

Word salad October 1st2013

“Ghosts”

After River Phoenix died, he paid me a visit. It was a week after his death. I had awoken to unusually cold air in the room and I reached to pull up the covers and there he sat at the edge of my bed, sideways and looking up from beneath his long hair. It wasn't a dream, it had that unique feeling to it. He spoke:

“Fame, It isn't all its cracked up to be. Don't hurry anything.” I took this all in, accepting it as truth. Made me wonder what else wasn't “all its cracked up to be.” The next morning I noticed the imprint left on the edge of the bed as if someone had been sitting there.

I inherited the “gift” from a great, great aunt who travelled up and down the west coast reading tea leaves. My strictly non-pagan, hyper Catholic relatives rarely spoke about Aunt Maggie.

“She's peculiar,” they would say. My own family, if they knew what I had, would say the same thing. Hell, they might say it anyway.

My life has been largely as an outsider, a misfit, loner- it has been my eternal quest to find places of acceptance. As my friend Janet says, “We are orange. And nothing rhymes with orange. Hard in a world that prefers blue or brown.” Oddly enough I think I have lived a supernatural life in search of a natural one. Everyone wants to be loved.

Three years ago I met a kindred spirit- a warm Brazilian man who owned a magic shop. He was a healer, a wizard, finely schooled in the art of the *in between*. Robert embodied a mysticism and wisdom I found very comforting. Many an afternoon we would converse about African deities, bubbalowifo, and the workings of other realms. I was struggling terribly to find work, to find friends, to find balance and thought if anyone can help, he can. He convinced me to do a “cleanse” in the traditional Santerian practice. Oh what the hell. How weird can it be.

I was instructed to buy three boxes of fresh basil, a coconut, and a bottle of rubbing alcohol. My shirt must be white, no jewelry, and bring a change of clothes "in case I get messy." Whaaaat? He showed me the "ritual room:" dirty, cement floor, African masks gracing each wall, this was so trippy even for me, candles in gargoyle statues, live chickens in a cage, and an odor I can't immediately place.

"What is that smell?" I whisper, looking around.

"Blood. But don't worry." Ok.

The Ritual commences: lots of chanting in Portuguese. My eyes are to remain closed. He takes an egg and rolls it over my body, he inscribes chalks symbols on my inner elbows, back of my neck, and he spits big mouthfuls of rum at my back.

"They hate rum," he whispers. Um, they?? He lights a cigar and takes three puffs. He studies the images in the ashes. Speaks to something in the room who apparent answers back. I begin to feel dizzy. He rubs bunches of basil on my head. That isn't unpleasant. More chanting. But I go with it. Once you have astral projected/time travelled/conversed with the dead, not much can faze you. All I wanted to do was be around him, my heart was so drawn to this mysterious, beautiful man who understood who I was.

I open one eye quickly to see him pulsating, rocking. At the height of his trance he hands me the two live chickens to hold upside down while he continues to feverishly sway and keel. Turning me quickly around he takes the chickens from me.

"Do not look back," and the next sound is a flutter of wings and a thud. Then he lights a circle of fire around my body. Without thinking he grabs my arms and has me walk through the flames, no skin injured. We are done. I have to say whatever bewitching phantom extraction he did that day, my life did improve. And he was big part of it.

The weeks and months that followed our mutual attraction grew. This was an evolved kind of soul connection I had never before had. There was an obstacle: Rosarita. She did not like when I came into the store. She knew we were starting

to fall in love. We never acted on it. It tortured me we couldn't be together. It felt like God's cruel joke. And then six months later I saw the truth.

I had arrived at the store on hot June day. I hadn't seen Robert in a couple of weeks. He was puffy and disheveled. Five empty beer cans already squashed on the floor, and it was only 11:30. Excited, I share the news that my book was being published. He interrupts, takes a swig of beer, and says, "You make me so horny." And he tries to grab my breast. Hope is extinguished.

My extraordinary white wizard showed up to me a sad man with a multitude of ordinary problems. Apparently being gifted doesn't exempt you from being common. I don't ever want to be common.

During my recent move I was compelled to open a hand painted trunk I have had since I was 8 years old. It was stored at my mother's house.

This cream colored trunk held evidence of half my life- remnants of both pleasure and pain glued in between the pages of flower colored scrap book, including my homemade blue velvet (to go with his eyes) Parker Stevenson/ Hardy Boys fan book, Parker being my first "love."

I hadn't seen any of this stuff in decades. With each card unfolded I was taken back through the annals of my life. Maybe something here would reassure me at one point I did fit in, I did feel embraced, and ok with being me. Declarations of true friendship, my first ballet shoes, birthday cards with cats in costumes and photos of happy people in various incarnations of their lives. Detritus stuck between the pages. It is otherworldly to visit these places inside me. Names I couldn't remember, photos I didn't remember taking- how could this be? It all seemed so dire at the time, clutching each other, bonding as friends, as lovers, as some kind of marker in each other's journey. But looking back all I see are ghosts. Real ghosts. All of us. We are only imprints left behind. What once held such meaning now a faded photograph, a forgotten name in a peeling away book in the bottom of a dusty trunk.

What is supernatural is the revolving door of people we meet, the souls we take up, place in our backpacks, and clink our proverbial glasses with: snap shot

memories as witnesses to each other. Intense love, intense loyalty, intense betrayal. **And then dust.** Did it matter that I couldn't remember who Marnie was? No- chances are if she found the same picture of us wearing striped skirts and false eyelashes, she wouldn't remember me either. But at one time we are all everything to each other. The ghosts of our former selves. It is our wish to concretize our lives which is by nature ephemeral. We can't ever do it completely.

At any given moment we are all heathen, heretic, hero, heartbreaker, hater, and heaven. Good. That is a lot of lives in one.

I am at mid- life and presumed it would have supplied more wisdom about this whole business of living one. It hasn't. But I will tell you what the dead has taught me.

The dead: "When you walk your dog at 11:15 every night and you nearly trip over that same spot on the corner pavement, pay attention to the smell of jasmine, the sounds of the crickets, and the wag of your dog's tail. That's what matters, the rest is bullshit." Or-

The dead: "Kiss them on the head every night before bed, your son, your husband, your lover. Do it. You'll never regret you did."

Me: "C'mon guys give me something here. I listen to you all the time..."

The dead: "Alright, alright, alright. Life is beautiful and brutal. It doesn't change on the other side."

Me: "That's the numinous mysteries of the ages??? That's it?"

The dead: "That's everything." (Oh.)

You know what is supernatural? Falling in love, staying in love, being loved.

We all want guarantees. Warranties. A return policy. But supernatural behavior is getting up in the morning and showing up for life anyway, open to what it may or may not deliver.

None of us want to end up being the name we can't remember in someone else's childhood trunk. We all want to matter. We all want to believe... in the beauty of this world and our own world and perhaps another world. The possibility of magic in the ordinary.