

Tales From St. Helena's Bay, #1, 2015

My darling readers,

I may have provided a vicarious adventure in Tanzania for you last winter. I was cooking over a fire, hauling buckets of water from the well, staving off parasites and infections and malaria, while the wonderful babies at the Center peed on my leg... and there wasn't quite enough nutritious food for any of us to eat.

Well, dears, here's my full disclosure today:

Spirit has brought me to the (relative) lap of luxury this time. My lessons are to be about something else, apparently. My teacher and guide, Anna, was not kidding when she told me

*This year will
not be so ferocious.*



My patio garden this year, azure oceanside and beach just beyond

To pick up from the “Tales From Cape Town #1,” where I last left you hanging, ten days ago....

My friends Fakier and Tim and I drove north, up the western Cape, through many national preserves, which were mostly ocean-side chaparral with a few ostrich and springbok and flamingoes and ibis.. Everything is dry and it looks like yet another drought year coming, to the farmers' dismay.

Finally, after a few hours, we found Eiland Huis (Afrikaan, for Island House), outside of St. Helena's Bay.

As my American friend Jimmy Whitfield, who spent several decades as a missionary all over sub-Saharan Africa, wrote me:

Truly that part of the Continent is one of the most beautiful places ever created.

Here's the moon rising, at sunset, from my porch



So what is a sporadically funded non-profit home for severely disabled children, many of them indigent, doing on a piece of fabulously beautiful beachfront property, you might ask?

The answer lies within the magical sphere of Jimmy Duncan, the founder and creator of Eiland Huis.

Jimmy and I were somehow “familiar” to each other, and became good friends, from the first minute. He rises at 5:30 in the morning, drinks sixteen cups of coffee to get going, and smokes his first pack of cigarettes long before eating a piece of Wonder Bread and margarine or whatever he can scarf up on the run. (By the way, I’ve only met a few people who aren’t smokers, since I arrived here in the Western Cape.).

Jimmy is tired. Very tired. I’ve told him that his adrenals are claiming early retirement. You healers out there, please pray for this dear man to alter his habits. We need him here.

Jimmy’s first chosen task, in his nineteen-hour day, is to hang the wash out on the clothes-lines. Ten drooling children in diapers mess up a lot of clothes. But we have two washing machines (donated, like everything else) and plenty of water. I usually help him hang or fold the clothes, since it’s a chance to chat and hear great stories about Island House and Jimmy’s chequered past.



He is a natural-born story-teller, and a great guy. A couple decades ago, he and his his wife split up after their child was born born with cerebral palsy...and an inability to walk or to feed herself.

In America, 85 - 90% of couples with disabled children don't stay together, I've read, due to the emotional strain. Jimmy inherited the bulk of the caregiving role.

Though he is completely devoted to his daughter, now thirty-two years old...he soon realized that it was impossible to hold down a job or do anything besides care for her. And the utter loneliness and sense of isolation was shattering.

Eleven years ago, Jimmy was a faithful member of the same Spiritualist Church that Fakir and I attended in Cape Town, and did clairvoyant readings there himself..

He was given a message from Spirit that his mission is to open a center for other needy and disabled children, to care for them graciously and to liberate their parents from this consuming job.

So, on pure faith, he located a one-room shack on government beach-front, the current site of Island House, and started building, with donated materials. A few curious neighbors "happened" to show up...and told their friends about Jimmy's mission. Eventually the energy and donations began to roll in. Then the children, mostly society's discards with nowhere else to go and no apparent future, came his way as well. A few were terminally ill when they arrived, and have passed on, surrounded by loving and respectful care.



But others, like my buddies Jamkela and Courtney, have outlasted all medical predictions, by many many years now.

Says Jimmy:

I took Jamkela to the emergency room, when he first arrived, and they refused to admit him, because they thought he was gonna die right away....so I just brought him home.



He was covered with bedsores and lice and eczema, suffering malnutrition...



That was a couple of years ago...After two years of good nutrition, loving care and sensory stimulation, , Jamkela's smile lights up the room and enlightens everyone that sees it.

He is now twelve years old.

Only three of the eleven children can speak, one can feed herself...

I am learning volumes from these eleven teachers of mine...about love and patience and present-tense existence.

Most of our residents are not mobile or verbal. My first afternoon, I felt awkward and slightly lost, not sure where my point of entry or communication might be, beyond eye contact.

Soon, a young university student named Stephanie showed up to visit, for the holidays, while we were feeding the kids. Steph is studying special ed in college and designing creative toys. She “opened the door” of perception for me, putting me miles ahead of what I might have otherwise presumed, that first day. As she spooned the nutritive mush (often flavorful meat and vegetables, blenderized for digestion), Stephanie commented that Jade was purposely spitting the food back in her face....



...She's doing this cause she's angry that I worked with Natalie first....she gets pretty possessive and jealous, you know. But when I tuck them in at night, we all agree to meet in a special place in our dreams.

Thanks, Stephanie! I'm hoping she will be back to visit again in January. After showing her a few photos of the Earth Mother at Wattle Hollow, she's ready to come visit me there, as well.

I have never felt so blessed, and with such an opportunity to learn about pure energy. I feel some profound inner shifting within occurring, as my own morning and evening meditations on the beach widen and deepen, which allows me to bless the children in a wider way. New musical dimensions are also opening, as I sing to the children, while I do massage work or play my flute.

I'll be sharing my other lessons with you as they unfold, friends...

But another of my first couple lessons-plans:

*Coyote trickster is never very far! Last week, I went hiking in my own private “Garden of the Gods”, which describes the rock outcroppings right up the mountainside from Island House. I bushwhacked all around the chaparral, keeping a careful eye out for the Cape cobras which are said to live



there, and had a euphoric time. As I returned home, feeling my “Omnipotent Amazon” emerging I twisted my ankle in our yard, on a small log. ... I continue to twist it about once a day...and to slam my other index toe on the left foot, just to be fair.

And then I remembered yesterday: I’ve always had a weak right ankle, since I was born....I used to limp for the first hour of each morning, when I was back-packing in the Andes, in the Peruvian desert, on the Appalachian trail...It’s as if I’m re-visiting this old trauma, and learning to walk again. I bought a lot of supplements..and its rapidly improving now. Yoga on the beach was unconstrained today.

* television. One of my favorite bugaboos. I haven’t had one for decades. T.V. is an ongoing thing here, especially the soap operas.

How wonderful!

I can hear my meditation teacher booming in his deep baritone, in response to my aversion.... It took me an entire week to create my own “studio,” outside the door, where I now work on each child, as we listen to the wind and the ocean. Ahhh, miracles are so so simple.

I’m often cooking meals for visitors...Lunch today was: mesclun salad greens with avocado, chicken, and my chia/feta vinaigrette.

Supper was stir-fry veggies with ginger/lavender/butter sauce, over a brown rice/quinoa/pecan mixture. I bought the spices, dairy, grains, and nuts... but Jimmy and I pick up a van-load of food that is donated by the local grocery store, twice a week.

Island House couldn’t exist without these charitable items, donated funds, and pure faith in the goodness of others.

Friends, as always, there’s so much more to tell, but I’ve promised myself to finish this letter by New Year’s Eve.

May you all be warm, peaceful, healthy and hopeful in this new year.

And thanks to my incredible community around the world, for your encouraging and thoughtful comments.

Sending love and gratitude,

Joy



