



Drinking the Dragon: Stories of The Dark Nights of Soul

by

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Excerpt from Chapter Three: THROUGH THE FIRES:

Enduring the Dark Night of Soul

WILLIAM'S STORY

*Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.
Ameila Burr*

Love in an Instant

When William met Suzanne, the attraction was immediate and mutual. They were both attending a farewell celebration for the owners of a local bakery, which was the site of the party. William remembered that when their eyes met, “there was curiosity, electricity, and a sense of joyful recognition in our connection.” For their wedding nearly three years later, Suzanne wrote, “...across a crowded room, I saw you for the first time...my life was changed, forever...When we said hello, our hands knew...that we there was something special in the connection...that we would never part again after that moment.” Suzanne died just nine years after they first met, as a result of a ruptured blood vessel in her brain.⁵ Even so, William has come to understand that they truly *are* never apart. He has had numerous inexplicable experiences which bear out Suzanne’s promise of “forever” in her wedding vows.

William is soft-spoken and articulate, with an emotional honesty and openness honed by the countless growth and self-awareness trainings in which he both participates in and leads. William’s hair is silver-gray and wavy; his face is craggy with bushy eyebrows over expressive eyes. William’s primary livelihood is from remodeling and building custom homes as a general contractor, but he spends a good deal of his time involved in facilitating voluntary men’s groups comprised of participants who have been through the Mankind Project’s The New Warrior Training,ⁱ and assisting with various Coaches Training Institute (CTI) leadership trainings. Certified as life coaches, both he and Suzanne were busy co-developing and delivering workshops focused on life purpose, emotional literacy, and self-expression before she died, work that William wants to continue. The two years since Suzanne’s death has brought to William a deeper, more visceral understanding of the process and effects of loss and grieving as well as an empathic understanding and maturity that he hopes will be of benefit to others in his group meetings and workshops.

*If we could know which of us, darling, would be the first to go, who would be first to
breast the swelling tide and step alone upon the other side?*

Julia Harris May

Infinite Knowing

William shared that shortly before Suzanne's brain hemorrhage, they spent what was to be their last weekend together, sharing deeply from their lives and speculating about the process of death. "We discussed what death might be like and how much awareness we might have during this process. We also promised each other that whoever went first would try to show the other what death was really like." Remarkably, said William, "Suzanne delivered...she helped me to know something about what the "Great Mystery" might hold for me..."

Only 51 years old, Suzanne was at lunch with a friend when she fell ill with a severe headache. Hospitalized, she endured several brain surgeries over a period of 11 days, at times rallying to conscious awareness and at other times appearing close to death. William related that, after Suzanne's third surgery, he realized that Suzanne was unmistakably passing. He whispered in her ear that she was "free to choose to stay or go." Later, William wrote to Suzanne about this moment in his journal: "Selfishly, I wanted you to stay with me on Earth and to recover. But from my deepest loving place, I wanted for you what you wanted, and fully trusted you to know what to do, how to be." It was after William had "let go" of Suzanne that he had the following luminous experience:

I lay down on the couch in the waiting area next to Suzanne's room in the ICU. It was only moments after I put my head on the pillow that Suzanne's essence manifested around me and completely enveloped me. She was the most exquisite shimmering green, full of what appeared to be sparkling gem stones of many colors. Then the energy rushed out, stretching out into an amorphous field of infinite knowing. I knew that Suzanne was out of her body and that she was showing me what her experience of death was like. I remained on the outer rim or edge of this energy field, which I knew was as far as I was allowed to go. The love, compassion, wisdom, and knowing was immense in this field of expanded awareness. I had such a powerful feeling of being known and loved and appreciated. At one point, I seemed to see a series of lifetimes going back and back; there was the familiarity of having known Suzanne in the past as well as the present. I knew that she was saying good-bye to our physical relationship here on Earth. She silently communicated to me her immense gratitude for our time together on Earth, for having helped her in this lifetime to know and accept herself. I knew that Suzanne was going on—and that she had included me in her process. I felt so incredibly loved. I felt such great joy and such great sadness.

When William awoke the next morning, he knew in his heart that Suzanne had passed. He was able to quietly tell the brain surgeon, "She's crossed over." Suzanne was taken off of life support as family members took turns saying their good-byes. Yet even after her physical death, Suzanne continued to reassure them of her embracing presence. When the family later gathered on the sidewalk outside of the hospital, several individuals related their personal experiences regarding Suzanne's passing. As Suzanne's son, Cody, slept in the hospital, he had had a dream in which his mother sat up in her bed in the ICU and began communicating with an angelic presence. The being was telling her that she could choose to stay, even though the recovery would be long and difficult, or she could decide to go. Suzanne chose to leave her physical body behind, gracefully lifting off of the bed and shooting out through the ceiling. William recalled that as family members shared, "The air began to change and confetti-like crystalline formations of light began to dance around us. It was Suzanne loving us and letting us know she was still with us."

ⁱ For more information on the *Mankind Project's The New Warrior Training*, view the website: <http://www.mkp.org/nw.htm>