

## **ONE**

### **Beginnings: The Path Now Taken**

*Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness.*

Shakti Gawain

One morning, I was asking in my meditations for guidance and clarity. On the porch facing the mangroves, I opened my eyes from prayer and saw a crow breaking off pieces of dead wood from a tree near the intracoastal waterway. He was about twenty feet from me, blue-black, and portentous in a way that I didn't want to think about. My former in-laws are from the Middle East, and they told me that when my son was in a coma, crows gathered on the roof ridge of their house in Baghdad. Ten days later, they flew off and my father-in-law knew that Michael had died. On this morning as I saw the crow, my son Christopher was traveling overseas. His face leapt to my mind as soon as I saw the bird. Panic seized me in its claws, and I forgot what I had originally been asking for in meditation and began to pray for Christopher's safety.

Then I remembered what I was trying to share with other women through my writing. We are creatures of habit, and it is necessary to learn to look at things in a new way. I forced myself to look at this bird. What was he? Didn't crows flock together? His ca-ca was not the caw I heard from crows in the city. He actually was quite beautiful, in a stark way. Just then, he was joined by a smaller version of himself. She broke off a stick, and they flew together to the center of the mangroves. I went inside and got my field guide to birds. It seemed they were fish crows, and they were a mated pair. I got out my medicine cards and the wonderful book by Ted Andrews called Animal-Speak and discovered that the native way of looking at these birds was quite different from mine. The raven, or crow, is a sign of change, of opening to new things, of magic. Also, they represent the movement from darkness into light.

I began to look forward to seeing these birds as they gathered material that I assumed was for their nest. Then one morning I saw them on the railing of my porch. They flew off when they saw me but were back again the next day. The following morning, she was drinking from my water fountain as he stood guard. That night, I came home to find the fountain dry, water splatters and small feathers on the porch around it. They must have bathed in the fountain, and their wings swept the water out. I was amazed at their presence in my life. Now, every morning, I refill the fountain's bowl and watch for their arrival. They come the same time every day, drink, sit on the rail for awhile, and leave. They take their

baths in the late afternoon, but only if they can't see me.

How did I come from that superstitious fear that left me nearly unable to breathe, to this joy of anticipation every morning? A change in perception was all it took. This is the most important lesson in life, whether it be understanding a child or beginning a new career. The saying is nothing new, but now I see it differently.

“It's all in how you look at it.”

What perception of yourself and your life do you accept as fact? Was the fact that my husband no longer loved me an indication that I was unlovable, or simply an indication that he, indeed, no longer loved me? I have begun again, knowing that I have great value.

If we have money in the bank, we think of ourselves as prosperous. Lose the money in the bank, take away the perception of prosperous. But is this correct, or did we just take away the money in the bank? If we are able to see ourselves as prosperous in our daily outlook, we are still prospering when financial lack happens. We're just getting a message that it's time to move on or change our approach since what we're doing is not working for us in a material way. How we fight to stay in our wrong place, blaming ourselves, accepting the judgements of the world or our families. Lack is a state of mind. Of course poverty is a real experience, and a painful one. But it does not need to change who we are, only the circumstances of where we are.

When my children were young, I went to the packing plant in town and bought damaged cans, particularly cans with the labels missing. When I got home, the kids would hold their breath as I took the first can from the crate and opened it. I could almost hear their prayer: “Dear God, please let it be peaches instead of spinach!” Yes, we had financial problems because I chose to stay home and raise children instead of adding to our income. But we were never poor in spirit or ingenuity. We prospered. And from my fear, my change of perspective, I created a poem.

### **Divorce Paper**

*Say that we loved each other. Though counter-omens abound,  
it was true, once, and truth swallows loss. I watched two ravens  
drink chlorinated water from the fountain on our porch,  
dense bodies casting black light over flamed geraniums;  
despite old wives' tales, I sensed no foreboding.  
Florida is blindingly fruitful this spring, gulls flashing*

*sweet sunset from their tails, apricot tinted on wing and breast. Bursting oleanders overflow white-washed walls as if they believe they are in Spain. In our house, drifting cotton curtains are pulled closed, protecting oak floors from sun's destruction. The Realtor laments our echoing rooms, wishes I were in the kitchen baking loaves of wheat bread.*

*What does all of this mean, if not just fodder for poets? We began with lust clothed in the raiment of love, believed it ourselves for a time, just long enough to weave rainbows, drape them over our children. Seeing life through pastel halos was not a bad choice; roses and hibiscus bloom on despite drought and spider mites, as long as their roots are strong.*

Choose to change your perspective. If there is nothing in the current situation that adds to your life in a positive way, walk away. Walk away with love, but walk away. The others involved in the situation will be no more productive than you if you have looked with a whole heart and found nothing there worth saving. You must allow others those same choices. I don't mean you have to *understand* those choices. Sometimes that is not possible in the moment. Later, perspectives will change again and you may find Grace where there was grief. Again, the message is all about being true to yourself the best way that you can, in the moment. Notice what you do to create a life of conscious choice, and give yourself credit if nothing else is happening in the moment but your noticing. That may be enough, for now.

**Soul Practice:** Sit for a minimum of ten minutes and allow your mind and senses to explore one situation in which you would like a change of perspective. Don't control, simply state that you would like to see things differently. Allow anything, no matter how "out there" it may seem, to surface. Afterwards, think and write about it briefly, then put it away. After a while, look again and see if you have effected a change.

***Affirmation: Today I vow to look at everything from more than one point of view. I have the autonomy of looking in a new way and changing my thoughts.***