancient knowledge- ceaselessly held in the web of invisible mysteries until I am blessed and given form. And then played! To willingly receive the pound of the stick, the gong, To willingly receive the pressure and for the expression and song of my life force to resound.

This is my sacred desire and intent. And, I know that even though I may not see or understand the underlying design of some constriction, pain or pressure - I can trust that the hands of the invisible are crafting me with such tender precision and skillful love.