Women Who Run Th^he Wolves

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Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype

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and bump their way down the road to a fantasized shining city of the psyche. But they are disappointed, for the lush and the wild is not there. It is in the spirit world, that world between worlds, *Rio Abajo Río*, that river beneath the river.

Don't be a fool. Go back and stand under that one red flower and walk straight ahead for that last hard mile. Go up and knock on the old weathered door. Climb up to the cave. Crawl through the window of a dream. Sift the desert and see what you find. It is the only work we *have* to do.

You wish psychoanalytic advice?

Go gather bones.

CHAPTER 2

Stalking the Intruder: The Beginning Initiation

Bluebeard

in a single human being there are many other beings, all with their own values, motives, and devices. Some psychological technologies suggest we arrest these beings, count them, name them, force them into harness till they shuffle along like vanquished slaves. But to do this would halt the dance of wildish lights in a woman's eyes; it would halt her heat lightning and arrest all throwing of sparks. Rather than corrupt her natural beauty, our work is to build for all these beings a wildish countryside wherein the artists among them can make, the lovers love, the healers heal.

But what shall we do with those inner beings who are quite mad and those who carry out destruction without thought? Even these must be given a place, though one in which they can be contained. One entity in particular, the most deceitful and most powerful fugitive in the psyche, requires our immediate consciousness and containment—and that one is the natural predator.

While the cause of much human suffering can be traced to negligent

rostering, there is also within the psyche naturally an innate *contra naturam* aspect, an "against nature" force. The *contra naturam* aspect opposes the positive: it is against development, against harmony, and against the wild. It is a derisive and murderous antagonist that is born into us, and even with the best parental nurture the intruder's sole assignment is to attempt to turn all crossroads into closed roads.

This predatory potentate¹ shows up time after time in women's dreams. It erupts in the midst of their most soulful and meaningful plans. It severs the woman from her intuitive nature. When its cutting work is done, it leaves the woman deadened in feeling, feeling frail to advance her life; her ideas and dreams lay at her feet drained of animation.

Bluebeard is a story of such a matter. In North America, the best known Bluebeard versions are the French and the German.² But I prefer this old version in which the French and the Slavic have been mingled. It is close to the one given to me by my Aunt Kathé (pronounced "Katie"), who lived in Csibrak near Dombovar in Hungary. Among that cadre of farmwomen tellers, the Bluebeard tale is begun with an anecdote about someone who knew someone who knew someone who had seen the grisly proof of Bluebeard's demise. And so we begin.

HERE is A HANK OF BEARD which is kept at the convent of the white nuns in the far mountains. How it came to the convent no one knows. Some say it was the nuns who buried what was left of his body, for no one else would touch it. Why the nuns would keep such a relic is unknown, but it is true. My friend's friend has seen it with her own eyes. She says the beard is blue, indigo-colored to be exact. It is as blue as the dark ice in the lake, as blue as the shadow of a hole at night. This beard was once worn by one who they say was a failed magician, a giant man with an eye for women, a man known by the name of Bluebeard.

'Twas said he courted three sisters at the same time. But they were frightened of his beard with its odd blue cast, and so they hid when he called. In an effort to convince them of his geniality he invited them on an outing in the forest. He arrived leading horses arrayed in bells and crimson ribbons. He set the sisters and their mother upon the horses and off they cantered into the forest. There they had a most wonderful day riding, and their dogs ran beside and ahead. Later they stopped beneath a giant tree and Bluebeard regaled them with stories and fed them dainty treats.

The sisters began to think, "Well, perhaps this man Bluebeard is not so bad after all."

They returned home all a-chatter about how interesting the day had been, and did they not have a good time? Yet, the two older sisters' suspicions and fears returned and they vowed not to see Bluebeard again. But the youngest sister thought if a man could be that charming, then perhaps he was not so bad. The more she talked to herself, the less awful he seemed, and also the less blue his beard.

So when Bluebeard asked for her hand in marriage, she accepted. She had given his proposal great thought and felt she was to marry a very elegant man. Marry they did, and after, rode off to his castle in the woods.

One day he came to her and said, "I must go away for a time. Invite your family here if you like. You may ride in the woods, charge the cooks to set a feast, you may do anything you like, anything your heart desires. In fact, here is my ring of keys. You may open any and every door to the storerooms, the money rooms, any door in the castle; but this little tiny key, the one with the scrollwork on top, do not use."

His bride replied, "Yes, I will do as you ask. It all sounds very fine. So, go, my dear husband, and do not have a worry and come back soon." And so off he rode and she stayed.

Her sisters came to visit and they were, as all souls are, very curious about what the Master had said was to be done while he was away. The young wife gaily told them.

"He said we may do anything we desire and enter any room we wish, except one. But I don't know which one it is. I just have a key and I don't know which door it fits."

The sisters decided to make a game of finding which key fit which door. The castle was three stories high, with a hundred doors in each wing, and as there were many keys on the ring, they crept from door to door having an immensely good time throwing open each door. Behind one door were the kitchen stores, behind another the money stores. All manner of holdings were behind the doors and everything seemed more wonderful all the time. At last, having seen all these marvels, they came finally to the cellar and, at the end of the corridor, a blank wall.

They puzzled over the last key, the one with the little scrollwork

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on top. "Maybe this key doesn't fit anything at all." As they said this, they heard an odd sound—"errrrrrrrr." They peeked around the corner, and—lo and behold!—there was a small door just closing. When they tried to open it again, it was firmly locked. One cried, "Sister, sister, bring your key. Surely this is the door for that mysterious little key."

Without a thought one of the sisters put the key in the door and turned it. The lock scolded, the door swung open, but it was so dark inside they could not see.

"Sister, sister, bring a candle." So a candle was lit and held into the room and all three women screamed at once, for in the room was a mire of blood and the blackened bones of corpses were flung about and skulls were stacked in corners like pyramids of apples.

They slammed the door shut, shook the key out of the lock, and leaned against one another gasping, breasts heaving. My God! My God!

The wife looked down at the key and saw it was stained with blood. Horrified, she used the skirt of her gown to wipe it clean, but the blood prevailed. "Oh, no!" she cried. Each sister took the tiny key in her hands and tried to make it as it once was, but the blood remained.

The wife hid the tiny key in her pocket and ran to the cook's kitchen. When she arrived, her white dress was stained red from pocket to hem, for the key was slowly weeping drops of dark red blood. She ordered the cook, "Quick, give me some horsehair." She scoured the key, but it would not stop bleeding. Drop after drop of pure red blood issued from the tiny key.

She took the key outdoors, and from the oven she pressed ashes onto it, and scrubbed some more. She held it to the heat to sear it. She laid cobweb over it to staunch the flow, but nothing could make the weeping blood subside.

"Oh, what am I to do?" she cried. "I know, I'll put the little key away. I'll put it in the wardrobe. I'll close the door. This is a bad dream. All will be aright." And this she did do.

Her husband came home the very next morning and he strode into the castle calling for his wife. "Well? How was it while I was away?"

"It was very fine, sir."

"And how are my storerooms?" he rumbled.

"Very fine, sir."

"How are my money rooms?" he growled

"The money rooms are very fine also, sir."

"So everything is good, wife?"

"Yes, everything is good."

"Well," he whispered, "then you'd best return my keys."

Within a glance he saw a key was missing. "Where is the smallest key?"

"I ... I lost it. Yes, I lost it. I was out riding and the key ring fell down and I must have lost a key."

"What have you done with it, woman?"

"I . . . I . . . don't remember."

"Don't lie to me! Tell me what you did with that key!"

He put his hand to her face as if to caress her cheek, but instead seized her hair. "You infidel!" he snarled, and threw her to the floor. "You've been into the room, haven't you?"

He threw open her wardrobe and the little key on the top shelf had bled blood red down all the beautiful silks of her gowns hanging there.

"Now it's your turn, my lady," he screamed, and dragged her down the hall and into the cellar till they were before the terrible door. Bluebeard merely looked at the door with his fiery eyes and the door opened for him. There lay the skeletons of all his previous wives.

"And now!!!" he roared, but she caught hold of the door frame and would not let go. She pleaded for her life, "Please! Please, allow me to compose myself and prepare for my death. Give me but a quarter hour before you take my life so I can make my peace with God."

"All right," he snarled, "you have but a quarter of an hour, but be ready."

The wife raced up the stairs to her chamber and posted her sisters on the castle ramparts. She knelt to pray, but instead called out to her sisters.

"Sisters, sisters! Do you see our brothers coming?"

"We see nothing, nothing on the open plains."

Every few moments she cried up to the ramparts, "Sisters, sisters! Do you see our brothers coming?"

"We see a whirlwind, perhaps a dust devil in the distance."

Meanwhile Bluebeard roared for his wife to come to the cellar so he could behead her.

Again she called out, "Sisters, sisters! Do you see our brothers coming?"

Bluebeard shouted for his wife again and began to clomp up the stone steps.

Her sisters cried out, "Yes! We see them! Our brothers are here and they have just entered the castle."

Bluebeard strode down the hall toward his wire's chamber. "I am coming to get you," he bellowed. His footfalls were dense; the rocks in the hallway came loose, the sand from the mortar poured onto the floor.

As Bluebeard lumbered into her chamber with his hands outstretched to seize her, her brothers on horseback galloped down the castle hallway and charged into her room as well. There they routed Bluebeard out onto the parapet. There and then, with swords, they advanced upon him, striking and slashing, cutting and whipping, beating Bluebeard down to the ground, killing him at last and leaving for the buzzards his blood and gristle.

The Natural Predator of the Psyche

Developing a relationship with the wildish nature is an essential part of women's individuation. In order to execute this, a woman must go into the dark, but at the same time she must not be irreparably trapped, captured, or killed on her way there or back.

The Bluebeard story is about that captor, the dark man who inhabits all women's psyches, the innate predator. He is a specific and incontrovertible force which must be memorized and restrained. To restrain the natural predator' of the psyche it is necessary for women to remain in possession of all their instinctual powers. Some of these are insight, intuition, endurance, tenacious loving, keen sensing, far vision, acute hearing, singing over the dead, intuitive healing, and tending to their own creative fires.

In psychological interpretation we call on all aspects of the fairy tale to help us represent the drama within a single woman's psyche. Bluebeard represents a deeply reclusive complex which lurks at the edge of all women's lives, watching, waiting for an opportunity to oppose her. Although it may symbolize itself similarly or differently in men's psyches, it is the ancient and contemporary foe of both genders. It is difficult to completely comprehend the Bluebeardian force, for it is innate, meaning indigenous to all humans from birth forward, and in that sense is without conscious origin. Yet I believe we have a hint of how its nature developed in the preconscious of humans, for in the story, Bluebeard is called "a failed magician." In this occupation he is related to other fairy tales which also portray the malignant predator of the psyche as a rather normative-looking but immeasurably destructive mage.

Using this description as an archetypal shard, we compare it to what we know of failed sorcery or failed spiritual power in mythohistory. The Greek Icarus flew too close to the sun and his waxen wings melted, catapulting him to earth. The Zuni myth "The Boy and the Eagle" tells of a boy who would have become a member of the eagle kingdom but for thinking he could break the rules of Death. As he soared through the sky his borrowed eagle coat was torn from him and he fell to his doom. In Christian myth, Lucifer claimed equality with Yahweh and was driven down to the underworld. In folklore there are any number of sorcerers' apprentices who foolishly dared to venture beyond their actual skill levels, or attempted to contravene Nature. They were punished by injury and cataclysm.

As we examine these leitmotifs, we see the predators in them desire superiority and power over others. They carry a kind of psychological inflation wherein the entity wishes to be loftier than, as big as, and equal to The Ineffable, which traditionally distributes and controls the mysterious forces of Nature, including the systems of Life and Death and the rules of human nature, and so forth.

In myth and story we find that the consequence for an entity attempting to break, bend, or alter the operating mode of The Ineffable is to be chastened, either by having to endure diminished ability in the world of mystery and magic—such as apprentices who are no longer allowed to practice—or lonely exile from the land of the Gods, or a similar loss of grace and power through bumbling, crippling, or death.

If we can understand the Bluebeard as being the internal representative of the entire myth of such an outcast, we then may also be able to comprehend the deep and inexplicable loneliness which sometimes washes over him (us) because he experiences a continuous exile from redemption.

The problem with Bluebeard in the fairy tale is that rather than empowering the light of the young feminine forces of the psyche, he

is instead filled with hatred and desires to kill the lights of the psyche. It is not hard to imagine that in such a malignant formation there is trapped one who once wished for surpassing light and fell from Grace because of it. We can understand why thereafter the exiled one maintains a heartless pursuit of the light of others. We can imagine that it hopes that if it could gather enough soul(s) to itself, it could make a blaze of light that would finally rescind its darkness and repair its loneliness.

In this sense we have at the beginning of the tale a formidable being in its unredeemed aspect. Yet this fact is one of the central truths the youngest sister in the tale must acknowledge, that all women must acknowledge—that both within and without, there is a force which will act in opposition to the instincts of the natural Self, and that that malignant force *is ivhat it is.* Though we might have mercy upon it, our first actions must be to recognize it, to protect ourselves from its devastations, and ultimately to deprive it of its murderous energy.

All creatures must learn that there exist predators. Without this knowing, a woman will be unable to negotiate safely within her own forest without being devoured. To understand the predator is to become a mature animal who is not vulnerable out of naïveté, inexperience, or foolishness.

Like a shrewd tracker, Bluebeard senses the youngest daughter is interested in him, that is, willing to be prey. He asks for her in marriage and in a moment of youthful exuberance, which is often a combination of folly, pleasure, happiness, and sexual intrigue, she says yes. What woman does not recognize this scenario?

Naive Women as Prey

The youngest sister, the most undeveloped sister, plays out the very human story of the naive woman. She will be captured temporarily by her own inner stalker. Yet, she will out in the end, wiser, stronger, and recognizing the willy predator of her own psyche on sight.

The psychological story underlying the tale also applies to the older woman who has not yet completely learned to recognize the innate predator. Perhaps she has begun the process over and over again but, lacking guidance and support, has not yet finished with it.

This is why teaching stories are so nourishing; they provide initiatory maps so even work which has hit a snag can be completed. The Bluebeard story is usable by all women, regardless of whether they are very young and just learning about the predator, or whether they have been hounded and harassed by it for decades and are at last readying for a final and decisive battle with it.

The youngest sister represents a creative potential within the psyche. A something that is going toward exuberant and fissioning life. But there is a detour as she agrees to become the prize of a vicious man because her instincts to notice and do otherwise are not intact.

Psychologically, young girls and young boys are as though asleep about the fact that they themselves are prey. Although sometimes it seems life would be much easier and much less painful if all humans were born totally awake, they are not. We are all born *anlagen*, like the potential at the center of a cell: in biology the *anlage* is the part of a cell characterized as "that which will become." Within the anlage is the primal substance which in time will develop, causing us to become a complete someone.

So our lives as women are ones of quickening the anlage. The Bluebeard tale speaks to the awakening and education of this psychic center, this glowing cell. In service of this education, the youngest sister agrees to marry a force which she believes to be very elegant. The fairy-tale marriage represents a new status being sought, a new layer of the psyche about to be unfurled.

However, the young wife has fooled herself. Initially she felt fearful of Bluebeard. She was wary. However, a little pleasure out in the woods causes her to overrule her intuition. Almost all women have had this experience at least once. As a result she persuades herself that Bluebeard is not dangerous, but only idiosyncratic and eccentric. Oh, how silly. Why am I so put off by that little old blue beard? Her wildish nature, however, has already sniffed out the situation and knows the blue-bearded man is lethal, but the naive psyche disallows this inner knowing.

This error of judgment is almost routine in a woman so young that her alarm systems are not yet developed. She is like an orphan wolf pup who rolls and plays in the clearing, heedless of the ninety-pound bobcat approaching from the shadows. In the case of the older woman who is so cut away from the wild that she can barely hear the inner warnings, she too proceeds, smiling naively.

You might well wonder if all this could be avoided. As in the animal world, a young girl learns to see the predator via her mother's

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and father's teachings. Without parents' loving guidance she will certainly be prey early on. In hindsight, almost all of us have, at least once, experienced a compelling idea or semi-dazzling person crawling in through our windows at night and catching us off guard. Even though they're wearing a ski mask, have a knife between their teeth, and a sack of money slung over their shoulder, we believe them when they tell us they're in the banking business.

However, even with wise mothering and fathering, the young female may, especially beginning about age twelve, be seduced away from her own truth by peer groups, cultural forces, or psychic pressures, and so begins a rather reckless risk-taking in order to find out for herself. When I work with older teenage girls who are convinced that the world is good if they only work it right, it always makes me feel like an old gray-haired dog. I want to put my paws over my eyes and groan, for I see what they do not see, and I know, especially if they're willful and feisty, that they're going to insist on becoming involved with the predator at least once before they are shocked awake.

At the beginning of our lives our feminine viewpoint is very naive, meaning that emotional understanding of the covert is very faint. But this is where we all begin as females. We are naive and we talk ourselves into some very confusing situations. To be uninitiated in the ways of these matters means that we are in a time of our life when we are vulnerable to seeing only the overt.

Among wolves, when the bitch leaves her pups to go hunting, the young ones try to follow her out of the den and down the path. She snarls at them, lunges at them, and scares the bejeezus out of them till they run slipping and sliding back to the den. Their mother knows her pups don't yet know how to weigh and assess other creatures. They don't know who is a predator and who is not. But in time she will teach them, both harshly and well.

Like wolf pups, women need a similar initiation, one which teaches that the inner and outer worlds are not always happy-go-lucky places. Many women do not even have the basic teaching about predators that a wolf mother gives her pups, such as: if it's threatening and bigger than you, flee; if it's weaker, see what you want to do; if it's sick, leave it alone; if it has quills, poison, fangs, or razor claws, back up and go in the other direction; if it smells nice but is wrapped around metal jaws, walk on by.

The youngest sister in the story is not only naive about her own mental processes, and totally ignorant about the murdering aspect of her own psyche, but is also able to be lured by pleasures of the ego. And why not? We all want everything to be wonderful. Every woman wants to sit upon a horse dressed in bells and go riding off through the boundless green and sensual forest. All humans want to attain early Paradise here on earth. The problem is that ego desires to feel wonderful but a yen for the paradisical, when combined with naivete, makes us not fulfilled, but food for the predator.

This acquiescence to marrying the monster is actually decided when girls are very young, usually before five years of age. They are taught to not see, and instead to "make pretty" all manner of grotesqueries whether they are lovely or not. This training is why the youngest sister can say, "Hmmm, his beard isn't really *that* blue." This early training to "be nice" causes women to override their intuitions. In that sense, they are actually purposefully taught to submit to the predator. Imagine a wolf mother teaching her young to "be nice" in the face of an angry ferret or a wily diamondback rattler.

In the tale, even the mother colludes. She goes on the picnic, "goes along for the ride." She doesn't say a word of caution to any of her daughters. One might say the biological mother or the internal mother is asleep or naive herself, as is often the case in very young girls, or in unmothered women.

Interestingly, in the tale, the older sisters demonstrate some consciousness when they say they do not like Bluebeard even though he has just entertained and regaled them in a very romantic and Paradisical manner. There is a sense in the story that some aspects of the psyche, represented by the older sisters, are a little more developed in insight, that they have "knowing" which warns against romanticizing the predator. The initiated woman pays attention to the older sisters' voices in the psyche; they warn her away from danger. The uninitiated woman does not pay attention; she is as yet too identified with naïveté.

Say, for instance, a naive woman keeps making poor choices in a mate. Somewhere in her mind she knows this pattern is fruitless, that she should stop and follow a different value. She often even knows how to proceed. But there is something compelling, a sort of Bluebeardian mesmerization, about continuing the destructive pattern. In most cases, the woman feels if she just holds on to the old pattern a little longer, why surely the paradisical feeling she seeks will appear in the next heartbeat.

At another extreme, a woman involved in a chemical addiction

most definitely has at the back of her mind a set of older sisters who are saying, "No! No way! This is bad for the mind and bad for the body. We refuse to continue." But the desire to find Paradise draws the woman into the marriage to Bluebeard, the drug dealer of psychic highs.

Whatever dilemma a woman finds herself in, the voices of the older sisters in her psyche continue to urge her to consciousness and to be wise in her choices. They represent those voices in the back of the mind that whisper the truths that a woman may wish to avoid for they end her fantasy of Paradise Found.

So the fateful marriage occurs, the mingling of the sweetly naive and the dastardly unlit. When Bluebeard leaves on his journey, the young woman does not realize that even though she is exhorted to do anything she wishes—except that one thing—she is living less, rather than living more. Many women have literally lived the Bluebeard tale. They marry while they are yet naive about predators, and they choose someone who is destructive to their lives. They are determined to "cure" that person with love. They are in some way "playing house." One could say they have spent much time saying, "His beard isn't really so blue."

Eventually a woman thus captured will see her hopes for a decent life for herself and her children diminish more and more. It is to be hoped that she will finally open the door to the room where all the destruction of her life lies. While it may be the woman's actual mate who denigrates and dismantles her life, the innate predator within her own psyche concurs. As long as a woman is forced into believing she is powerless and/or is trained to not consciously register what she knows to be true, the feminine impulses and gifts of her psyche continue to be killed off.

When the youthful spirit marries the predator, she is captured or restrained during a time in her life that was meant to be an unfoldment. Instead of living freely, she begins to live falsely. The deceitful promise of the predator is that the woman will become a queen in some way, when in fact her murder is being planned. There is a way out of all of this, but one must have a key.

The Key to Knowing: The Importance of Snuffling

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Ah, now this tiny key; it is the entry to the secret all women know and yet do not know. The key is both permission and endorsement to know the deepest, darkest secrets of the psyche, in this case the something that mindlessly degrades and destroys a woman's potential.

Bluebeard continues his destructive plan by instructing his wife to compromise herself psychically; "Do what ever you like," he says. He prompts the woman to feel a false sense of freedom. He implies she is free to nourish herself and to revel in bucolic landscapes, at least within the confines of his territory. But in reality, she is not free, for she is constrained from registering the sinister knowledge about the predator, even though deep in the psyche she already truly comprehends the issue.

The naive woman agrees to remain "not knowing." Women who are gullible or those with injured instincts still, like flowers, turn in the direction of whatever sun is offered. The naive or injured woman is then too easily lured with promises of ease, of lilting enjoyment, of various pleasures, be they promises of elevated status in the eyes of her family, her peers, or promises of increased security, eternal love, or hot sex.

Bluebeard forbids the young woman to use the one key that would bring her to consciousness. To forbid a woman to use the key to consciousness strips away Wild Woman, her natural instinct for curiosity and her discovery of "what lies underneath." Without the wild knowing, the woman is without proper protection. If she attempts to obey Bluebeard's command not to use the key, she chooses death for her spirit. By choosing to open the door to the ghastly secret room, she chooses life.

In the tale her sisters come to visit and "they were, as all souls are, very curious." The wife gaily tells them, "We can do anything, except for one thing." The sisters decide to make a game out of finding which door the little key fits. They again have the proper impulse toward consciousness.

Psychological thinkers, from Freud to Bettelheim, have interpreted episodes such as those found in the Bluebeard tale as a psychological punishment for women's sexual curiosity.⁴ Women's curiosity was given

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a negative connotation, whereas men were called investigative. Women were called nosy, whereas men were called inquiring. In reality, the trivialization of women's curiosity so that it seems like nothing more than irksome snooping denies women's insight, hunches, intuitions. It denies all her senses. It attempts to attack her fundamental power.

So, considering that women who have not yet opened the forbidden door tend to be the same women who walk right into the Bluebeard's arms, it is fortuitous that the older sisters have the proper wildish instincts for curiosity intact. These are the shadow-women of the individual woman's psyche, the tics and nudges in the back of a woman's mind that re-mind her, put her back in her right mind about what is 'important. Finding the little door is 'important, disobeying the predator's order is important, finding out what is so special about this one room is important.

Doors, in times past, were made mostly of stone, but also of wood. The spirit of the stone or wood was thought to be retained in the door, and it too was called upon to act as guardian of the room. Early on there were more doors to tombs than to homes, and the very image of *door* meant something of spiritual value was within, or there was something within which must be kept contained.

The door in the tale is portrayed as a psychic barrier, a kind of guard that is placed in front of the secret. This guard which rests in stone or wood reminds us again of the predator's reputation as a mage—a psychic force that twists and tangles us up as though by magic, keeping us from knowing what we know. Women strengthen this barrier or door when they engage in a form of negative self-encouragement which warns them not to think or dive too deeply, for "you may get more than you bargained for." In order to breach this barrier, the proper countermagic must be employed. And the fitting magic is found in the symbol of the key.

Asking the proper question is the central action of transformation—in fairy tales, in analysis, and in individuation. The key question causes germination of consciousness. The properly shaped question always emanates from an essential curiosity about what stands behind. Questions are the keys that cause the secret doors of the psyche to swing open.

Though the sisters know not whether treasure or travesty lies beyond the door, they summon their goodly instincts to ask *the* precise psychological question, "Where do you think that door is, and what might lie beyond it?" It is at this point that the naive nature begins to mature, to question, "What is behind the visible? What is it which causes that shadow to loom upon the wall?" The youthful naive nature begins to understand that if there is a secret something, if there is a shadow something, if there is a forbidden something, it needs to be looked into. Those who would develop consciousness pursue all that stands behind the readily observable: the unseen chirping, the murked window, the lamenting door, the lip of light beneath a sill. They pursue these mysteries until the substance of the matter is laid open to them.

As we shall see, the ability to stand what one sees is the vital vision which causes a woman to return to her deep nature, there to be sustained in all thoughts, feelings, and actions.

The Animal Groom

So though the young woman attempts to follow the orders of the predator, and agrees to be ignorant about the secret in the cellar, she can only do so for so long. Finally she puts the key, the question, to the door and finds the shocking carnage in some part of her deep life. And that key, that tiny symbol of her life, suddenly will not cease its bleeding, will not cease to give the cry that something is wrong. A woman may try to hide from the devastations of her life, but the bleeding, the loss of life's energy, will continue until she recognizes the predator for what it is and contains it.

When women open the doors of their own lives and survey the carnage there in those out-of-the-way places, they most often find they have been allowing assassination of their most crucial dreams, goals, and hopes. They find lifeless thoughts and feelings and desires; ones which were once graceful and promising are now drained of blood. Whether these hopes and dreams be about desire for relationship, desire for an accomplishment, a success, or a work of art, when there is this gruesome discovery in one's psyche, we can be sure the natural predator, also often symbolized in dreams as the animal groom, has been at work methodically destroying a woman's most cherished desires.

The animal groom character is a marker in the psyche, symbolizing a malevolent thing disguised as a benevolent thing. This or some proximate characterization is always present when a woman carries

naive presentments about something or someone. When a woman is attempting to avoid the facts of her own devastations, her night dreams will shout warnings to her, warnings and exhortations to wake up! or get help! or flee! or go for the kill!

Over the years, I've seen many women's dreams with this animal groom feature or this things-are-not-as-nice-as-they-seem aura. One woman dreamt of a beautiful and charming man, but when she looked down, there was a loop of cruel barbed wire beginning to uncoil from his sleeve. Another woman dreamt that she was helping an old person cross the street and the old person suddenly smiled diabolically and "melted" on her arm, burning her deeply. Yet another woman dreamed of eating with an unknown friend whose fork flew across the table, mortally wounding the dreamer.

This not seeing, not understanding, not perceiving that our internal desires are not concomitant with our external actions; this is the spoor left behind by the animal groom. The presence of this factor in the psyche accounts for why women who say they wish to have a relationship instead do all they can to sabotage a loving one. This is how women who set goals to be here, there, or wherever by such and such time never even begin the first leg of the journey, or abandon it at the first hardship. This is how all the procrastinations which give rise to self-hatred, all the shame-feelings which are pushed down and away to fester, all the new beginnings which are sorely needed, and all the long overdue endings are not met. Wherever the predator lurks and works, everything is derailed, demolished, and decapitated.

The animal groom is a widespread symbol in fairy tales, the general story going something like this: A strange man courts a young woman who agrees to be his bride, but before the wedding day she takes a walk in the woods, becomes lost, and as darkness falls, climbs into a tree to be safe from predators. As she waits out the night, along comes her betrothed with a spade over his shoulder. Something about her groom-to-be gives him away as being not truly human. Sometimes it is his strangely formed foot, hand, arm, or hair that is decidedly outré and gives him away.

He begins to dig a grave beneath the very tree she sits in, all the while singing and muttering about how he will murder his latest brideto-be and bury her in this grave. The terrified girl conceals herself all night long, and in the morning when the groom-to-be is gone, she runs home, reports him to her brothers and father, and the men waylay the animal groom and kill him. This is a powerful archetypal process in women's psyches. The woman is adequately perceptive, and though she too at first agrees to marry that natural predator of the psyche, and although she too goes through a period of being lost in the psyche, she wills out at the end, for she is able to see into the truth of it all, and she is able to hold it in consciousness and take action to resolve the matter.

Ah, so then comes the next step, even more difficult yet, and that is to be able to stand what one sees, all one's self-destruction and deadness.

Blood Scent

In the tale, the sisters slam the door to the killing chamber shut. The young wife stares at the blood on the key. A whimper rises within her. "I must scrub this blood off or he will know!"

Now the naive self has knowledge about a killing force loose within the psyche. And the blood on the key is women's blood. If it were only blood from having one's frivolous fantasies sacrificed, there would be but a nick of blood on the key. But it is so much more serious, for the blood represents the decimation of the deepest and most soulful aspects of one's creative life.

In this state a woman is losing her energy to create, whether it be solutions to mundane issues of her life with such as school, family, friendships, or her goals, her personal development, her art. This is not a mere procrastination, for it continues over weeks and months of time. She seems flattened out, filled with ideas perhaps, but deeply anemic and more unable to act upon them.

The blood in this story is not menstrual blood, but arterial blood from the soul. It not only stains the key, it runs down the entire persona. The dress she wears as well as all her gowns in her wardrobe are stained by it. In archetypal psychology, clothing personifies the outer presence. It is a mask a person shows to the world. It hides much. With proper psyche padding and disguises, both men and women can present a near-perfect persona, a near-perfect facade.

When the weeping key—the crying question—stains our personas, we cannot any longer hide our travails. We can say what we like, present the most smiling facade, but once we have seen the shocking truth of the killing room, we can no longer pretend it does not exist. And seeing the truth causes us to bleed energy even more. It is painful; it is artery cutting. We must try to immediately correct this terrible state.

So, in this fairy tale, the key also acts as container; it contains the blood which is the memory of what one has seen and knows. For women, the key always symbolizes entrée to a mystery or into knowledge. In fairy tales, the key is often represented by words such as "Open Sesame," which Ali Baba shouts to a ragged mountain, causing the entire mountain to rumble and crack open so he could pass through. In a more picaresque manner, at Disney Studios, the fairy godmother in Cinderella chortles "Bibbity-bobbity-boo!" and pumpkins turn into carriages and mice into coachmen.

In the Eleusinian mysteries, the key was hidden on the tongue, meaning the crux of the thing, the clue, the trace, were in a special set of words, key questions. And the words women need most in situations similar to the one described in Bluebeard are: What stands behind? What is not as it appears? What do I know deep in my ovaries that I wish I did not know? What of me has been killed, or lays dying?

Any and all of these are keys. And the answers to these four questions are very likely to come up with blood on them. The killing aspect of the psyche, part of whose job it is to see that no consciousness occurs, will continue to check in from time to time and twist off or poison any new growth. It is its nature. It is its job.

So, in a positive sense, it is only the insistent blood on this key which causes the psyche to hold on to what it has seen. You see, there is a natural censoring of all negative and painful events that occur in our lives. The censoring ego most certainly wishes to forget it ever saw the room, ever saw the cadavers. This is why Bluebeard's wife attempts to scour the key with horsehair. She tries everything she knows, all the remedies for lacerations and deep wounds from women's folk medicine: cobwebs, ash, and fire—all associated with the weaving of life and death by the Fates. But not only does she fail to cauterize the key, neither can she end this process by pretending it is not occurring. She cannot stop the tiny key from weeping blood. Paradoxically, as her old life is dying and even the best remedies will not hide that fact, she is awake to her blood loss and therefore just beginning to live.

The formerly naive woman must face what has occurred. Bluebeard's killing of all his "curious" wives is the killing of the creative feminine, the one who has the potential to develop all manner of new and interesting aspects. The predator is particularly aggressive in ambushing woman's wildish nature. At the very least, it seeks to scorn, and at the most to sever a woman's connection to her own insights, inspirations, follow through, and more.

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Another woman I worked with, an intelligent and gifted woman, told me of her grandmother, who lived in the Midwest. Her grandmother's idea of a really good time was to board the train to Chicago and wear a big hat, and walk down Michigan Avenue looking in all the shop windows and being an elegant lady. By hook or by crook or by fate, she married a farmer. They moved out into the midst of the wheatlands, and she began to rot away in that elegant little farmhouse that was just the right size, with all the right children, and all the right husband. She had no more time for that "frivolous" life she'd once led. "Too much kids." Too much "women's work."

One day, years later, after washing the kitchen and living room floors by hand, she slipped into her very best silk blouse, buttoned her long skirt, and pinned on her big hat. She pressed her husband's shotgun to the roof of her mouth and pulled the trigger. Every woman alive knows why she washed the floors first.

A starved soul can become so filled with pain, a woman can no longer bear it. Because women have a soul-need to express themselves in their own soulful ways, they must develop and blossom in ways that are sensible to them and without molestation from others. In this sense, the key with blood could be said to also represent a woman's female bloodlines that have gone before her. Who among us does not know at least one female loved-one who lost her instincts to make good choices for herself, and was forced therefore to live a marginal life or worse? Perhaps you yourself are that woman.

One of the least discussed issues of individuation is that as you shine the light into the dark of your psyche as strongly as you can, the shadows, where the light is not, grow even darker. So when we illuminate some part of the psyche, there is a resultant deeper dark to contend with. This dark cannot be let alone. The key, the questions, cannot be hidden or forgotten. They must be asked. They must be answered.

The deepest work is usually the darkest. A brave woman, a wisening woman, will develop the poorest psychic land, for if she builds only on the best land of her psyche, she will have for a view the least of what she is. So do not be afraid to investigate the worst. It only guarantees increase of soul power.

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58 Women Who Run With the Wolves

It is in this psychic kind of land development that Wild Woman shines. She is not afraid of the darkest dark, in fact she can see in the dark. She is not afraid of offal, refuse, decay, stink, blood, cold bones, dying girls, or murderous husbands. She can see it, she can take it, she can help. And this is what the youngest sister of the Bluebeard tale is learning.

The skeletons in the chamber represent, in the most positive light, the indestructible force of the feminine. Archetypally, bones represent that which can never be destroyed. Stories of bones are essentially about something in the psyche that is difficult to destroy. The only thing that we possess that is difficult to destroy is our soul.

When we talk about the feminine essence, we're really talking about the feminine soul. When we talk about the bodies scattered in the cellar, we're saying something has happened to the soul-force and yet, even though its outer vitality has been taken away, even though life has essentially been wrung out of it, it has not been destroyed utterly. It can come back to life.

It comes back to life through the young woman and her sisters, who ultimately are able to break the old pattern of ignorance and to behold a horror, and not look away. They are able to see, and to stand what they see.

Here we are again at *La Loba's* place, at the archetypal bone woman's cave. Here we have the remnants of what once was the full woman. However, unlike the cyclical life and death aspects of the Wild Woman archetype who takes the life that is ready to die, incubates it, and hurls it back into the world again, Bluebeard only kills and dismantles a woman until she is nothing but bones. He leaves her no beauty, no love, no self, and therefore no ability to act in her own behalf. To remedy this, we as woman must look to the killing thing that has gained hold of us, see the result of its grisly work, register it all consciously, and retain it in consciousness, and then act.

The cellar, dungeon, and cave symbols are all related to one another. They are ancient initiatory environs; a place to or through which a woman descends to the murdered one(s), breaks taboo to find the truth, and through wit and/or travail triumphs by banishing, transforming, or exterminating the assassin of the psyche. The tale lays out the work for us with clear instructions: track the bodies, follow instincts, see what you see, call up psychic muscle, dismantle the destructive energy. If a woman does not look into these issues of her own deadness and murder, she remains obedient to the dictates of the predator. Once she opens the room in the psyche that shows how dead, how slaughtered she is, she sees how various parts of her feminine nature and her instinctual psyche have been killed off and died a lowly death behind a facade of wealth. Now that she sees this, now that she registers how captured she is and how much psychic life is at stake, now she can do something even more powerful.

Backtracking and Looping

Backtracking and looping is when an animal dives under the ground to escape and pops up behind the predator's back. This is the psychic maneuver which Bluebeard's wife effects in order to reestablish her sovereignty over her own life once again.

Bluebeard, upon discovering what he deems to be his wife's deceit, seizes her by her hair and drags her down the stairs. "Now it is your turn!" he roars. The killing element of the unconscious rises up and threatens to destroy the conscious woman.

Analysis, dream interpretation, self-knowing, exploration, all are undertaken because they are ways of backtracking and looping. They are ways of diving down and coming up behind the issue and seeing it from a different perspective. Without the ability to see, truly see, what is learned about ego-self and the numinous Self slips away.

In Bluebeard, the psyche now tries to avoid being killed. No longer naive, it has become cunning; it pleads for time to compose itself in other words, time to strengthen itself for the final battle. In outer reality, we find women planning their escapes too, whether from an old destructive mode, a lover, or a job. She stalls for time, she bides her time, she plans her strategy and calls up her power internally, before she makes an external change. Sometimes it is just this kind of immense threat from the predator that causes a woman to change from being an adaptive dear to having the hooded eye of the watchful.

Ironically, both aspects of the psyche, the predator and the young potential, reach their boiling point. When a woman understands that she has been prey, both in the outer and inner worlds, she can hardly bear it. It strikes at the root of who she is at center, and she plans, as she must, to kill the predatory force.

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Meanwhile her predatory complex is enraged that she has pried open the forbidden door, and is busily making its rounds, attempting to cut off all avenues of her escape. This destructive force becomes murderous, and says the woman has violated the holy of holys and now must die.

When opposing aspects of a woman's psyche both reach their flash points, a woman may feel incredibly tired, for her libido is being drawn away in two opposite directions. But even if a woman is fatigued unto death with her miserable struggles, no matter what they might be, even though she be starved of soul, she must yet plan her escape; a woman must force herself forward anyway. At this critical time it is like being in subzero weather for a day and a night. In order to survive, we must not give in to the fatigue. To go to sleep is certain death.

This is the more profound initiation, a woman's initiation into her proper instinctive senses wherein the predator is identified and banished. This is the moment in which the captured woman moves from victim status into shrewd-minded, wily-eyed, sharp-eared status instead. This is the time that almost superhuman effort manages to drive the so-tired psyche to its final work. The key questions continue to help, for the key continues to bleed its wise blood even as the predator forbids consciousness. His maniacal message is, "For consciousness—you die." Her response is to trick him into thinking she is his willing victim while she plans his demise.

Among animals there is said to be a mysterious psychic dance between predator and prey. It is said, if the prey gives a certain kind of servile eye contact, and a certain kind of shiver that causes a faint rippling of the skin over its muscles, that the prey acknowledges its weakness to the predator and agrees to become the predator's victim.

There are times to shiver and run, and there are times to not. At this time, a woman must not shiver, and must not grovel. Bluebeard's young wife's plea for time to gather herself together is not the signal of submission to the predator. It is her shrewd way of gathering her energy up into muscle. Like certain creatures of the forest, she is poised to make an all-out strike against the predator. She dives into the ground to escape the predator, then unexpectedly surfaces behind him.

Giving the Cry

When Bluebeard bellows for his wife and she stalls for dear time, she is trying to rouse energy to overwhelm the captor, whether that specifically or in combination be a destructive religion, husband, family, culture, or a woman's negative complexes.

Bluebeard's wife pleads for her life, but craftily. "Please," she whispers, "allow me to prepare for my death."

"Yes," he snarls, "but be ready."

The young woman summons her psychic brothers. What do these represent in a woman's psyche? They are the more muscled, more naturally aggressive propellants of the psyche. They are the force within a woman which can act when it is time to kill. Although this attribute is here portrayed by the male gender, it can be portrayed by either gender—and by other things which are genderless, such as the mountain which snaps shut on the intruder, the sun which descends for an instant to burn the marauder to a crisp.

The wife races up the stairs to her chamber and posts her sisters on the ramparts. She cries up to her sisters, "Do you see our brothers coming yet?" And her sisters call down that they see nothing yet. As Bluebeard roars for his wife to come to the cellar so he can behead her, again she cries, "Do you see our brothers coming?" And her sisters call down that perhaps they see a little dust devil or a whirlwind off in the distance.

Here we have the entire scene of a woman's surge of intra-psychic power. Her sisters—the wiser ones—take center stage in this last initiatory step; they become her eyes. The woman's cry travels over a long intra-psychic distance to where her brothers live, to where those aspects of psyche that are trained to fight, to fight to the death if necessary, live. But initially, the defending aspects of psyche are not immediately as close by to consciousness as they should be. Many women's alacrity and fighting natures are not as close to consciousness as is efficient.

A woman must practice calling up or conjuring her contentious nature, her whirlwind, dust-devil force. The symbol of the whirling wind is a central force of determination which, when focused rather than scattered, gives tremendous energy to a woman. With this more fierce attitude at the ready, she will not lose consciousness or be interred along with the rest. She will solve, for once and for all, the

interior woman-killing, her loss of libido, the loss of her passion for life. While the key questions provide the opening and loosening required for her liberation, without the eyes of the sisters, without the muscle of the sword-wielding brothers, she cannot fully succeed.

Bluebeard shouts for his wife and begins to clomp up the stone steps. His wife cries to her sisters, "And now, do you see them now?" And her sisters cry down, "Yes! We see them now, they are almost here." Her brothers gallop down the hall. They charge into her room and drive Bluebeard out onto the parapet. There, with swords, they kill him and leave what is left of him for the carrion eaters.

When women re-surface from their naïveté, they draw with them and to themselves something unexplored. In this case the now wiser woman draws an internal masculine energy to her aid. In Jungian psychology, this element has been named *animus*, a partly mortal, partly instinctual, partly cultural element of a woman's psyche that shows up in fairy tales and in dream symbols as her son, husband, stranger, and/or lover—possibly threatening depending on her psychic circumstances of the moment. This psychic figure is particularly valuable because it is invested with qualities which are traditionally bred out of women, aggression being one of the more common.

When this opposite-gender nature is healthy, as symbolized by the brothers in "Bluebeard," it loves the woman it inhabits. It is the intrapsychic energy which helps her to accomplish anything she asks. He is the one who has psychic muscle where she may have differing gifts. He will aid and assist her in her bid for consciousness. For many women, he bridges between the worlds of internal thought and feeling and the outer world.

The stronger and more vast the animus (think of the animus as a bridge) the more able, easily, and with style the woman manifests her ideas and her creative work in the outer world in a concrete way. A woman with a poorly developed animus has lots of ideas and thoughts but is unable to manifest them in the outer world. She always stops short of the organization or implementation of her wonderful images.

The brothers represent the blessing of strength and action. With them, in the end, two things occur: one is that the vast and disabling ability of the predator is neutralized in a woman's psyche. And second, the blueberry-eyed maiden is replaced by one with eyes awake, and a warrior to each side of her if she but calls for them.

The Sin-eaters

Bluebeard is through and through a "cutting" story about severing and reunion. In the final stage of the story, Bluebeard's body is left for the flesh-eaters—the cormorants, raptors, and buzzards—to carry away. Here we have a very strange and mystical ending. In ancient times there were souls called sin-eaters. These were spirits, birds, or animals, sometimes humans, who somewhat like the scapegoat, took on the sins, the waste, of the community so people could be redeemed or cleansed.

We have seen how Wild Woman is *La Loba*, the bone woman, the finder of the dead, the one who sings over the bones of the dead, bringing them back to life, and that this Life/Death/Life nature is a central attribute of the wildish and instinctual nature of women. Likewise, in Norse mythology, the sin-eaters are carrion eaters who devour the dead, incubate them in their bellies, and carry them to Hei, who is not a place but a person. Hel is the Goddess of life and death. She shows the dead how to live backward. They become younger and younger until they are ready to be reborn and re-released back into life.

This eating of sins and sinners, and the subsequent incubation of them, and their release back into life once more, constitutes an individuation process for the most base beings in the psyche. In this sense it is right and proper for that purpose that we draw energy out of the predatory elements of our psyches, killing them so to speak, draining their powers. Then they may be returned to the compassionate Life/Death/Life Mother, to be transformed and re-issued, hopefully in a less contentious state.

Many scholars who have studied this tale think Bluebeard represents a force which is not redeemable.⁵ But I sense additional ground for this aspect of the psyche—not a transformation from mass murderer into Mr. Chips, but more like a person who must be in an asylum, but a decent place with trees and sky and proper food, and maybe music to soothe, but not banished to a back ward in the psyche to be tortured and reviled.

On the other hand, I do not want to portray that there is no such thing as manifest and irredeemable evil, for that also exists. Throughout time there is the mystical sense that any individuation work done by humans also changes the darkness in the collective unconscious of

all humans, that being the place where the predator resides. Jung once said that God became more conscious⁶ as humans became more conscious. He postulated that humans cause the dark side of God to become struck with light when they rout their personal demons out into the light of day.

I do not claim to know how it all works, but following archetypal pattern, it would look and work something like this: Instead of reviling the predator of the psyche, or running away from it, we dismember it. We accomplish this by not allowing ourselves divisive thoughts about our soul-life and our worth in particular. We capture invidious thoughts before they become large enough to do any harm, and we dismantle them.

We dismantle the predator by countering its diatribes with our own nurturant truths. Predator: "You never finish anything you start." Yourself: "I finish many things." We dismantle the assaults of the natural predator by taking to heart and working with what is truthful in what the predator says and then discarding the rest.

We dismantle the predator by maintaining our intuitions and instincts and by resisting the predator's seductions. If we were to list all our losses up to this point in our lives, remembering times when we were disappointed, when we were powerless against torment, when we had a fantasy filled with frosting and frou-frou, we would understand that those are vulnerable sites in our psyches. It is to those desirous and underprivileged parts that the predator appeals in order to hide the fact that its sole intention is to drag you to the cellar and leech your energy as a blood transfusion for himself.

In the finale of the Bluebeard story his bones and gristle are left for the buzzards. This gives us a strong insight into transformation of the predator. That is the last task for a woman in this Bluebeardian journey: to allow her Life/Death/Life nature to pick the predator apart and carry it off to be incubated, transformed, released back into life.

When we refuse to entertain the predator, its strength is extracted and it is unable to act without us. We, in essence, drive it down into the layer of the psyche where all creation is as yet unformed, and let it bubble in that etheric soup till we can find a form, a better form for it to fill. When the predator's psychic *energum* is rendered, it is formable to some other purpose. We are creators then; the raw substance reduced down, it becomes then the stuff of our own creation.

Women find that as they vanquish the predator, taking from it

what is useful and leaving the rest, they are filled with intensity, vitality, and drive. They have rendered from the predator what has been stolen from them, vigor and substance. To render the predator's energy and turn it to something else can be understood in these ways: The predator's rage can be rendered into a soul-fire for accomplishing a great task in the world. The predator's craftiness can be used to inspect and understand things from a distance. The predator's killing nature can be used to kill off that which must properly die in a wom-an's life, or what she must die to in her outer life, these being different things at different times.

To render the parts of Bluebeard is like taking the medicinal parts of the deadly nightshade, or the healing elements of the poisonous belladonna plant, and using these materials carefully and for healing and helping. What ash of the predator is left then will indeed rise up again, but in much smaller form, much more recognizably, and with much less power to deceive and destroy—for you have rendered many of its powers which it plied destructively, and you have turned these powers toward the useful and the relevant.

Bluebeard is one of the teaching tales which are important for women who are young, not necessarily in years, but in some part of their minds. It is a tale of psychic naiveté, but also of powerfully breaching the injunction against "looking" and finally cutting down and rendering the natural predator of the psyche.

Story is meant to set the inner life back into motion again. The Bluebeard story is a medicine which is particularly important to apply where the inner life of a woman has become frightened, or wedged or cornered. Story solutions lessen fear, give doses of adrenaline at just the right time, and most importantly for the captured naive self, cut doors into walls which were previously blank.

Perhaps most important, the Bluebeard story raises to consciousness the psychic key, the ability to ask any and all questions about oneself, about one's family, one's endeavors, and about life all around. Then, like the wildish being who sniffs things out, snuffles into and under and around to discover what a thing is, a woman is free to find true answers to her deepest and darkest questions. She is free to wrest the powers from the thing which has assailed her and to turn those powers which were once used against her to her own well-suited and excellent uses. That, is a wildish woman.

The Dark Man in Women's Dreams

The natural predator of the psyche is not only found in fairy tales but also in dreams. There is a universal initiatory dream among women, one so common that it is remarkable if a woman has reached age twenty-five without having had such a dream. The dream usually causes women to jolt awake, striving and anxious.

This is the pattern of the dream: The dreamer is alone, often in her own home. There are one or more prowler-types outside in the dark. Frightened, she dials⁷ the emergency phone number for help. Suddenly, she realizes, the prowler is inside the house with her . . . close to her . . . perhaps she can feel his breath . . . perhaps he is even touching her . . . and she cannot ring the emergency number. The dreamer awakens instantly, breathing gutturally, heart like a crazy drum.

There is a strong physical aspect to having a dream of the dark man. The dream is often accompanied by sweats, struggles, hoarse breathing, heart pounding, and sometimes cries and moans of fear from the dreamer. We could say the dream-maker has dispensed with subtle messages to the dreamer and now sends images which shake the neurological and autonomic nervous system of the dreamer, thereby communicating the urgency of the matter.

The antagonist! s) of this "dark man" dream are usually, in women's own words, "terrorists, rapists, thugs, concentration camp Nazis, marauders, murderers, criminals, creeps, bad men, thieves." There are several levels to the interpretation of such a dream, depending on the life circumstances and interior dramas surrounding the dreamer.

For instance, often such a dream is a reliable indicator that a woman's consciousness, as in the case of a very young woman, is just beginning to gain awareness of the innate psychic predator. In other instances, the dream is a harbinger; the woman dreamer has just discovered, or is about to discover and begin liberating, a forgotten and captive function of her psyche. Under yet other circumstances the dream is about an increasingly intolerable situation in the culture outside the dreamer's personal life, one in which she is being called to fight or flee.

First let us understand the subjective ideas in this motif as applied to the personal and interior life of the dreamer. The dark man dream tells a woman what predicament she is facing. The dream tells about a cruel attitude toward herself as personified by the thug in the dream. Like Bluebeard's wife, if the woman can consciously gain hold of the "key" question about this matter and answer it honestly, she can be set free. Then the muggers, lurkers, and predators of the psyche will exert much less pressure on her. They will fall away to a distant layer of the unconscious. There she can deal with them conscientiously instead of in crisis.

The dark man in women's dreams appears when an initiation—a psychic change from one level of knowing and behavior to another more mature or more energetic level of knowledge and action—is imminent. This dream occurs to the as-yet-to-be-initiated, as well as those who are veterans of several rites of passage, for there is always more initiation. No matter how old a woman becomes, no matter how many years pass, she has yet more ages, stages, and more "first times" awaiting her. That is what initiation is all about: it creates an archway which one prepares to pass through to a new manner of knowing and being.

Dreams are *portales*, entrances, preparations, and practices for the next step in a woman's consciousness, the next day in her individuation process. So, a woman might have a dream of the predator when her psychic circumstances are too quiescent or complacent. We could say that this occurs in order to raise a storm in the psyche so that some energetic work can be done. But also a dream like this affirms that the woman's life needs to change, that the woman dreamer has gotten caught in some hiatus or ennui as regards a difficult choice, that she is reluctant to take the next step, go the next distance, that she is shying away from wresting her own power away from the predator, that she is not used to being/acting/striving at full bore, in all-out capacity.

Additionally, dark man dreams are also wake-up calls that say to pay attention to something gone radically amiss in the outer world, or in personal life, or in the outer collective culture. Classical psychological theory tends to, by absolute omission, split the human psyche away from relationship to the land on which humans live, away from knowledge of the cultural eitiologies of malaise and unrest, and also to sever psyche from the politics and policies which shape the inner and outer lives of humans—as though that outer world were not just as surreal, not just as symbol-laden, not just as impacting and imposing upon one's soul-life as the inner din.

When the outer world has intruded on the basic soul-life of one individual or of many, dark man dreams come in legions. It has been fascinating to me to have gathered dreams from women afflicted by something gone wrong in the outer culture, such as those living near the poisonous smelter at York City," Idaho, to dreams dreamt by some extremely conscious women actively involved in social action and environment protection, such as *las guerrillas compañeras*, warrior sisters in the Quebrada outback of Central America,⁹ women in the *Cofradías des Santuarios*¹" in the United States, and civil rights proponents in Latino County." They all dream many dark man dreams.

Generally, it would appear that to the naive or noncognizant dreamers, these are meant as wake-up calls: "Hola! Pay attention, you're in danger." And to those women who are quite conscious and involved in social action, the dark man dream seems to be almost a tonic which reminds the woman what she is up against, which encourages her in turn to stay strong, stay vigilant, and to continue the work at hand.

So, when women dream of the natural predator, it is not always or solely a message about the interior life. Sometimes it is a message about the threatening aspects of the culture one lives in, whether it be a small but brutal culture at their office, one within their own family, the lands of their neighborhood, or as wide as their own religious or national culture. As you can see, each group and culture appears to also have its own natural psychic predator, and we see from history that there are eras in cultures during which the predator is identified with and allowed absolute sovereignty until the people who believe otherwise become a tide.

While much psychology emphasizes the familial causes of angst in humans, the cultural component carries as much weight, for culture is the family of the family. If the family of the family has various sicknesses, then all families within that culture will have to struggle with the same malaises. There is a saying *cultura cura*, culture cures. If the culture is a healer, the families learn how to heal; they will struggle less, be more reparative, far less wounding, far more graceful and loving. In a culture where the predator rules, all new life needing to be born, all old life needing to be gone, is unable to move and the soul-lives of its citizenry are frozen with both fear and spiritual famine.

Why this intruder which, in women's dreams, most often takes the

shape of an intrusive male seeks to attack the instinctual psyche and its wildish knowing powers in particular, no one can say for certain. We say it is the nature of the thing. Yet we find this destructive process exacerbated when the culture around a woman touts, nourishes, and protects destructive attitudes toward the deep instinctual and soulful nature. By this, the culture causes these very destructive values—to which the predator avidly agrees—to grow stronger within the psyches of all its inhabitants. Likewise, when a society exhorts its people to be distrustful of and to shun the deep instinctual life, then the auto-predatory element in our psyches is strengthened and accelerated.

Yet even in an oppressive culture, in whatever women the Wild Woman still lives and thrives or even glimmers, there will be "key" questions asked, not only the ones we find useful for insight into ourselves but also ones about our culture. "What stands behind these proscriptions I see in the outer world? What goodness or usefulness of the individual, of the culture, the earth, of human nature has been killed, or lays dying here?" Once these issues are examined, the woman is enabled to act according to her own abilities, according to her own talents. To take the world into one's arms and to act toward it in a soul-filled and soul-strengthening manner is a powerful act of wildish spirit.

It is for this reason that the wildish nature in women must be preserved—and even, in some instances, guarded with extreme vigilance so that it is not suddenly abducted and garroted. It is important to feed this instinctive nature, to shelter it, to give it increase, for even in the most restrictive conditions of culture, family, or psyche, there is far less paralysis in women who have remained connected to the deep and wild instinctual nature. Though there be injury if a woman is captured and/or tricked into remaining naive and compliant, there is still left adequate energy to overcome the captor, to evade it, to outrun it, and eventually to sunder and render it for their own constructive use.

There is one other specific instance in which women are highly likely to experience dark man dreams and that is when their internal creative fire is smoking and banking all by itself, when there is little fuel left in the corner, or when the white ashes grow deeper every day yet the cookpot remains empty. These syndromes can occur even when we are veterans at our art, as well as when we first seriously begin to apply our gifts outwardly. They occur when there is a pred-

atory intrusion into the psyche, and as a result we find every reason to do anything and everything except sit there, or stand there, or travel there in order to execute whatever it is that we hold dear.

In these cases, the dark man dream, even though accompanied by heart-jumping fear, is not an ominous dream. It is a very positive one about a proper and timely need to awaken to a destructive movement within one's own psyche, to that which is stealing one's fire, intruding on one's vim, robbing one of the place, the space, the time, the territory to create.

Often the creative life is slowed or stopped because something in the psyche has a very low opinion of us, and we are down there groveling at its feet instead of bopping it over the head and running free. In many cases what is required to aright the situation is that we take ourselves, our ideas, our art, far more seriously than we have done before. Due to wide breaks in matrilineal succor over many generations, this business of valuing one's creative life—that is, valuing the beauteous and artful ideas and works which issue from the wildish soul—has become a perennial issue for women.

In my consulting room I have watched as certain poets toss their pages of work onto the sofa as though their poetry were refuse rather than treasure. I have seen artists bring their paintings to session, banging them against the door frame on their way in. I have seen the green gleam in women's eyes as they try to disguise their anger that others seem able to create and that they themselves, for some reason, cannot.

I have heard all the excuses that any woman might knit up: I'm not talented. I'm not important. I'm not educated. I have no ideas. I don't know how. I don't know what. I don't know when. And the most scurrilous of all: I don't have time. I always want to shake them upside down until they repent and promise to never tell falsehoods again. But I don't have to shake them up, for the dark man in dreams will do that, and if not he, then another dream actor will.

The dark man dream is a scary dream, and scary dreams are most often very good for creativity; they show the artist what will happen to them if they allow themselves to be fried into talented derelicts. This dark man dream is often enough to scare a woman back into creating again. At the very least, she can create work which elucidates the dark man in her own dreams.

The threat of the dark man serves as a warning to all of us—if you don't pay attention to the treasures, they will be stolen from you. In

this manner, when a woman has one or a series of these dreams, it means that a huge gate is opening to the initiatory grounds where her revaluing of her gifts can occur. There, whatever has been incrementally destroying her or robbing her can be recognized, apprehended, and dealt with.

When a woman works to espy the predator of her own psyche, and if she will acknowledge its presence and do necessary battle with it, the predator will move to a much more isolated and unobtrusive point in the psyche. But if the predator is ignored, it becomes increasingly and deeply hateful and jealous, with a desire to silence the woman forever.

At a very mundane level, it is important for a woman having dark man and Bluebeardian sorts of dreams to cleanse her life of as much negativity as she can. Sometimes it is necessary to limit or thin out certain relationships, for if a woman is outwardly surrounded by persons who are antagonistic to or careless about her deep life, her interior predator is fed by this and develops extra muscle within her psyche, and more aggression toward her.

Women are often highly ambivalent about aggression toward the intruder, for they think it is a "damned if I do, damned if I don't" situation. If she doesn't break away, the dark man becomes her keeper and she his slave. If she does break away, he pursues her relentlessly, as though he owns her. Women fear that he will hunt them down in order to bring them back into submission, and this fear is reflected in their dreamlives.

And so it is common for women to kill off their creative, soulful, and wildish natures in response to threats from the predator. That is why the women lie as skeletons and cadavers in Bluebeard's cellar. They learnt of the trap, but too late. Consciousness is the way out of the box, the way out of the torture. It is the path away from the dark man. And women are entitled to fight tooth and nail to have it and keep it.

In the Bluebeard story we see how a woman who falls under the spell of the predator rouses herself and escapes him, wiser for the next time. The story is about the transformation of four shadowy introjects which are in particular contention for women: have no vision, have no insight, have no voice, have no action. In order to banish the predator, we must do the opposite. We must unlock or pry things open to see what is inside. We must use our insight and our ability to stand what we see. We must speak our truth in a clear voice. And

we must be able to use our wits to do what needs be about what we see.

When a woman is strong in her instinctual nature, she intuitively recognizes the innate predator by scent, sight, and hearing . . . anticipates its presence, hears it approaching, and takes steps to turn it away. In the instinct-injured woman, the predator is upon her before she registers its presence, for her listening, her knowing, and her apprehension are impaired—mainly by introjects which exhort her to be nice, to behave, and especially to be blind to being misused.

Psychically, it is difficult at first glance to tell the difference between the uninitiated, who are as yet young and therefore naive, and women who are injured in instinct. Neither knows much about the dark predator, and both are therefore still credulous. But fortunately for us, when the predatory element of a woman's psyche is on the move, it leaves behind unmistakable tracks in her dreams. These tracks eventually lead to its discovery, capture, and containment.

The cure for both the naive woman and the instinct-injured woman is the same: Practice listening to your intuition, your inner voice; ask questions; be curious; see what you see; hear what you hear; and then act upon what you know to be true. These intuitive powers were given to your soul at birth. They have been covered over, perhaps by years and years of ashes and excrement. This is not the end of the world, for these always wash off. With some chipping and scraping and practice, your perceptive powers can be brought back to their pristine state again.

By retrieving these powers from the shadows of our psyches, we shall not be simple victims of internal or external circumstances. No matter how culture, personality, psyche, or other might demand women be dressed and behaved, no matter how they may all wish to keep all females in a gaggle with ten dozing *dueñas*, chaperones, nearby, no matter what pressures attempt to compress a woman's soulful life, they cannot change the fact that a woman is what she is and that this is dictated by the wild unconscious, and that it is good.

It is crucial for us to remember that when we have dark man dreams there is always an opposing power poised and waiting to help us. When we initiate wildish energy in order to balance the predator, guess who immediately shows up? Wild Woman comes diving over whatever fences, walls, or obstructions the predator has erected. She is not an icon, to be hung on the wall like a *retablo*, religious painting. She is a living being who comes to us anywhere, under any conditions. She and the predator have known each other a long, long time. She tracks him through dreams, through stories, through tales, and through women's entire lives. Wherever he is, she is, for she is the one who balances his predations.

Wild Woman teaches women when not to act "nice" about protecting their soulful lives. The wildish nature knows that being "sweet" in these instances only makes the predator smile. When the soulful life is being threatened, it is not only acceptable to draw the line and mean it, it is required. When a woman does this, her life cannot be interfered with for long, for she knows immediately what is wrong and can push the predator back where it belongs. She is no longer naive. She is no longer a mark or a target. And this is the medicine that causes the key, finally, to cease its bleeding. ·

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