

Tales From Joy, 2023

#1

Hola, my dear
readers.

I like to imagine
each year is totally
different from the
one preceding it....
But I do seem to
recall that the exact
same thing
occurred last year ..
hmmmm:

I arrived here in the
lovely town of La
Paz (Baja Sur)



Harvesting veggies in the community garden

and sloughed into a pleasantly vegetative state, setting up my little 1950's kitchen, getting my drinking water, renting a bicycle.... And revisiting my favorite sacred spots...

And same as last year, it took a few weeks and several sweet but persistent inquiries from y'all e.g.

Uuuuh, are you going to tell us where you are, dear Joy?

to wake me up.

And when I finally did get inspired to write something, my computer crashed. Just like last year it took another couple weeks to get that up and running, with help from the same guy, last year's neighbor, Chuck. Except Chuck now lives down the block.

I have no neighbors here at the hacienda...Maria and Clemente have decided to retire from hosting. I'm the only one welcome to be here, as more of a family friend.



Yes, I feel completely blessed and privileged.

No pilates, yoga or dance classes this year.

...And amidst all this stillness, I've been forced to look into the clear pond-like reflection of my own mind and admit what I see, dear readers:



AN ALPHA JUNKIE!!

An ALPHA JUNKIE (a phrase that I made up ... And it may not even be technically correct in terms of brainwave definitions) refers to the various levels of awareness that the mind can dwell in.

My mind has become a bit flat and two-dimensional, consumed by the weight of near-constant engagement. I have become addicted this entire year to keeping it ENGORGED with data.



Daily doses of Youtube monologues by Stephen Colbert and Noah Trevor were my gateway drug, plus SNL on the weekend. Then I gradually slid into CNN, NBC, Washington Post, New York Times, Democracy Now, Glen Kirchner, Robert Reich and other political commentaries, every damn day for several months, with subtly dissolving boundaries regarding my consumption.

Our national and global slide towards the brink of fascism and the *end times* (ecologically) became the most compelling cliff-hanger in my world.

Honestly, I felt proud that I "knew stuff" and could recite it, like a clever parrot, better than anybody else.

Are any of these things “bad” or blameworthy?

Oh, no.

Has it become out of proportion for my balance, vitality and creativity, locking out the subtler dimensions?

Absolutely.

In response to my awareness and prayers, it was obvious I had to

Back away from the cellphone.



Is there anything wrong with taking a photo of the sunrise?

Of course not.

Had it become a compulsory habit, and therefore one step removed from being present?

Yes.

My immersion into the news and then the need to de-stress from the news has been sucking the life out of my days and nights!

Just one more article

became a constant refrain, like any drunk who can't quite leave the bar; like millions of housewives who are enslaved to their daily television soap-opera, in every culture...

I have traditionally used these Tales, dear readers, as a sort of confessional, where y'all co-witness my transgressions. Then I, hopefully, move on. Your prayers are gratefully accepted.

I self-administered a five-day media fast. Yet the compulsion lingers nearby. I'm the recovering drunk with a one-week chip in her pocket... whose breath still harbors a trace of Jack Daniels....

Meanwhile....

Last Saturday evening, I walked towards the central plaza, at dusk.

And I was fascinated to encounter this scene:

Here's the account I sent to my sister the next day:



"The town square ... was a sort of cultural typhoon!

Several incompatible groups collided, creating swirling eddies of drama!

The cast of characters included:

*****the penitentes**, wearing all black (Doom and Gloom REPENT NOW folks... they got there first and had set up a loudspeaker .*

***several **quinceañeras** This refers to the pre-Columbian tradition of fifteen year-old girls being Princess for a Day on their fifteenth birthday. It's a very big deal down here. Sort of a public sales demo...*



I wrote to my dear friend Stephen a week earlier with the inquiry:

*They are **STILL** sacrificing virgins to the patriarchy??.*

Yepp....he responded, instantly.

***A dozen **folk dancers from the Ballet Folklórico** showed up as well, expecting to do some photo ops for their upcoming tour in the spring.*

*****a bride and her entire retinue** were planning on the traditional plaza photos before crossing the street to finalize their vows in the centuries-old Cathedral.*

*** finally the nearby **merchants** twenty feet away wanted to play jazzy western Christmas carols to*



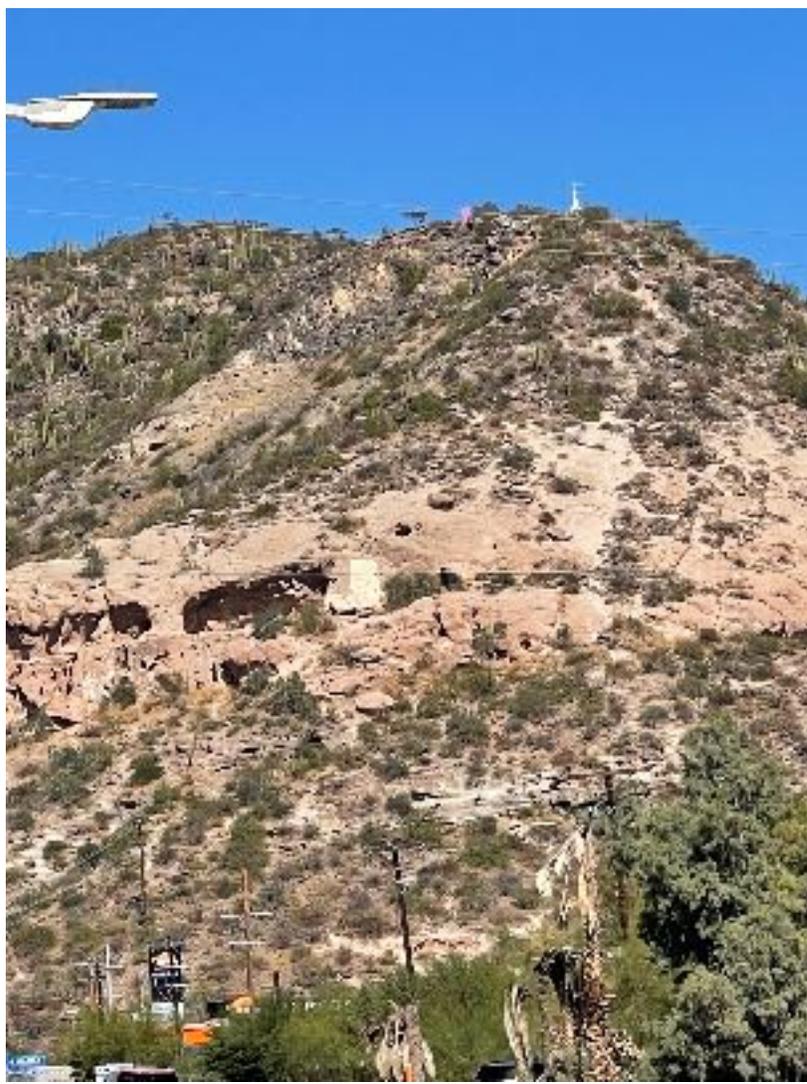
stimulate sales at their hundreds of stalls..

And how did this cultural battle resolve itself?

The Evangelicals conquered the territory. They had the loudest speaker (supplied by American churches from the north). And everyone else re-located. It was a hollow victory, though: The Penitentes ended up on their knees, praying loudly in the dark. Having sucked all the life out of the plaza, the area was otherwise entirely empty by the time I left.

I went to the expat bookstore in downtown La Paz the next day and bought two novels by that Colombian master of dark irony, Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Speaking of irony, I'm going to add one more little Coyote Trickster tale, dear readers. I sent this out to my Trickster tribe a few days go, on Christmas:



A Trickster's Tale

On the winter solstice last week, I headed off to one of my pilgrimage spots, known as the Calavera. From there, I continued on up the steep rock incline that ends at the Cross on the mountain-top. Usually that ends my pilgrimage.

But that day, I joyfully continued upward, carefully bushwhacking through the rock, cactus and thorn-bush

obstacle course..



I got happier and happier with the joy of adventure, with the special nature of this sacred day, the winter solstice.

It seems the pagan holidays have not been so monetized, with the exception of Halloween.

And it was, simultaneously, the anniversary of my late husband's passage from Planet Earth: The day I sang to Merlin as he was dying of metastasized cancer long long ago. (1985)



I was singing this Traveling Song aloud,

*You'll be travelin' lightly, traveling lightly
On into the sky.*

You won't need your body 🎵🎵...

And, simultaneous to that line, I walked straight into a cholla cactus, firmly impaling my left hip with more than a few spears!

I hastily tacked on the observation,

But I still do! 🎵🎵

And spent the next ten minutes laughing and pulling bits of cholla cactus out of my skin and pants.

I had pulled most of them off, when I realized that this needed a photo, on behalf of Coyote Trickster!

My pants still had 1000's of tiny cactus thorns attached...so I took one of the liter-sized plastic bottles** out of my sack... And installed it inside my pants to protect the skin. Worked beautifully.



** I pick up garbage, to honor the Mother, especially in these sacred places.



Friends, I am well aware of the wreckage that the holiday storms have wrought up north, sending temperatures well below zero. I have spent hours praying in this chapel, asking for your mental fortitude, your safety, and for the rapid healing of the plumbing systems that perhaps self-destructed for some of you.

I've experienced some survivor's guilt as well.

I hope to send one more Tale from Mexico, about the incredible local art, and the Mexican government's attitude of caring for the health of its people.



Let me know if you'd like to de-subscribe...or if you want to add names to the recipients' listing.

Blessings,
Joy

