

# The Call of the Wild

*by Jeannie Zandi*



When I was entering high school, there was a lot of discussion among us athletic girls about what we would do: become cheerleaders or play basketball. Some went one way, some went another. It came down to a simple choice for me: did I want to cheer for the boys while they scored baskets, or did I want to score baskets myself? It seemed that boys liked cheerleaders much more than basketball players and the lure of being popular was strong. Yet in the end, as I sat with the question, it became clear to me that there was only one choice from deep within me: to shoot the baskets myself.

When I was 20, I worked part time during college transcribing the handwritten notes of an eclectic writer and high school teacher. As the summer approached, he and his wife invited me to be a counselor on a six-week, traveling-school-bus summer camp for high school youth in Alaska. My way would be paid, I would receive a stipend, and I would see Alaska. How exciting! I was somewhat concerned about how to earn the money I needed to make that summer for school, but delighted with the idea of the adventure.

When I told my boyfriend about it, he gravely stated that he couldn't guarantee he would be there when I got back. (Note to self: When anyone gets too serious and grave, bullshit is afoot.) And so, long story short, I didn't go. I let my large vision of possibility shrink with the fear of losing the relationship and the then convincing arguments that I was truly selfish. Later, in the final days of that relationship, there was a moment when I wanted to skinny-dip in the pounding cold Atlantic at night. My boyfriend's disapproval by then was dwarfed by the

pulsing desire to strip down and dive in, and so I gave in to that call. Having had the holy impulses in me labeled as something else (something “bad”) by one who called himself my love only served eventually to carry me onward and away from him.

There were many years then when I followed my impulses and managed to be surrounded by those who did not need to challenge them. And yet I was not finished. At 36, when I was pregnant with my daughter and going through some kind of deep transformation that felt like hell, I had the constant gnawing sense that I needed space, to live alone, to have a womb in which to comfort myself in darkness.

In the eyes of my child's father, I was betraying him — I had, as consciously as I could have, invited the commitment and the conception of a child, only to enter into an unanticipated dissolution of self that called me to a roomier structure than what a traditional commitment looked like. Again the concept of selfishness came up, and again I let another 's vision, within which I did not feel whole, guide my life. With his stated need to leave the relationship if I followed the call to live apart, I was at a loss for a way to support the impulse and not feel like I was committing a grave relational sin.

Yet the larger vision that called to me was one in which space was not the opposite of commitment. It was one in which impulses are holy and serve to deliver us to the larger life we are meant to live, rather than temptations from the devil of selfishness luring us into irresponsibility and betrayal.

It took me four years of suffering to wear down the conditioning inside that told me I should not and could not take this space from the father of my child, until finally it slipped out effortlessly in a conversation one day and I didn 't take it back. Though in his mind the relationship was over, in my mind I was simply and finally moving with what was true inside my body — there was no meaning attached to it for me. I didn't know what truth the next moment would deliver, I only knew the simple and body-centered truth of *now*. But getting to that point — as a woman conditioned to be a nice girl, to think of others, to serve relationship over self, to be reasonable and rational and responsible, to live along the edges of life eking out what I needed instead of asking myself what I wanted — was no small feat.

The truth that speaks to me currently is to leave my job of eight years and to do the work of my heart, which has no actual culturally sanctioned “career” into which to fit. The work I am being called to pursue has to do with love, presence and living oneness in this world. There are no want ads in the paper for the position, and in my being raised by an engineer and a math and science teacher, there is no historical familial support or even recognition that this world of oneness < span class="text164"> even exists, never mind to be an arena in which to make a living. There is no model of anyone in my family striking out on their own, and certainly not the women. There isn 't any reassurance inside of my mind that says that this is a wise thing to do.

Quite the contrary — there are many messages that advise just the opposite. Potentially to risk my daughter 's attendance at her beloved Waldorf school brings up loud cries of "Selfish!" from the mind. We as women have been conditioned to put our needs behind the needs of those we love, to serve others, to love others, to nurture others and, above all, not to be selfish. In addition, the conditioning is strong that to move away from the herd, or to stand out in the herd, is to compromise one 's safety.

What safety? As far as I can tell, the heart of our being is broadcasting to us to move away from our collective historical mind-created security blanket that we call normal, appropriate, reasonable, rational, responsible and safe, an approach that has us speeding headlong into the death of our planet, and instead to listen to the wild call of the holy impulse as it moves within each heart to evolve us into a sustainable way of life.

And so I sound this bugle call to women, to say your dissatisfaction with the way things are exists for a reason. The soul of the world is speaking to you. When the way things operate doesn 't make sense to the whole being that you are, when you look around and feel that you have outgrown the systems and structures in which you find yourself, the truth is that you have. What if the holy impulse, or a divine dissatisfaction, in this present moment is the transformative power of the Divine speaking through us to birth a new world, rather than simply silly or flighty whims that should either be ignored or at most be turned into hobbies? What if we can actually make these impulses the center of our lives and not only do something different, but leave the established social structures behind completely to form our lives and thus our world from our gut sense of what is good, right, just, whole and beautiful?

We certainly have plenty of forms that no longer have any soul, if they ever did. As women, we give birth to life; can we also give birth to new structures, businesses, organizations and ways of living that are brimming with the kind of energy that exists in a kitchen when four women friends are cooking dinner together? Like the Pied Piper, I want to sound my bugle in every crevice of the planet to invite women from the safe confines of the campfire out into the dark wilderness where nothing has yet been born, to gestate and give birth to a new way of being as women.

What this necessitates is that we get to know and fall in love with this simple being that we inherently are, below the complexity that we 've had heaped on top of it. Our essential divine nature is always here below that, always pulsing like a slow heartbeat underneath our frantic strategies to finally get something right in our lives. The mind thinks listening to this heartbeat is a very, very stupid idea. It thinks it surely will be the demise of everything we have ever known. It murmurs that our salvation depends upon keeping this mind-created world together and running so we can at some point get to that place the culture has promised where it 's all wonderful. It's not going to happen.

As women we're taught to respond to external forces — to keep those around us happy and pleased and appeased and feeling good about themselves. We're taught to listen to our mind-created self-criticism that says we should spend a lot of our time wondering how to become more beautiful, desirable or pleasing. How many woman-hours could have gone into birthing a new world into being that instead were sunk into worrying if our butts are too fat in those pants or if our hair looks good enough to leave the house today? So this is a shift from trying to sense in any given moment how a "good woman" would be from an external definition to having only one thing that tells us in any moment how to be: our inner compass.

Many moves in aikido are a simple turning in place. The attacker comes at you and you're wheeling around the center pole of yourself, simply filling out the wholeness of where you stand, and the person gets led by you very easily around you and onto the ground. This happens just by holding the center pole of your self. This is not the center pole of your mind or of your opinions, but deeper than that. In fact, the mind is dying to be saturated in this ocean of being and love that you are. It at first might put up a lot of protestations, but when it gets a little taste of the honey that is dripping from the center of your being, it laps it up and falls asleep like a contented nursing baby.

To become whole and world unto ourselves does not mean to go to the mind and all its stories of lack in an attempt to clean them up. It's not a janitorial project. It's not a housecleaning project, it's a departure. It's saying, "Yes, that's very nice, sweetheart, chatter on with your bad advice, I'm going to listen to this inner knowing; this is my new queen." This queen of the heart. And this queen of the heart wants *all* of you, not just a little bit of you, not just five minutes each day — it wants every bit of you, your whole life. It wants you to be dissolved in that love in every moment. And it's only a matter of time before you know yourself as this love because this is the truth of what we are and who we are. Our illusions have a shelf life, but this truth is unchanging, always here and beckoning, beating its heartbeat to us — *boom, boom*. We don't have to improve our self-esteem because the self that would have esteem is a made-up one, and below that self that would have or would not have esteem is this simple alive being that we are, already completely, fully rich and whole.

To stop and simply explore being and the impulses that rise from it may cause the mind to become impatient: "When are things going to get going?" The mind doesn't want to slow down — it thinks our survival is dependent upon not really being here, but being lost in our overdoing strategies as we head for the promised land. We are beings of such beauty and love. It literally blows the mind when you get a glimpse into it. And this is what the world is asking of you, to live from that essence. To remember that. To put that on the altar of your day. To give your precious minutes to that. Because something beautiful wants to dance you. It's you.

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Originally published in The Eldorado Sun, May, 2007.