

Essay

MEETING SEKHMET

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Last November I received another letter from Deidre inviting me to tour Egypt for two weeks with a group of women in late January. The first letter I threw away. I stopped to read the second one, and then was so moved by the idea of this journey that I immediately fired off a reply detailing why I *absolutely could not come*. Too much money.

A few days later I dreamed that small obstacles were preventing me from going on a trip abroad with some women. What I found interesting about the dream was that when I woke up I was furious! How could I have let those little things stop me! As soon as Jeff woke up I told him about the dream. A few minutes later I told him about Deidre's letters and how I had responded to the second one. Oddly enough I made no conscious connection between the trip to Egypt and the dream! But Jeff did, and said "Well then, we'll have to make sure you can go."

That was it. Right then and there I resolved to go to Egypt, no matter what it took. I had \$1500 in savings, and I could borrow on my credit cards if need be. Then, amazingly enough, my parents and my in-laws volunteered the rest of the money. (This kind of gifting has happened only one other time in my life, so I was certainly not expecting it.)

Why circumstances had miraculously cleared the way for this journey was not clear, though I had always wanted to go, ever since I was a child staring at pictures in art

history books, wondering why I felt so connected to the art of ancient Egypt and Greece, why it seemed so eerily familiar. (This was long before I had ever heard of reincarnation. I was a good Catholic girl.)

In 1990 my friend Clarissa and I saved our money for a year so we could spend a month in Greece uncovering the goddess in ancient ruins; now, with only six weeks notice, I would go to Egypt.

Little did I know it then, but on my journey to Egypt I would undergo death and resurrection, paralleling the myth of Osiris.

Day three, at the hotel in Giza. from my journal: “Have been unable to sleep. Last night, asking my inner guides, and the only message I got was ‘Open.’ Then, when I did, a terrible feeling of oppression on my solar plexus, what I have previously described as ‘an infinite hole of negativity’ – and it felt like a giant hand had its fist closed around my stomach and was yanking up on it . . . Towards morning, still sleepless, the feeling that there may be a ‘force field’ set up around ancient secrets. The Great Pyramid towered over our hotel, not even a quarter-mile away. I hope that once we left Giza I would be able to sleep.

The day before, we had visited the “Serapeum,” near the step pyramid at Saqqara. The Serapeum is a series of enormous underground vaulted hallways offset with 24 niches the size of large bedrooms, each of which contains a huge sarcophagus meant for a bull. Walking through the shadowy hallways of the Serapeum had left me with an eerie feeling, the odd sense that I was contaminated with something from that ancient time.

The next morning, besides feeling exhausted from lack of sleep, I also felt lethargic, drugged. Attempting to shake it off, I continued with the group on our tours of ancient tombs and temples and the grand old Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

On the cruise boat, anchored at Luxor, day four, from journal: “despite sleep last night, still feel fairly weak, sometimes chilled, sometimes feverish. Pain in muscles going up and down stairs.”

Day six, journal: “I’ve been conserving my energy so that I have enough for the antiquities each morning. I then collapse into bed, and mostly sleep until the next morning’s call, at 7:30. So lethargic, I’m almost paralyzed.” I told Hope, my roommate, that I had somehow locked into the shadow of ancient Egypt. That it was as if “my KA had gone down into the BA.” (From our Egyptian guide I had learned that the KA is the soul, and that C.G. Jung identified the BA as the collective unconscious.) We both laughed at my strange remark. And we both knew that, somehow, it was true. I was the only one to be having this kind of experience.

Day eight, journal: “Woke up today hoping to feel much better after Deidre volunteered a wonderful Reiki healing on me last night. I told her that I had been feeling awful, leaden, paralyzed. Working mostly on my legs, she was “told to tell” me “to accept the quickening.” She was also told to tell me that “I have an Ankh in my womb.” (The Ankh is the symbol of everlasting life.)

I told her that it was as if I had come here and contacted the shadow of ancient Egypt, that I was holding it — for everyone — the same way I did with the shadow of Hiroshima as a two-year-old child. She said, “You must birth that now, let it go.”

Before Deidre worked on me, I told her that I didn’t think I would make it to the temple complex at Karnak the next day. That every day I was feeling a little worse, and had been only barely able to make it to the Dendera temple that morning. She told me that before we went to the main complex at Karnak, if I could get up the energy to at least go to a small shrine on the outskirts, one dedicated to the goddess Sekhmet. She said that she had had a powerful experience when she first went there, and she thought that I would too, since lion-headed Sekhmet was known as the dark side of the Hathor (Aphrodite) energy. That Sekhmet held the shadow. One of her most told stories goes like this: when the god Ra was getting old, he started to lose the respect of his people. So he asked Hathor to do something to make them regain their respect. Hathor came to Ra in her aspect as Sekhmet, and her solution to the problem was to go on a killing rampage, becoming so bloodthirsty that not even the gods could stop her. Finally Ra had

to trick her to stop, by making up a sleeping potion for her to drink which looked like blood.

So the next morning, once again I forced myself to get up and dress and eat a little breakfast, and follow the group from our cruise boat to our little bus. I wasn't feeling better which was discouraging; on the other hand I wasn't feeling worse either. So maybe Deidre's work had shifted the energy, halted the descent.

Strangely enough, when we approached the little shrine, I was first in line (usually I had dragged behind). The outside doorway led into the central one of three rooms, which contained the statue of a headless seated god. Before I had a chance to investigate this statue I felt like I was being pulled to the right, to enter a darkened room. Peeking around the corner (why was I peeking? did I already know that I would be afraid?) I was instantly galvanized by what looked like two eyes, gleaming in the darkness. Looking right at me, they were fierce, alien, even extraterrestrial. Hope, who had been right behind me, heard me whisper, "Oh my God!!" — as if I was terrified. I *was* terrified. I felt like a small child who had just seen the bogeyman.

I was not the only one to experience the statue of Sekhmet in this manner. Even the skeptical intellectual Britisher in our group came up to me afterwards to say, in a surprised, hushed voice, "She was *terrifying!*"

Deidre had arranged for our Egyptian guide to take the guards away from the little shrine so we could have the place to ourselves for a while. Each woman then spent a few minutes alone in the room with the Sekhmet statue. When I went in there I was surprised to see that the room had gotten lighter, and that I had mistakenly taken her ears to be her eyes! (At the time, I took this to be a stupid mistake on my part; after the trip was over, I came across an author who claims that ancient Egyptian statues were sometimes deliberately constructed to give two distinctly different impressions.) I could see now that her real eyes were not frightening but utterly compassionate. However, the energy in the statue as a whole, or maybe it was just in that part of the little room she was in (unlike many statues, this was still standing in the place it had originally

occupied) was extraordinarily uncanny and powerful. When my turn came, I entered Her presence feeling embarrassed and abashed, like a serf in front of a queen. Standing about five feet in front of her, I closed my eyes and my head instantly filled with what I can only describe as a continuous loud deep buzzing. The energy was so overwhelming that I opened my eyes, and again, the unbearable, inaudible, screaming buzz — I closed my eyes again. Again the energy sounded in me — overwhelming. I opened my eyes. There was no escape from it. I surrendered, moving into resonance with the powerful uncanny energy in that room.

Several of us remarked, after re-emerging from our own audiences with Sekhmet, that the room she was in was becoming lighter, and, since the sky was clear and the room constructed of stone, we wondered how that was happening.

When our sessions were over, we went to find our guide, as he wanted to say a few things to us about Sekhmet. *Five minutes later, when he walked into the room, it had returned to its original darkness.* Again, several of us noted this.

That afternoon I felt marginally better, and told Deidre that perhaps her session with me had helped after all, because I wasn't worse that day, that perhaps Reiki had helped to turn the tide.

The next morning I awoke spontaneously at 5:30 and was moved to go out and watch the sunrise. As I sat on the deck watching the sun rise over the Nile I realized that I felt better, much better, that this new day was a new birth.

That same morning I learned that besides being the dark goddess, resembling Kali, Sekhmet was also the goddess of disease and healing!

That afternoon I suddenly realized that my meeting with Sekhmet was the reason I had come to Egypt. That as I had been paralyzed by the collective nuclear shadow in this life since I was a small child, so I had also, on going to Egypt, assumed the weight of the collective shadow of this ancient land. Indeed, if reincarnation is to be a factor here, perhaps it was in Egypt when I first picked up this energy, as if it was my own to carry; and that in coming back to Earth in 1942, only three weeks after the first Chicago

experiment in nuclear fission, I was, because of my ancient Egyptian experience, primed to take on collective shadow energy again in this life.

In coming into the presence of the power of Sekhmet, in moving into resonance with her terrible and compassionate energy, I had given that shadow back to the god, where it belonged. Only She could contain the collective shadow energy. I was a mere mortal; I had no business carrying such a horrendous weight.

Soon after arriving home, I sent my trip journal to one of my sisters. Imagine my shock when she responded via email: “Not long after JP (a famous European opera producer, and her lover for many years) died, he appeared in a dream and said “The KA is the BA.” I didn’t know what that meant at the time and ran to the New York Public Library to find out.”