

Opening the Vault Door

By Kathleen Hendrickson

It is not like being possessed, exactly, but more the welcoming back of an important

part of me returning home for full expression. Deep sadness lifts as I lower the barriers that shut out a seemingly lost love. I take comfort in my internal and spiritual world, at home in the ethereal world of the one consciousness.



Sadness, a deep undercurrent not unlike a rip tide in the Atlantic Ocean where I swam over the years, catches one unaware and pulls with a force too great to defy. Impossible to swim out of the tide, one survives by joining with the force until it weakens and you can swim in a perpendicular path to the safety of

the shore. Emerging from the force is possible only by uniting with its power until a path evolves. I have spent years exploring events that might lie behind my inner riptide of emotion, a depth of darkness that defies logic until light dispels.

My third son, Luke Richard, was born “still” during his delivery. What had all the elements for the delivery of a healthy screaming infant instead was a series of missteps on the part of the many individuals who might have come together as a unified team, instead of unknowingly operating in disharmony with each other. The nine-pound lifeless being, the color of steel blue, was quickly removed from my sight and wheeled out of the delivery room in a small portable bassinet. I retreated inward; unaware of what was happening for my husband, my doctor, who was late to the scene, the nurse and her student nurses, the neonatal nurse. It was the day of our ninth wedding anniversary.

In the months that followed, I found myself unconsciously looking at any babies I might see on my trips to Riverhead, as if I would somehow find my lost baby. The groundbreaking work by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross¹ on death and dying was still emerging into our consciousness in the early 70’s. There was neither the thought that I would benefit from holding the lifeless baby, nor value in creating a ceremony around his burial. Instead, my husband, in his grief, and in my withdrawal as I lie in the hospital bed for three days, a prescriptive practice for childbirth at the time, arranged for burial of the little one prior to my release. It was his own way of dealing with his emotional pain.

¹ Kübler-Ross, E. (1969) On Death and Dying, Routledge

There had been a transcendent spiritual component to the day of, and the nighttime intimacy and conception of Luke Richard. It felt like a pre-ordained act, I an actor on a stage. Years later I am led to understand that he was not meant to survive his birth. How curious life surprises us and challenges our beliefs about being in this experience of humanness.

Eighteen years later, my Soto Zen Buddhist teacher, Rev. Cuthbert Juttner, brought me significant relief as he performed a *mizuko kuyo* ritual - a memorial service for the stillborn and his parents. The ceremony brought me lightning bolt release from the years of pain as I became instantly showered in the love I once held for this small being growing inside me.

Forty-two years have passed. I study research on the genetic influences that are integral in our psychology. I find an article by Melissa Lee Phillips² that reverberates within me, much like the vibrations of the ancient Chau gong as it washes over the listener. Research on the genetic material found in the brains of deceased women with Alzheimer disease found that the Y chromosome, the chromosome that determines the sexual definition of a male, were in the brain tissues of mothers of sons.

A spirit of joy alights on my shoulder and like the awesome sight of the bright yellow goldfinch at the bird feeder in June; I acknowledge that the Y-Chromosome that came from my husband, deceased for fifteen years has residence in my brain. It would seem that I carry within me the physical material of my ex-husband, the father of not only Luke Richard, but my three living sons as well.

As an intuitive and sensitive, I come to understand this previously unshakeable sense of utter loss within – a deep mourning for an absent love that influences me on subtle and physical levels.

How rich is this? Encoded within my physical make-up are genetic ties to each son and their father. Non-acceptance of them is to reject an integral part of myself. I smile at the elegance of our human biology as I contemplate opening to complete acceptance of each player in the field – myself included.

When the time seems right, I meditate and open the door of my heart to my first husband, lovingly removing any barriers of my making that separate me from him and our sons. I walk with acceptance, love, and peace of that which I have shunned and shut out all too many years.

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² Melissa Lee Phillips, Bearing Sons Can Alter Your Mind, Sep. 26, 2012, *ScienceMag.com*