

Essay Series

PPP: KATY & ME

Personally Processing Pluto: Part 2

Welcome to Planet Earth, late 1992

© Ann Kreilkamp

This is the second article in what may become a series illustrating my experience of transit Pluto's current opposition to my natal 23°02 Taurus Moon. At birth, the Moon was 72° from Pluto (at 6°53 Leo). This means that my Progressed Moon, moving at the rate of 1° per month, crossed natal Pluto during December, 1948. That was the month I turned six years old and my family moved to Idaho, where I met Katy, my very first childhood friend, born only four days after me. I discovered the time of the Progressed Moon's conjunction with Pluto when I began to wonder why Katy had come back into my life in January, 1992, during the beginning of Pluto's transit opposite my Moon . . .

I found out about Katy's return the day before I drove five hours to see her. All the while wondering what was driving me. When I learned about Katy's whereabouts, I was in the midst of sorting through the million details of my burgeoning life, determined to get at least a few things done that day — and instead, the insane idea popped into my head that I must see Katy. Now.

I wrestled with this idea the rest of that day, feeling alternately excited and burdened by it. That night, having set the alarm for 7 AM, just in case I did want to go, I woke up at 2 AM. tossing with indecision, unable to go back to sleep. I thought, "Well, OK, that means I won't go. I'll just be too exhausted."

At the first beep of the alarm I was up, alert, filled with the familiar excitement that comes into me at the start of any journey. My body, it seemed, was deciding things this day. There was no question. I was going.

There was to be a mini-class reunion for Katy at 1 PM at a hotel. I wanted to arrive in time for that, as well as see her afterwards alone, returning to Jackson the next day.

Katy was in town to care for her dying father. In the 31 years since we had graduated from high school, I had seen her but once, ten years ago. My visit to our hometown had coincided with one of Katy's rare visits home from Australia, where she had married and become a wealthy Sydney matriarch, rearing three children and showing Andalusian horses in dressage.

Ten years ago, I remember our sitting in her basement family room, next to the ping pong table we played on as little girls. Nearly 40 years old now, we shivered with cold in the semi-darkness, and huddled together, whispering, so her parents wouldn't hear us upstairs. Two things remain in memory from that talk. One, her confession that she had had an affair the year before, "a final fling before middle age," she called it. And it's true, she did look middle-aged, matronly. As if she had completed one stage of her life and begun another. As if the folly of youth was behind her now and she could wash her hands of it.

The second thing I remember left me stunned, in shock: directly, mincing no words, she dropped her clipped Australian accent long enough to make sure I heard and understood: "You abandoned me in high school."

True. I did. Though I doubt I agreed with her when she said that. I probably just backed out of that conversation somehow — laughing, smoothly changing the subject, without betraying the slightest emotion.

Now, ten years later, I am driving to meet her over desert roads, the same desert on which we used to ride our horses as girls. She was always bigger than I, and the leader, much more daring. She continually challenged me, pushed me beyond my natural — Moon in Taurus! — caution. Together we climbed trees, jumped over coolees, raced our

horses, played in the mud, the sand, played horses, played “master and slave.” And she was always the master, I the slave.

Except for that one time — the day I lay face down in my backyard with Katy sitting on top of me, pulling hard on my braids. The pain was acute. An enormous Taurus fury built up inside. I erupted, threw her off and ran after her, enraged.

In junior high school I met another girl, Molly, who was more interested in talking about boys than in riding horses and doing other tomboy things. Molly and I were equals; she didn’t need to dominate me. The two of us listened to Pat Boone and Elvis and talked endlessly about boys, dreaming ourselves into their arms.

I abandoned Katy for Molly. I didn’t know how to have two best friends. Especially when they called upon two such different sides of me.

Katy, Molly and I were together in another way, however, as members of an extended group of both boys and girls, a sort of tribal reality, the first of many tribes I have belonged to in my almost 50 years. My mother still talks about our crowd in the class of ’60, how we all did things together, boys and girls, as pals. This kind of group is normal now for teenagers, but back then it was unusual.

We were the class intellectuals, holding long passionate discussions about the nature of reality, and especially, the existence of God. Being an obedient Catholic girl, I found these discussions terrifying, and Katy’s militant atheism heretical. There was no sense trying to convince her otherwise, as she was more logical than I.

Molly and I were the valedictorians; Katy, the salutatorian.

Every member of our tribe went to Ivy League schools except me. I had to go to Catholic University.

During our first Christmas vacation as freshmen in college, the old gang gathered together back in our hometown. We all noticed how thick Katy’s Eastern accent was. I heard later that her Australian accent was equally thick. It was as if she couldn’t wait to cut off her roots, become someone else, leave her past behind.

When we were all in our thirties, she once visited Dick, another member of our old high school tribe, and brought her husband, William, and three little children along. “Katy sat there and acted like a good little wife and mother,” Dick told me later. “And then, when it came time to get their coats, she came with me to the coat closet. ‘Dick,’ she whispered, ‘have you ever read *Steppenwolf*?’” Puzzled by this question, Dick answered, “Yes, a long time ago, in college.” “Well,” she said with a conspiratorial look, “William hasn’t read *Steppenwolf*.”

Both Dick and I saw this story as confirmation of who she seemed to be: a highly self-aware person, playing a role while both knowing that she was in the role and not believing in it. Her remark near the coat closet was her way of telling him that her husband did not understand her, that she was the existential hero, playing out a role from which her essential self remained alienated.

She reminded us of another woman, who also seemed to be playing out roles which had nothing to do with her reality. In Martha’s case, it seemed she was playing out her mother’s views of her, who she should be. Martha died four years ago, in a bizarre mysterious “accident,” having within five minutes turned her mother’s living room into a blazing inferno. Her mother rushed to the door to find Martha standing in the middle of the room, rooted to the spot, arms reaching out, begging her mother to come too.

The difference between Katy and Martha was this: I could always sense the difference between Katy’s essence and her masks. I had the feeling that at any moment she could rip the mask off and be totally herself. Martha, on the other hand, seemed to have disappeared into her roles; she never let anyone know whether or not she had an inner life.

Meeting Katy now, in the hotel, was to watch the grand entrance of a dowager queen. I had arrived in plenty of time, and was in the lobby with several other female classmates, most of whom had not been part of our high school clique. These were the girls who had stayed on in our home town. Two of them were Mormon mothers now, with six and seven children respectively; another was married to a redneck cowboy; and the fourth was a good, gentle woman who looked exactly the same, she had not changed even her haircut for over 30 years.

While waiting for Katy, we had all checked each other out visually — as anyone who has ever attended a high school reunion knows. I was surprised to see the change in one of the Mormon mothers — she had been a fiery, curvy cheerleader and now looked plump and docile and kind. The other mother looked exactly as she had in high school, except that age had elevated her venusian loveliness into the loving and revered mother of a large brood.

Katy walked in, very much in command of the situation, pleased to be the object of group interest, and yet, I could tell, amazed that I was actually there. [I had called her on the phone to say I might make it.] She began to speak in her thick Australian accent and I could see the Mormon mothers look at her with a sort of mixture of envy and distaste. She was pretentious, and they knew it. And they felt both provincial and disgusted.

The three hours we all sat in a restaurant together — soon joined by Mary Jo, looking very fit and energized after all these years — were difficult for all of us. Mary Jo talked a great deal, though I remember little of what she said. The woman married to the redneck knew a lot about the history of other classmates, so she was kept busy answering questions. I was sitting with the Mormon mothers, and didn't know how to talk to them, except to attempt interest in their children's and grandchildren's pictures. Katy and I were seated down the table from each other, so we were not able to talk at all.

As our time together wound down, Katy looked down the table at me and said in a loud voice that she wanted to see me before I left town. Mary Joe jumped up and invited both of us to her house in the morning for breakfast. That settled, the strange party came to an end.

That night I was still wondering why I had come, why my body had insisted.

The following morning I arrived at 9 AM sharp at Mary Jo's new suburban house and was greeted by the sharp bark of a small dog. "That's okay," Mary Jo was soothing the dog as she opened the door to me, "It's a woman, don't worry, it's a woman." I exclaimed at how interesting that remark was, and she said, "that's right, she doesn't like men!"

That was the first clue that something unusual was going on, though I didn't recognize it at the time.

Mary Jo's living room was stuffed full. Big long velvet plush couches filled with pillows surrounded an enormous square oak coffee table. Large porcelain dolls dressed in exact period clothing stood on the floor or on tables or draped themselves on chairs. Bouquets of dried flowers graced the walls. A giant portrait of Jesus stood on a tripod in one corner. . .

The dolls didn't surprise me too much. Though I had never seen them in a home I knew they were art of Mormon culture, having seen them in Salt Lake City shops.

Mary Jo, effervescent as ever, was asking me to take off my coat and make myself at home. She led me into her sparkling blue and white kitchen and sat me down at the already-set table with a steaming mug of tea. Katy arrived within minutes, and took the chair across from me.

So here we were. Just the three of us, not all in the same group in high school, but connected now. How? I suggested that we use our time together to tell our stories — each of us taking 20 minutes or so and the others listening. A long silence followed. Mary Jo had been busy preparing the eggs, with her back to us. I could sense her tension, waiting to see what Katy would say. Then Katy announced sternly, “No. I don't want to do it.”

Mary Jo quickly turned around and got us over that hurdle, serving the eggs and ham and homemade rolls with homemade strawberry jam.

Katy and I began by reminiscing. “When did we last meet?” I asked. “Ten years ago,” she said. “You were in town for your third divorce.” I was shocked into silence. The tone in her voice was that of disgust. She then continued the conversation by talking about how she and her husband had just “upgraded” to a new house, with six bedrooms and a pool and sauna and 8,000 square feet.

Seeking relief from each other, we both then turned to Mary Jo, peppering her with questions about her life. She was glad to oblige, and began talking at a rapid fire rate

with lots of smiling and laughing and good cheer. Lightly tripping over horrendous tales. She said she had open heart surgery at 30, and ten different operations since then. Said she finally got divorced from her husband whom she had never loved two years ago, “because of abuse in the family,” she said, her voice lowered, shooting a meaningful look at me. Her kids, all three of them adopted, “have been through hell.”

Throughout her soliloquy I was staring at her, astonished by the discrepancy between what she was saying and her happy-go-lucky manner.

The contradiction I was sensing within her was causing me to squirm. Her story fascinated me, I wanted her to continue. On the other hand, I was feeling utterly alienated from both these women and their worlds. Katy had begun the conversation with a snide remark to me, and then had made sure we all knew how wealthy she was. And Mary Jo, through the way her home was furnished, was showing me that she shared the same material values.

I found myself in a familiar position, feeling estranged from my surroundings. The occasion reminded me of other awkward times when I have had to interact with people from the past whose direction in life has diverged from mine.

I also noticed my behavior in reaction to what I was feeling: I was alternately wolfing food and then sitting back in my chair, arms crossed over my chest. But here is the amazing thing: for the first time in my life I was noticing myself doing this. Noticing how a perceived difference in values between myself and others was making me feel out of place, unwanted. And noticing my defensive reaction to the discrepancy — both inside and outside.

Externally, I was feeling awkward. I was dressed all wrong. I didn't have very good table manners . . . Indeed at one point, uncrossing my arms to lunge for more strawberry jam, I tipped it over, spilled it on the tablecloth.

Internally, I was feeling myself on the other side of a glass wall, freezing all of us into place, so that it seemed we were all moving like robots, according to some pre-arranged program. I was judging them both, as *not-me*, and striving to feel superior

to them — rather than what I really felt — inferior — so that I could survive the occasion, the separation, the loneliness.

I was both noticing them and noticing my judgments. For the first time in my life I was not attaching to either my judgments or to blaming myself for making them. I was simply there, present to the complex multidimensionality of my experience, and unusually aware.

This strange shift was going on inside, and meanwhile, Mary Jo kept on talking. [So we were telling stories after all!] Then something she said caught my interest . . . Mary Jo was telling the story of how she left her husband, and mentioned that she just left the house to him, “all 17 rooms of it!” She said this with an attitude of joy and release, as if she was still experiencing that weight lifting off of her.

Oh! So Mary Jo was not really a materialist! I glanced at Katy. What would be her response to this? Not surprising, her face remained a mask, betraying nothing.

My earlier assumption that both of them were materialists was wrong. How interesting! Things were not what they seemed. Suddenly, all my prior judgments flew out the window and I was left sitting in the middle of a vast and open space. Where everything was possible. Where anything could happen. I felt vibrant, excited, ready for anything.

Mary Jo suggested she give us a tour of her house. Of course! I stood up and followed the two of them out of the kitchen. We began in the living room, where four dolls were perched, two on the floor, one on a table, the other on the edge of a chair. Each was dressed impeccably in a detailed costume meant to exactly imitate some period of history. Katy exclaimed over each one, remarked on its monetary value. I was noticing this, and noticing Mary Jo’s evident love of both these little lifelike creatures, and of her sister who had sewn all their clothes. Meanwhile, I was also noticing myself noticing all this, how calm and present I felt, willing to focus on and absorb each doll in turn, acknowledge its perfection.

The tour of the entire house and its contents of precious dolls completed, we returned to the living room and sank deep into the plush blue couches.

Mary Jo started talking again. This time I was beginning to feel annoyed. It was time for Katy and I to talk — whatever that meant. I didn't want to leave without some kind of meaningful exchange between us.

Perhaps I was picking up on her feelings too, because suddenly, she stopped Mary Jo in mid-sentence and turned to me, asking in a low tone, stripped of any accent, "Well, Ann, what about death?"

Without any hesitation, I responded, "There is no death."

Thus began the discussion both of us had come for. The masks were off. And Mary Jo was glad to join it. Unfortunately, we had only 20 minutes before I had to leave.

In those 20 minutes the three of us faced each other and spoke from our hearts. It was as if all the rest had been a long preparatory ritual for this, the core existential meeting which we had all wanted in the first place.

They both came to the door to see me off. Suddenly Mary Jo asked me: "How do you live, how do you survive?" "I live on the edge," I responded, "and very well! — I am only barely within the material world."

"Yes," Mary Jo said, looking around at her house. "I am too much of a materialist."

"We've got to remember, it's just stuff," I said.

Katy looked at me long and meaningfully. "Yes," she added, "that's all it is, stuff." She then said to me, slowly, looking directly into my eyes. "I feel honored that you came." "Well," I answered, "I wanted to honor you."

Katy and I didn't talk much, as it turned out. It didn't matter. What mattered was that I honored her, after all these years. What mattered was that I followed my body's prompting and presented us with that opportunity to re-open and heal a wound left over from when I abandoned her in junior high school.

What amazes me is this: I had no idea my relationship with Katy needed healing. I did not consciously realize there was real cellular/psychic damage from that particular

time in my childhood. But my body knew, and guided me to re-enter the situation. My body, my Taurus Moon, empowered by Pluto, traveling through Scorpio.

Pluto, of course, is currently linked by sextile to Uranus/Neptune in Capricorn, a planetary pattern which I feel as symbolic of my internal breakthrough (Uranus) from frozen robotic role-playing (Capricorn) into an utterly open space (Neptune) at Mary Jo's kitchen table. I am convinced that these three magical outer planets, working together at this point in history, have the capacity to completely revolutionize both human consciousness and experience. I'm seeing the revolution in my own case. If in one, then in many.