

# *Sister Who's Perspective*

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*Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding.*

*Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed.*

*Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified.*

*Blessings, love, and peace to you. ---Sister Who*

## *Hanging in There*

*While installing some wallboard recently, it was necessary to remove the light fixture and then reinstall it after the wallboard was in place. In the process of doing this, however, the light suddenly ceased to function. Suspecting a loose wire or connection somewhere, I removed the wallboard I had just installed as well as the piece below it, in order to trace the wire from the light all the way to the switch, to locate the loose connection. As it turned out, after replacing the light fixture and later replacing the switch also, the problem continued to appear and disappear, almost randomly. Various readings obtained while using a volt meter were confusing at best. For the moment, the circuit is again working and has offered no further problems, but I confess that I never did figure out exactly what was wrong.*

*One of the possible metaphors within this experience is that sometimes the adversary or obstruction to the projection or distribution of light, may be something superficial and not so deep and complex as some might speculate. To fix the situation, all that is necessary is to change or replace the superficial element.*

*More concisely, deep spiritual functioning is not independent of superficial life circumstances. We must pay equal attention to both within ourselves and within the lives of others. The circumstances of others' lives are not a trivial matter which has no significance for us.*

*For whatever reason, during the years of the media blitz concerning starvation in Ethiopia, God...chose(?)...to do nothing. We, on the other hand, continued to throw away food, all across our nation, because it wasn't what we liked, was past its freshness date, or for any of a number of other reasons. A lot was done to help those starving people. Obviously a lot more could have been done.*

*In what way am I any more important than any of them? Sometimes, apparently, no matter how real God is, people are allowed to suffer and die, while waiting for the rest of us to wake up and*

*intervene. That being the case and in contrast to what so many have been telling me during the last few weeks while I have been absolutely hammered by problems, God doesn't always open a window when a door is closed, God doesn't always provide when our fellow members of humanity fail to do, and goodness is not always rewarded nor evil always punished. Sometimes God lets people suffer and die, rather than take from us any opportunity to finally learn to really care about each other.*

*One person attempted to explain to me that simply being alive and breathing was enough for which to be thankful and joyful. I don't think I ever want to drop to such a low common denominator, nor do I think I should, since that would be a betrayal of all of the wonderful visions God has placed within my heart and head. Still, I have no judgment to offer that particular person, if the knowledge of such basic qualities is helpful.*

*To be an open-minded person who will hear when the Divine speaks and see when a new turn in the path is shown, however, is also to be willing, if only in the tiniest way and in whichever brief moments we are able, to consider that hang-gliding is also a form of "hanging in there."*

*No, I am neither actually formally educated nor experienced in hang-gliding. A combination of observation and common sense, however, suggest numerous insights.*

*First of all, it is a combination of dependency and willful action. Though dependent upon weather conditions and numerous basic laws of physics, one must respond to the winds, to updrafts and downdrafts, and to the contours of the land. There is a sense of freedom but also of limitation, all action of the pilot of the hang-glider being executed within a space beneath the wing which is only a few feet wide.*

*In trusting but also interacting with the various air currents, by simply "hanging in there,"*

*the person is transported to a new place by forces completely beyond his or her control.*

*How wonderful if we could learn to interact with life that way--to be so in harmony with that which we cannot control, that our moment-to-moment choices of whether to go this way or that, would totally respected.*

*More often, we seek to be in harmony but spend our time in nearly inescapable uncertainty. I stumbled onto a quote from Hellen Keller this week, something to the effect that security is only a superstition and that life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all. Yet for me these words ring hollow because Hellen Keller was born into a wealthier family, sufficiently wealthy in fact that they could hire Ann Sullivan to be Hellen's private tutor. The security of which Ms. Keller spoke seems to me to have been more intellectual than physical. She was not facing issues of physical survival.*

*Many people in the world have had a similar experience of life, having to decide between careers, between opportunities, between brands of clothing in a large department store, or between luxurious resorts where they could spend their vacation time. For others the decisions are whether to eat today or spend the money on the mortgage or rent payment, whether to live within a crime-ridden neighborhood or as a homeless person sleeping under a bridge, or whether to lie in order to secure a good-paying job and a generous income or to tell the truth and risk not being able to get a job at all.*

*A friend reminded me this week of the age-old advice that if you lose your soul, you have nothing of any true value left. An easy thing to say, to hear, and with which to agree, perhaps, but in a less-than-perfect world something that may cost you everything else you have to give.*

*So we're hanging in there as the craziness of the world keeps on turning, but how are we hanging in there? Are we the dying body swaying from a gallows, still twitching as if alive, or the pilot beneath the hang glider, transcending the limitations of earth-bound people by trusting and interacting with higher principles, content to accept the costs of leaving things behind in order to be light enough to soar? I find myself also wondering if I, or anyone else for that matter, have the stamina to soar?*

*Like the albatross, sometimes also called the gooney bird if I remember correctly, it's the taking off and the landing which are difficult and dangerous. The soaring which occurs in between the two is food for the soul. How wonderful if our lives were filled*

*with soaring instead of with not being able to get off the ground.*

*Dreams of better things than struggling through seemingly endless muddy bogs, also must "hang in there." Just as we must sometimes give our dreams wings, we must also give them "coat hooks."*

*A vague and usually casual remark that "tomorrow is another day" or "today is the first day of the rest of your life" or "it will all work out" leaves nothing psychologically or emotionally concrete upon which to hang one's hopes, nor anything solid upon which to stand during times of trouble.*

*A coat hook is something upon which to hang a coat until such time as you either are able or need to wear it again. Calling to someone, "hang your coat anywhere" when there are in fact no coat hooks within sight, leaves the person feeling confused and looking around to see any available thing by which your words might be fulfilled.*

*Similarly, for an out-of-work person experiencing economic need, a job interview may provide the empowering light at the end of the tunnel (or rather, may provide some possibility that the light is not an on-coming train). For a person who is lonely, an informal social gathering may provide the long-awaited introduction to a new and dear friend. For a person living within a home in poor condition, a painting or cleaning party organized by a friend could be the means by which he or she knows of being loved and included rather than forgotten by the rest of the human race.*

*On the flip side of this discussion, however, are those who hang like a tattered coat on a rusty nail, going through the motions of life but so stuck in some sort of rut, that they are unwilling to accept being relocated to a more empowering and hope-filled hook. That they are "hanging in there" can not be denied, but there is a faint odor more suggestive of the corpse dangling from the gallows, than the kite on the end of the string, the pilot beneath the sturdy hang-glider, or the albatross rising into the blue expanse above.*

*I find myself at a loss, in this last case of the tattered coat on the rusty nail, the person stuck, possibly even for years, in a rut which only serves to keep them right where they are instead of carrying them higher. I can only pray that the love, presence, and wisdom of the Divine knows better than I, how to recycle rusty nails.*

*With all due respect, however, I choose not to be the tattered coat, clinging to a rusty nail.*

## Storms that Linger

*I have work that needs to be done,  
but the fall of rain has just begun  
and as the drops dance overhead  
and the clock ticks slowly,  
as if in dread,  
and my dreams are locked  
within an old tool shed,  
my heart pleads for the sun.*

*Why was it not while I was sleeping  
that wetness fell, in puddles seeping  
through the dry and dusty ground  
to thirsty roots  
of grasses brown,  
to wake again  
earth's emerald mantle  
around my shoulders keeping?*

*I dodge the raindrops and hurry failing  
to stay dry and grasp the ailing  
reluctant lock and wooden door.  
I twist the key  
and pull once more  
to get the tools  
my hands have touched  
and end their present jailing.*

*Yet the lock won't yield so I return  
as anger begins inside to burn  
at what will not occur today,  
will have to wait,  
will have to stay  
just as it was  
in mending-wanting form  
and expression stern.*

*I close the door as the phone now rings  
wondering which voice it brings  
sighing deep in resignation  
looking to  
the designation.  
"Unavailable" shines the screen.  
I lift the cord and greet  
the unknown questing person  
and private friendship sings.*

*The miles and troubles fade from view  
by friendship called to mind anew  
and isolation swept aside  
as hearts are shared  
and tears are dried,  
and dreams revived  
to guide again  
on this relentless gray day too.*

*Lightning cracks across the sky  
I pause a moment to shake and sigh  
my weary head too long in worry  
so many things,  
so in a hurry  
to leave this sad unfruitful state  
I smile and chat  
then bid the friend goodbye.*

*Thunder rolls with deepest trembling,  
still darker clouds above assembling  
in fearsome shapes and massive forms,  
that what has been  
is promised more,  
my door ajar,  
I watch and wait  
and ponder other paths.*

*Within such stormy worlds  
my soul's confusion twirls  
and calls for harmony divinely sweet  
and hears the echo  
alone to greet  
my ears and heart,  
filled with work to do,  
a flag designed to be unfurled.*

*If peace be known within such times,  
will have to live in hearts and minds  
with divine and holy seeds so filled  
and music soft  
as songbirds trilled  
at creation's wondrous  
golden dawn.  
From heart to head, so must it climb.*

**"The phrase**

**' God will take care of you'  
should only ever be spoken  
by those who are willing  
to act as the hands of God."**

**---Sister Who**

## Dangerous Safety

*I have often heard acquaintances who claim a "New Age" form of spirituality, insist that the physical world in which we live is nothing more than an illusion created for the education of our souls. I disagree with them most strongly if they mean by this that what transpires within physical world situations and circumstances is unimportant or to be lightly dismissed.*

*One person whom I encountered a number of years ago, related a laundry list of personal experiences which were truly horrifying in their ability to do damage to a soul. Just as I was about to offer to help with inner healing in any way which was both within my ability and acceptable to the person also, I was informed that because all of it was nothing but illusion, it was not necessary to address or rectify any of it.*

*I was speechless. The door to all further discussion had just been closed and I knew I needed to respect that closed door, but inwardly I mourned the wounded soul which had just been so clearly displayed to me.*

*I understand that for many if not most, the illusion of safety is necessary, that we simply have not learned to consciously accept living within a world as filled with life-threatening danger as the world in which we live is. Occasional incidents of terrorism or fatal traffic accidents are written off as exceptions to the rule which will most likely never affect any of us directly. It's unlikely we could function or focus upon anything any other way, since there is in all honesty, no way to guarantee safety within all circumstances.*

*But are we then justifying lying to ourselves*

*and there by admitting we do not have the capacity to deal with the honest truth?*

*To use another phrase I've often heard, how could we truly live each day as if it were our last? How can we ever be so unattached to our memories and collections of sentimental objects that we really can "take it as it comes"? Our behavior suggests quite a bit of aversion to doing so.*

*The entire insurance industry is based upon our fear of what might happen and a desire to be "prepared" for anything and everything. This alone offers an enormous volume of evidence that we are absolutely unprepared to "take it as it comes."*

*Yet the psychologist Maslow created after much research, a pyramid diagram of typical human needs which says that we all have a basic need for safety and security that must come before all other aspects of psychological evolution and beingness. If therefore, the circumstances which we encounter do not include a true realization of safety and security to some minimum degree, we are at odds with our fundamental psychological wiring.*

*At the same time, however, the danger of actually being able to satisfy this need permanently or even for a sustained period of time, is that our defensive psychological muscles atrophy. If we have never known of human needs except through two-dimensional textbooks, it's as if the needs are not real somehow. We may even come to feel entitled to a life much better than what is known to perhaps a third of the world's population.*

*Why is it so necessary for someone else to lose, just so that we can win? If our safety is based within our love for each other, no adversary will ever be able to take it from us.*

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--S.W.