



Awakening

One Woman's Sexual Journey

A Play by Laurie Williams, Ph.D.

Table of Contents

Dedication
Awakening Copyright
PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES
WARNING
PERFORMANCES
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
CAST OF CHARACTERS
ACT ONE

Dedication

In loving memory of Mum and Dad - the perfect parents for this lifetime's journey.

Awakening

One Woman's Sexual Journey
A Play in One Act

Copyright © 2016 All Rights Reserved.
Laurie Williams, Ph.D.
Toronto, Canada

ISBN:978-0-9739989-4-8
Contact Information: www.sexhealingtheatre.com
phone: 416-918-6083
sexhealingtheatre@gmail.com

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES:

From the first moment I found a safe space to confront my fears around sexuality, I felt compelled to share my experience with other women so they could avoid the pain. Surely I wasn't alone. Along the way, I have learned that men also relate to my story or hold a space of care, not judgment. I desire for others' stories to be shared. I desire for sexuality to be become openly honoured and accepted for both men and women in our society. I believe the learning that is awakening around sexuality at this time will do much to heal the violence in our world.

In the play I say that magic and mystery always lure me. This quotation from a 2013-14 Mayan calendar that speaks to magic:

“Spells are but personal myths that craft and define our lives. Spells remind us that words and beliefs have magical powers that generate states of fascination and entrancement. By becoming conscious of the spells we are casting through our words and beliefs we can redefine them and thereby magically shift our lives.”

My continual growth through the process of writing, workshopping, editing and learning this script for performance continually illuminates this magic in my life.

So this is my story. What is yours?

WARNING:

Some of what I have written about almost being raped may trigger reactions in victims of rape. Please take care of yourself however you need. Circle yourself with white light. My heart holds you in your violation and pain. I share this story because it is part of what has helped me take control of my life and take my power back and I acknowledge my circumstances are not the same as being raped.

To all the men who have been in my life, I send you my love. You have been my teachers. Thank you. I hope that life is treating you well.

PERFORMANCES

First performed as a solo production “The Thaw: One Woman’s Journey to Sexual Awakening”. Written and performed by Laurie Williams, Ph.D., Directed by Tanya Rubinstein Taylor at Teatro Paraguas, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, April 12 and 13, 2013.

First performed as a two person play as “The Thaw: One Woman’s Journey to Sexual Awakening”, by Laurie Williams, Ph.D. and Claire Acott, directed by Alan Kinsella at the Alumnae Theatre in Toronto, ON, Canada September 23, 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people that I have to thank for helping this play come to life. My Medicine and workshop teachers: Barbara, Butterfly Dreamer and John, Thunderwolf, who started me on the path and continue to guide me. My first dramaturg, director and producer, Tanya Rubinstein Taylor in Santa Fe, New Mexico, whose loving support and encouragement brought me right through the writing and first production of this piece as a one-woman show in Santa Fe. My director and dramaturg, for the first Toronto production and evolution of the play to a two-hander, Alan Kinsella. Thank you for believing in my script enough to give of your immense talent and your time to edit with me and then to direct this workshop. Claire Acott for sharing her huge talent and her dedication as Younger Laurie. Nancy Wilson for her always beautiful graphic designs and belief in me. My dear friends: Carolyn Rendulich for monetary contributions and life support through the years, Paula DeCoito for flying all the way to Santa Fe to support me in my first workshop, for doing a final edit and for guiding me to the medicine, Michele Kuhlmann for her being there to prod me along for years, Gwyn for her enthusiasm, Morel d'Amour for doing a writing commitment together and connecting me to the courses that led to support of – Amy Jacobs, Debra Hawley, Anna Molitor – the group I needed to bring the play as my course project in Feminine Power. Brenda Darling for taking time to go through a run and offer feedback. Pamela Masden for pushing me to go for performing at a workshop even if it was only ten minutes and ended up not happening that time.

Sandra Burley for seeking music and being positive. Medea Chechik for her support and asking me to speak on her program herstory evolves on “That Channel”. Carlyle Janesen of Good for Her for her time and generosity and willingness to spread the word. All the women and men who have given me feedback and the green light along the way at my readings and workshops. Alumnae Theatre Company, to all of you wonderful women (and to Angus) who work so hard and support each other to provide a space and opportunities for women to create theatre.

TO EVERYONE AGAIN. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance:

Older Laurie: *Laurie from her mid 40's to present day, height 5' 3 1/2"* She is full of energy, determined and intent on knowing things.

Storyteller: *woman in her 50's.*

Younger Laurie: *Laurie from birth to her mid 40's. She is full of energy, determined and intent on knowing things.. height 5' 5 1/2"*.

Mum: *early 30's to mid-40's, petite and elegant.*

Dad: *Tall, dark, handsome, early 30's to 40's, height 6'.*

Rudy: *13 or 14 years, self confident.*

The Girl Next Door: *girl in her early 20's, brash.*

Giovanni: *Italian, late 20's, beard, receding hair line, slim, height 5'8".*

Bashir: *20, short curly black hair, Middle Eastern. Says two words.*

Marco: *short black hair, a lean face, mustache, broad shoulders, fit body, height about 5'6" dressed in a jean shirt and pants, mid-40's to 50's.*

Medicine Teacher: *woman in her late 50's.*

Punk Girl: *a very kind young lady with short blue hair, nose rings, tattoos all up and down her arms, wearing tatty shorts and doc martens in her early 20's.*

Sam: *mid-20's to 30's, stalky and height 5'7". He is not an actual physical presence in Laurie's life. They connect by letters and phone.*

ACT ONE

SETTING:
A Medicine Wheel.

AT RISE:

A woman in her 60's is completing the creation of a Medicine Wheel and invoking the powers of the universe.

OLDER LAURIE:

Powers of the Northwest, place of Sacred Law, I call on you to come and hold a strong safe space for this ceremony.

Powers of the Northeast, place of my Highest High Self, I call on you to come and hold a strong safe space for this ceremony.

(Older Laurie turns to the audience.) I'm standing in the middle of a medicine wheel. The medicine wheel is a sacred ceremonial circle into which all the powers of the universe are called to guide, protect and support you while you do your ceremony. Some of these powers are the elements, some are the worlds of Grandmother Earth – the plant, animal, mineral, human, and ancestor worlds. In the middle of the medicine wheel sit our our catalyst Life Force Energy, our sexuality, our creativity and our soul. It is the place of freedom and the teacher of honesty. The place of the void where all things are possible.

Have you ever really, really, really desired something with all your heart – like a longing of your soul? I have always desired to know sexual passion with someone I loved from the core of my being. I desired to know the deep intimacy of it, and it always eluded me. I kept struggling and I kept struggling and couldn't get there. But I never give up....

I call to the Powers of the Universe.

Great Mystery, this is Lightning Dancer. I call on you and all the Powers of the Universe to come as I search my soul, for its truth regarding sacred sexual energy in this body as a female. I take responsibility for my part in creating a world of beauty, truth, love, harmony and passion – wholeness/the male and female balanced within me – for claiming it. To meet the terror of annihilation, I create a sacred space of safety to hold the energies of transformation. I create a medicine wheel.

My studies in Shamanism have me journey back to mine my experiences. Journey to see how I created a belief system of who I am, and how I should behave in this world as a female sexual being. How I can create the life I desire. So here's my story.

STORYTELLER:

Once upon a time there was a wee girl. Its 1947.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I'm in a stroller in the front yard of our little white stucco house with its green roof and trim. A neighbour's young daughter, Debbie, is with me outside while my Mum is inside getting her hair permed. Debbie is pushing me faster and faster in a stroller and we are laughing and giggling with delight. Suddenly the stroller is tipping over. Wham. I hit my chin on the jagged joining parts of the stroller handle. Mum hears me scream and comes rushing out of the house.

MUM:

Laurie! Love. Mum's here. Oh! No! What happened? Debbie, go and get Mr. Woods. What have I done?! I knew I should never have trusted someone so young. There, there... Your beautiful face is ruined.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I'm left with a jagged red scar from the bottom of my lip to the bottom of my chin.

My Mum, who does everything for me and is overprotective, keeps telling me..

MUM:

Laurie, you have such booby eyes.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

But she looks away when she sees my scar. Something is wrong with my face. I have to hide my face.

STORYTELLER:

The wee girl continues to grow and to gather experiences.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

While Mum is dressing for a party, I'm prancing around in a pair of her high heels and the pink satin and black lace half slip Dad bought for her on a business trip. She is wearing her black cocktail dress with its large squares of taffeta and velvet on the skirt. Mum is petite and elegant.

"Mum, Mum, this is so pretty. You should wear it as a skirt."

Dad comes in. Dad is tall, dark, handsome, humanitarian. Mostly in the background but likes to buy us goodies on payday: sponge toffee, smarties, O'Henry. He helps me practise the piano every morning:

OLDER LAURIE and YOUNGER LAURIE:

There was an Eskimo I did know who lived up north in all the snoooooow, tidliooooo, tidliooooo.

OLDER LAURIE:

I'm about 6.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"See, see, Dad. Aren't I pretty?" Dad walks over to Mum.

DAD:

Would you like a cocktail, Peachie?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

They smile, kiss and Mum nods yes.

DAD:

You look lovely, Millie.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"What about me?"

Dad leaves without telling me I'm pretty.

OLDER LAURIE:

Mystery and magic always lure me.

In the Medicine, - that's the term we use for my Shamanic path – in the Medicine we talk about the dawn and dusk being a crack between the worlds – a time when it is easier to connect to other realms.

Like once when I'm walking home after swimming in the late autumn. The bare trees are outlined against a midnight blue sky that dissolves into pale blue, peach and gold on the horizon. The black shape of a huge oak catches my attention, and I am drawn into the tree by the power and beauty of its silhouette. I become a branch. This moment stays with me, returning every now and again with its magic.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"Mum, I was looking at this beautiful tree and it made me one of its branches."

MUM:

Laurie, enough of that nonsense. You have to be practical to survive in this world.

STORYTELLER:

The young girl is now in grade seven.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I'm standing in class with a group of girls, and a boy I like, Rudy, with his Elvis Presley hair cut, self confidence, and big smile, overhears me say,

“Isn’t he handsome? I’d like to marry someone like him.”

He calls back across the room to me, his mouth wide open and sneering,

RUDY:

Who would want to marry you? You’re too ugly.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Ouch!”

Around this time my blonde, curvy, cheerleader sister, Sue, who is four years older, is getting in constant trouble over her boyfriend. One night Dad falls asleep in his big arm chair while waiting up for my sister to come home from her date. His cigar ignites my Mum’s beautiful brand new curtains.

All the commotion wakes me up so I get out of bed and tip toe to the living room door and peak around the corner. I see the charred remains of the delicate gray curtains with their sprays of pink apple blossoms. Sue comes in and tries unsuccessfully to sneak to her bedroom.

DAD:

Come here young lady!

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Well!!! My Dad raises his voice at my sister – we DON’T raise our voices in my family!

DAD:

You are grounded for a month and we’ll see if we let you continue dating this young man or not. Go to bed. We’ll talk in the morning.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Sue glares at me as she stomps off to her bedroom. Mum sees me.

MUM:

Laurie! Laurie, you need to learn that you have to always be in control. Its important for you to always be in control.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“In control of what?”

MUM:

Of yourself, Laurie. I don’t want you and your sister to end up like Aunty Sheila and have to get an abortion and go into a mental institution. Now go back to bed.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Boys become scary but I want to know about sex and sex isn’t discussed in our home.

I ask my uncle on the farm about the animals but he ignores me. I won’t look at the “naughty” magazines the girls at school are sharing, but I scour Zane Gray books for its “naughty” bits.

STORYTELLER:

The young lady learns her value and her role as a female. Her Dad seems to say one thing and her mother another. Its grade 12 and the prom is coming up. Her Dad sees his colleagues dying in their 40’s and leaving their wives without a pension and is saying,

DAD:

Laurie, it’s important for women to go to university and have a good job. You never know if your husband may die and you may need to take care of yourself.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I don’t date. I don’t dream. I study and eat any cake, cookies, or candies I can get my hands on. I don’t want to be just a housewife. But my behavior worries my Mum.

MUM:

I want you to go out and have fun. Don’t always study. There’s more to life than studying. Go out with boys.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“The boys I like don’t like me.”

MUM:

Don’t be so particular. You’d like to go to the prom, wouldn’t you?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Yeaaa (*Laurie corrects herself*).....yes.”

My parents are friends with some new neighbours from the States who have a son my age. They must have discussed us because (*Ring.*)

MUM:

Laurie, it’s for you,.....it’s Ted.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Ted is tall and slightly overweight with big wide open eyes and a big grin - a beautiful piano player.

“Got it. Hi Ted..... Sure. Thanks. Bye. Mum. Ted asked me to the prom.”

I’m excited to be going to the prom with my friends.

But even though Ted is kind and attentive all evening, a perfect gentle man, opening the car door and holding my arm as we walk through the snow to my house, I am just not attracted to him. At the door, I look at the ground and say “Thanks”. When he leans to kiss me, my body goes rigid and I gasp. I push myself away and rush inside with tears starting to flow.

Mum catches me running upstairs.

MUM:

How.....What ...?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“It was awful. I feel so mean and horrible. Ted tried to kiss me and I couldn’t let him.”

MUM:

Oh, Laurie, you should have kissed him. You must have hurt his feelings. You shouldn’t have done that.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I’m thinking,

“What about my feelings?”

STORYTELLER:

The young lady becomes a young woman with her belief system and behavior patterns in place.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I am all fired up about citizen participation and have just read Jane Jacobs “No Mean City” so I’m doing an honours make-up year to get into the Masters of Town Planning program. I have a little dark bedsit on the third floor of a boarding house. I spend hours choosing matching curtains, throws, pillows and nic nacs. One day I am talking to the girl next door in the standing room only communal kitchen.

GIRL:

Whatcha doing?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Nothing. Just eating cookies.”

GIRL:

Bored, eh. You need sex.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“I couldn’t out of marriage.”

GIRL:

What if you don't get married? You don't want to die a virgin do you?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"No!"

GIRL:

Come on! You're 24. It's the 60's. Haven't you heard of free love? You don't have to be married. Go to the Graduate Student Union for lunch. You'll meet guys there.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I go the next day. I am sitting on the couch in the dingy lounge of the old GSU dressed in my deep blue sleeveless paisley sheath with its splashes of turquoise and hot pink, eating my lunch. This distinguished guy in a suit comes up to me.

JAMES:

May I join you. I'm James.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

James is about 5'10", with deep brown skin, proper. He's from the Caribbean. "Sure. I'm Laurie."

JAMES:

Nice to meet you. Do you come here often?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"I just started. Do you?"

JAMES:

I am doing a part-time masters in Political Science but I work for the UN full time, so I only come a couple times a week.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

We chat about politics and what I'm studying.

JAMES:

(He stands up.) I have to go to class now. Would you like to go to a movie with me on Friday night?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

(I nod.) Friday evening comes and he picks me up in his hunter green Carmen Gia. We go to "Vivre Sa Vie", an avant-garde French film. It has sexually explicit scenes. I am shy and ill at ease but happy. He drops me off home right after the film with a brief kiss on my cheek.

The next morning at 8:00 am. James is at the front door with three yellow roses, and croissants for breakfast. I'm still dressed in my pink baby dolls and housecoat. We go upstairs to my bedsit under the very disapproving eye of my landlady.

We sit on my make shift couch and talk about the UN and its parties. At one point he leans back and looks at me,

JAMES:

The parties might challenge you. The women wear see-through blouses with no bras.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"I don't know."

I am squirming inside and feeling totally inadequate. I'm thinking, "I could never do that and am I out of my league here." But remember I'm on a mission of lose my virginity.

We start making out and he slips off my housecoat and baby doll top, takes me over to the bed, turns off the light and then hurriedly undresses and climbs on the bed with me. He straddles me and he kisses me as he takes off my baby doll bottoms. I feel his weight on me. Then he spreads my legs apart with his and moves back and enters me. I get scared and excited at the same time but I don't participate. I freeze. It is something like I go into terrified, numb all my feelings and try to please but sort of have no idea what is going on. I can't seem to read any signs in the field.

He uses the withdrawal method.

It's over and I'm crying. It all happens so fast. I feel disappointed and guilty. He gets up, goes to the washroom and then leaves.

We have sex a couple more times. I cry each time and tell him I want to have his babies! He stops seeing me and I cry all day every day all summer long in my little windowless research cubicle at the Clarke Institute for Studies in Mental Health!

OLDER LAURIE:

Years later, despite having become very practical, the lure of mystery and magic has not disappeared. So when my friend, Paula, asks me to join her at Sundance, I jump.

Sundance is a 10 day ceremony. The first seven days we spend creating a huge medicine wheel to dance and sleep in. The Tree of Life stands in the center of the wheel and our sleeping arbors line the inner perimeter. We spend the last three days of the ceremony inside the medicine wheel fasting, praying and dancing back and forth to the Tree of Life. People come from afar to celebrate, meet old friends and new and to be with Spirit.

When the day arrives for the Grand entry into the medicine wheel, we gather at the East Gate. The long line of dancers in their fancy regalia create a rippling river of colours. The air is alive with excitement and anticipation and with the trepidation of all of us newbies.

The drums beat and I join the end of the procession to dance around the wheel to my sleeping arbor. Then quiet. We sit and prepare our pipes for the opening pipe ceremony. After, again the drums beat and the dancing begins.

We dance until 2:00 am. and start up again at 6:00 a.m.. In my typical fashion, I go through the motions. The days feel never ending as I listen to others' insights and journeys of transformation. My practicality has made me a Doubting Thomas. So Doubting Thomas as ever, I think that I am experiencing nothing in particular except disappointment and the others are just telling stories.

I try water fasting. I fail to last beyond a day and a half. Paula dry fasts the whole three days in the blazing hot Arizona desert.

Finally, the last day, and I eagerly await the wagon loads of watermelon which will welcome us when we exit the dance.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"YUM."

OLDER LAURIE:

People's faces shine with Spirit despite the layers of red dirt. Of course, I never think to ask if my face is shining. I assume it isn't.

I am not in the Medicine yet and still not connected to my body. So, the next day when Paula and I are leaving and we are warned to be careful driving because we are in an "altered" state, I think I'm not altered.

We decide to do some sightseeing and manage the long drive to the Petrified Forest.

Wandering around in these huge amazing canyons, we come upon one where the light starts shimmering. Entranced, we climb down to the bottom of the canyon to do a ceremony and become lost in the energy of canyon upon canyon of blue and white rocks vibrating. Part of me is thrilled, but my mind goes into panic getting more and more anxious to find our way out. At last we come upon a warden who guides us. The magic we feel calls us to visit again the next day but the canyons are just beautiful blue and white rock.

STORYTELLER:

Our young woman tries again. She meets Giovanni.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

He is an architect from Rome in the one year track of the Town Planning program. He's medium height, slim, has a dark brown trimmed beard, a receding hair line, glasses, and is wearing an apple red pullover and tan cords - looking very European. A mischievous smile relieves his intensity. We connect. A couple of months later,

GIO:

(Gio is pronounced as Joe) Bella, do you want to move into my friend's sublet in Rochdale with me?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I do and we have sex for the first time. Gio drags me to the bare bedroom and we fall on our futon.

“Gio.”

He sits me up and starts undoing my blouse and caressing my breasts as he does so.

OLDER LAURIE:

But guess what chatter is going on in my mind?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Oh, my God I don’t know how to do this. I hope I can feel something. I’m too fat and he’ll find it repulsive to touch me. Dad said men don’t like fat women. And Mum, I can just hear her.”

MUM:

Laurie, you shouldn’t be doing this. Stay in control.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“But I like him. I want to please him. I want him to like me. How do I please him?”

OLDER LAURIE:

Always wanting to please. That’s me. You know when I look back though, I took this wanting to please too far.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“More about that later.”

He slips off my blouse, reaches around and undoes my bra and slides the straps off my shoulders. I help him take off his red sweater. He draws me to him and kisses me, and then moves his hands slowly down my body to undo my jeans, pushing me down as he does so. He unzips and then wiggles down my jeans taking my panties with them. I wriggle to help him but anxiety grips me. He takes off his slacks and covers me with his body and spreads my legs with his. I hold my breath and stiffen. He enters me. I say to myself, “Geez, it hurts.”

It’s over and he rolls onto his side with his back to me. I stare at the ceiling, feeling sad and alone. This becomes our pattern. I think, “Something is not working here.” So one time after sex, - like great timing, I know, - I touch the back of his shoulder, I say,

“Gio, Gio.....I really want to feel something and I don’t.....I don’t know what to do.....Gio.....Gio.”

Nothing.

I don’t talk to anyone. I can’t admit I am having sex out of marriage.

Orgasms, orgasms, orgasms. What are they? What am I supposed to do? How do they happen? I want one. That is what sex is about. It is supposed to be magical, passionate and I can’t get there. I can’t connect to this guy. I can’t talk to him and I really like him.

OLDER LAURIE:

In the first shamanic sex workshop I take years later, I learn that there are 5 levels of orgasm and that we are usually at level one or two. A man’s natural reaction at level one is to withdraw and want to sleep; whereas, the woman wants to cuddle.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

In the summer Gio and I buy a beige volkswagon bug and tour architectural sites in the States, especially Frank Lloyd Wright’s. We have such fun. On the way home we stop at a road side park. We sit at the picnic table in the dappled light with our legs entwined and pull out our day old pepperoni pizza remains. I’m staring at all the initials carved in hearts on the table. I know he is returning to Rome as soon as we get back to TO. He puts his arm around me,

GIO:

Bella, you taught me to love trees. Before they were just in the way of the architecture.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“You taught me so much about politics, Gio.”

We sit in silence for a few moments, then,

GIO:

Bella, will you to come to Rome and marry me?

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Gio, yes!”

I’m so happy. But there’s part of me that feels it’s not real.

Gio returns to Rome and for the first time in my life at 26, I self pleasure. Touching “down there” had always been dirty and not nice. This activity, however, doesn’t last long.

In February, on the phone,

“Gio, is something going on? feeling you’re with someone else.”

GIO:

(Pause.) I’ve just seen my ex a couple of times. It means nothing.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

“Gio, how can you say that when I could sense it from here? I need some time to think. I’ll call you back.”

My belief that the relationship isn’t real takes over my thoughts. I call back a week later.

“Gio, Gio, this isn’t going to work, I’ll never feel that I can trust you.....”

My world collapses.

I feel like I’m play acting my life. I don’t know “The Rules”. How do I make someone love and desire me? Okay you can talk about it now.

OLDER LAURIE:

Remember I said, I think I’m supposed to please and take pleasing way too far? Well I even step over my own boundaries of right and wrong. Like with Gio. Gio is a Communist – not unusual in Italy but it scares me to death. I feel like I have “I am a communist” branded on my forehead when I come out of political meetings. Yet stories some party members tell me of how they would be in jail if it weren’t for the party, make me think. Anyway, Gio steals books saying it doesn’t matter because it is just stealing from big capitalist companies who steal from the people. I steal a book.

STORYTELLER:

So seeking to please, chaos governs the young woman’s relationships for the next 30 years.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

That summer, dressed in my shocking pink mini dress and thigh high black patent leather boots, I’m off to a family dinner and feeling swishy. I exit the subway car. Run up the stairs out into the sunshine and through this little bushed park between my parents’ apartment building and the subway. WHAM! I’m grabbed from behind and am on the ground with this white guy on top of me. I’m stunned. His hoodie and the shadows of the bushes mask the details of his face. Struggling, but knowing I am not winning, I go limp. Remember, I’m taught not to raise my voice; so I don’t even think to scream. I start to talk to him,

“This isn’t right. It’s about love.”

I feel his hand pulling up my dress and sliding into my panties. I say,

“You don’t want sex this way. You want to be loved.”

I’ll never know if it was my tampon or my talking that stops him, but he stops. He pulls me up and says,

“Promise not to call the police and give me a kiss and I’ll let you go.”

I do and he does. I continue to my parents’ and tell everyone. We all have a good laugh at my talking to him about sex being for love and marriage. I say I’m fine and insist, I promised not to call the police, so we go on as if nothing has happened. Well almost. I start noticing men looking at me on the street and I stop smiling. The next time I visit my parents’ the bushes are gone from the small park.

On campus a couple weeks later, I am almost raped again.

OLDER LAURIE:

My fear of men gets greater; sexuality gets scarier, and my connection to my sexual desire gets more deeply suppressed. 30 years pass and I am doing my shamanic sexual recapitulation of my life when I realise for the first time that these two sexual assaults happened in the same summer.....

Shamanism teaches us how to take 100% responsibility for our lives even when chaos happens. (It also says expect chaos 20% of the time.). I struggle with this concept but gradually see it gives me my power back. I see I am al-

most raped twice within a short span of time. I see I am desperately wanting to be loved and feeling hopeless and helpless – feeling a victim. I am without strong boundaries, not able to consciously own my desires, and so I am not making choices that would get me what I want safely. Being conscious, having boundaries and owning my desires would not necessarily have guaranteed my safety but could have in these situations. Taking even 1/4 of 10 percent responsibility for what happened gives me back some power because I have choice or power where I am response able. I am not blaming myself, the victim, and I am not saying that I wanted or deserved to be attacked. I AM NOT. And I am not agreeing with the sentiment of the time that provocative clothing means you are asking to be raped. I want to know what precautions I can take by looking at things honestly. Again, I am only speaking for myself and in my circumstances.

STORYTELLER:

With all her chaos, our young woman is like a ship without a rudder as she goes from one relationship to another: Ken, Bill, Bob, Simon, Raj, Daniel, Bashir.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Ken – someone is better than no one. No real connection here, but I quit my job and up and go to England with him. Bill - my friends link us up but why Laurie? It is a just no-go from the start for me, but I hang in, helping him overcome his sexual inadequacies and finding his path in life. Bob likes me and there is a mutual attraction, but my fear of sex overtakes me. The first time we have sex and he goes down on me, I jump up out of bed in the middle of it and run home. I can't stop laughing when I picture myself flying out of bed and rushing down the stairs, but I cringe when I think of what I put these poor guys through. Simon knows I am lost and for him I am just a conquest. Raj is waiting for an arranged marriage to happen and really not interested in a permanent relationship. Even though I know this and even though I know he isn't the "One", I still decide that maybe the reason he won't marry me is because I'm holding back. So I give my all. When he starts seeing someone else, I end up almost having a nervous breakdown and return to Canada. (*Shake my head.*) Then there is Daniel, the married man whose wife has not yet joined him in Canada.. We meet in the student co-op and go for a walk every night after dinner and talk. Mum keeps warning me about propinquity and I swear I am not interested in sex. Well it happens. We connect, but it's more a meeting of minds. And then Bashir. He is half my age and am I besotted with him! He needs a mother and a rescuer. I fill both roles. Finally I feel I have what I have been searching for and can't let him go when he no longer needs me. I go through all the sexual exercises in the book "Getting It On" and start waking up sexually but he is desperate to be free. I am desperate to hold on. I feel he is cheating but he denies it. What a tug-of-war! It gets to a point that he explodes and lashes out and batters and bruises me. He says,

BASHIR:

You're ugly....

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"Yeeow!" I let go knowing the pain I now see in other women's faces.

But stuck in the thoughts that I have given him everything, I conclude I must really be undesirable. I almost go crazy. One night, I lie in bed with an unbearable migraine. A girlfriend, JR, is holding my head. I feel myself on the knife edge of insanity. I have to choose which way to fall: go crazy and stop the pain or give life another chance.

OLDER LAURIE:

I know for sure I would have chosen to go crazy if JR had not held my head all night.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"Maybe Mum is right. Look what happens when you have sex out of marriage."

OLDER LAURIE:

BUT THE PART OF ME THAT IS INNOCENT, KEEPS GOING, KEEPS SEEKING ANSWERS: MY TRUE NATURE.

I do a Ph.D. on Love. Literally. - Hey, we study our own issues.

I go into therapy which helps, but my therapist is almost as uncomfortable dealing with sexuality as I am.

I go to a woman's sex workshop. We all sit in a circle with hand mirrors and check out our vaginas but it's not what I need.

Like, I try.

I think some of you who have enjoyed sex and your bodies don't get what I am talking about. Some of us haven't. When I say I didn't feel sexual passion, I mean it. I always want to talk to you about it, but I am too embarrassed, too ashamed of being so inadequate and too proud to admit it.

My first Medicine ceremony requires me to dig a six foot hole in the ground and stay in it over night. My boots get sucked into the muddy clay. Its cold and damp. All the tools need to be hauled uphill and down dale to the site and I don't care despite my exhaustion from fasting.

Its dusk as I head out for the half hour walk up through the forest on the twisting, rocky path in the ever darkening shadows and out onto the hilly field where all us seekers have dug our holes. A few of them are already standing at their holes with their flashlights. Crawling on the tarp covering the opening to mine is a large dull mustard caterpillar. I don't know its meaning but it feels good. I move it and wait with my prayer cigarettes for the medicine teachers to come. They bless me into my hole and secure the tarp over the opening. Around midnight a deluge thunders overhead. Cozy and warm doing my ceremony, I hear people stumbling around outside. The next morning I learn three people were flooded out. I feel a KNOWING that I am safe and there is something important here for me to learn.

After searching and searching, I finally find fellow seekers and knowledge that feed my joy in self discovery.

STORYTELLER:

She gets her PhD. Her therapy and now theater involvement ground her in herself. With Marco, the now woman has made some progress.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Marco has short black hair, a lean face, mustache, broad shoulders, fit body, - about 5'6" dressed in a jean shirt and pants. We meet at a Native protest march over OKA sacred burial grounds being used for a golf course. I figure he's about 26. Not good, I'm 45.

Its a perfect early September day and after the march we sit in the grass in front of the parliament buildings and talk,

MARCO:

I'm trying to get into a dry house. I've been dry for eight months. Its hard though. I sit in bars and nurse a root beer all night. I know I can't go back to my old friends.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I look into Marco's gentle brown eyes and I drop into his heart. Mine cracks wide open.

We keep meeting at the sit-in every night and connecting. It turns out he's 40! Part of me is aware of our differences in education, economic background and life experiences but he is so kind, so thoughtful. Like once when he is wrapping his niece, Annie's, birthday present: I get impatient with his slowness because there is so much to do but something about his manner pushes me to ask him why he is taking so long,

MARCO:

I'm trying to decide how to show Annie that I love her.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

I learn to always ask when we have differences and I think I know better.

He gives me tapes he makes of songs he loves.

A couple of months later we are in my little room in the student co-op. We haven't even made out. But the reality is I never have made out. We sit on my narrow single bed and talk about having sex,

"I'm not ready, Marco."

MARCO:

What's wrong with having sex? It's because I'm not white.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

Despite my better judgment, I give in. I feel a closing off again. We undress each other and he kisses his way down my body and pushes my legs up towards my chest and goes down on me. I think,

"Oh My God! What am I supposed to do?"

I try and tussle his hair. Its so awkward. He feels so far away. Sex is so undignified. He wants to please me, I know. He's asking me if I am enjoying it. He's taking his time. But I just wish it were over. I know I won't cum and he's going to feel badly.

OLDER LAURIE:

My extreme insecurity and distrust when he doesn't call and his use of pot for a while give us a rocky ride until we move in together two years later. Our values are really in sync though, and this man truly loves who women are and not just sexually. I do feel loved. And my problems, his problems, haven't gone away.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

He works nights and I am very involved in my theater studies and loving it. I work just enough consulting to pay my share of the bills. We never have much sex and even when we do,

MARCO:

Just relax and let me take you beyond the fear.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"No, I can't."

OLDER LAURIE:

I keep so busy, sex is easy to repress but my repression can't protect me from life. The old familiar stab of pain I feel because of my inadequacy gets triggered when people talk or make jokes about sex. And gradually life calls. I become haunted to know and live my sexuality and I keep denying things are missing. I love Marco and can't face hurting him. He knows though. So with the knowing plus the death of his brother and the emotional stress of his job, he falls off the wagon. He loses his license and job. I stop my theater involvement because of work demands and to be fairer to Marco.

Three years later...

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"Marco, have you seen my laptop?"

MARCO:

I sold it.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"What?! How could you? You know that I use it for work."

MARCO:

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm just a drunk. I'll never change. I don't deserve you. You should ask me to leave.

YOUNGER LAURIE:

"Go then. Go! I've had enough. I don't want to worry about you any more, about your stealing or your burning the house down."

OLDER LAURIE:

He goes.

At first I feel relief and then I feel as if I have nothing to live for - I know "co-dependent".

Much later, I realise that I used this as an excuse to ask him to leave. I can't face that I really need out even though I love him. I don't have the guts to say it.

Fortunately, this is when my friend, Paula, who is studying shamanism, gets me to one of their workshops on sexuality. I finally find a safe space to begin to confront the contradiction in my world that sex is scary and bad, especially out of marriage, but is the longing of my soul. I finally find a safe space to face the underground terror within me and the constant stab of pain I feel at my inadequacy as a female: my inadequacy physically, my inadequacy in relating to men, and especially my inadequacy sexually.

The workshops are about exploring, experiencing and honouring our sexual life force energy in a safe and sacred container. But Wow!!!! Do I have all my buttons pushed!!! I hate it! - except for the teachings and dress up. AND I know it's exactly what I need to confront my shame, my pain, my fears, my anger, my rage.

I become an apprentice and my shamanic journey begins.

So, my medicine teacher says,

MEDICINE TEACHER:

First of all, you need to cleanse your aging parts with cucumber and then reclaim your juiciness by self pleasuring. Buy a magic wand. It will be your friend for life. I promise.

OLDER LAURIE:

With all my might I push back against a life time of good girl conditioning. By the way, if you are thinking of doing the cucumber cleanse, peel it first.

The first time I go into Good for Her to buy the recommended magic wand, I'm hit by a wall of what seems like hundreds of dildos on display. My curiosity and fascination get the better of me and I wrestle my good girl to the ground. The dildos draw me closer: large ones, small ones, red ones, black ones, purple ones, plasticky ones, glass ones, realistic ones and not so realistic ones. Ones that vibrate and ones that don't – such a selection. I could have a whole wardrobe of sex toys. Wow! There are toys whose function I am unable to guess at.

A very kind young lady with short blue hair, nose rings, tattoos all up and down her arms, wearing tatty shorts and doc martens, comes up to me,

PUNK GIRL:

Do you need any help?

OLDER LAURIE:

"I'm looking for a magic wand."

(aside) She brings me this box that is over a foot long.

PUNK GIRL:

Here. May I help you with anything else?

OLDER LAURIE:

(aside) I am sure I am blushing at this point.

"Thanks. No."

I pay and stuff their telltale purple bag into my recycling bag and rush out of the store.

You know this exercise three times a week rule to maintain your fitness level? It applies here too. Well, for me, who has only self pleased for two short periods in my life, self pleasuring is excruciating. I see it as having to go back to this activity that proves how alone I am and how undesirable I am because I have to do it myself. AND. I. DO. IT! Mind you I avoid touching myself. I use the vibrator and dildo.

I go to two more level one and then a level two workshop (no intercourse here in case you are wondering.) and follow that with some training in my regular studies in year two. We learn our two breaths that help connect us to ourselves, and guess what? We should do each 20 minute breath followed by self pleasuring 3 times a week for three months. By this time I am getting committed to my studies and being the good gir... No! good student that I am and since I know that you get the new pattern in your body if you do it for eight months, I determine to do each breath three times a week for eight months. Yes, 16 months in total.

"Oh, its Wednesday and I haven't done my breath exercise yet. Better do it now. "

"There."

I tick it off my to-do list. *(aside)* You may have noticed, I am a recovering rigid) Next day.

"Geez, this weekend is my shamanic studies course. No time then, I better do it again today. Tick."

I am disciplined. No pleasure here yet, but my energy is running and my legs are shaking. I think I am never going to finish. And I do! I move onto my second breath.

I'm not finished my second set of 8 months, so I breathe away. About the third week of the 8th month, my legs are shaking like crazy. I self pleasure after and WOW it happens. The flood gates open, I mean literally! I'm riding the wave!!

"WOOOOOEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE! Oh my God. Yes!!!"

Now you may be thinking, my God woman, if sex has been such an issue all your life, why the hell have you left it so late? The answer is simple. TERROR. I would have to shatter my mirror of self reflection and face the terror of annihilation. My whole identity has been constructed to be "nice" in order to be "loved" - to be a "good girl", to be in control, to follow "the rules", uh huh, i.e. please others. Being sexual, especially being unmarried, despite the 60's, for me was to be a "bad girl" and to lose love. It's a self fulfilling prophecy. But my spirit keeps driving me to experience my sexual passion with a soul mate. I know there's mystery and magic in it. There's power in it. There's

joy in it. So maybe I needed to be in a place of its now or never to confront my quiet desperation.

In third year, I go on a medicine journey to Mexico. My clothes stick to my skin as I walk through the jungle on a barely discernible trail to the outer ruins of the palace precinct at Palenque. I climb down into the dark, dank tunnels through a series of tiny rooms and then down into the crypt. There is no light but there is light. I can barely make out the outline of the tomb.

I'm reluctant to fully enter but something rivets me in place. Talking?! Tiny piercing cries coming from all directions. I hear talking? Bats! I'm mesmerized. The bats are talking. I talk back. We talk on and on. Someone walks by and I feel self-conscious. I move back. I leave. Should I have stayed? Is this real? A memory deep within me awakens. I've been here before.

Around this time a friend asks if I would write to his nephew, Sam, who is in a war zone and who is interested in theater. I write to him to give him something positive to think about and find that he is a thinker, brilliant and gifted with words. We write over a period of almost two tours of duty.

At one point he mentions that he is having erotic dreams about me. I share that dreams of others can be about some aspect of ourselves and we let it drop. He's a flirt anyway and I like it. His honest sharing opens my world. He calls occasionally,

SAM:

Hey, you. How's it going?

OLDER LAURIE:

"Oh! Sam! Hi. Okay. How are you?"

SAM:

My buddy and I have a new past time. We are developing a monopoly game for a war zone. Instead of going to jail you get blown up by a landmine.

OLDER LAURIE:

"Sam! How can you make fun of such things?"

SAM:

It's better than crying. People are uncomfortable with the truth.

OLDER LAURIE:

I suppress the sexual feelings that are beginning to arise for him.
I love receiving his songs, poems and stories.

SAM:

"I could chase the days
But I'd only catch the night.....
seconds chasing minutes
with the minutes chasing hours.....
hours chase the days I chase
but time it is not ours.
weeks and months are laughing
yet years don't get the joke.

OLDER LAURIE:

As my connection with my sexual self gets stronger, the inner conflict with my repression becomes so intense I start having attacks of acid reflux that sear up my gullet cutting off my breath. I writhe around in bed at night in agony, in desperation, gasping for air. Longings, desires I dare not name, let alone allow myself to fully feel, screeeeeeeeeeam for release.

I am continuing with my sexual studies and I make a mesa to call in a soul mate. Ten days later Sam calls,

SAM:

Thank God I got you. Some sanity. We were picking through rubble looking for survivors from the bombing and as if that weren't bad enough, on the way back my buddy gets blown up before my eyes.

OLDER LAURIE:

"Sam, I am so sorry. Are you okay? You sound weird."

SAM:

Sorry. I'm high. I needed to be in another space for a bit.

OLDER LAURIE:

Again I feel my heart open with love. All of me is connected this time – heart, body and soul.

SAM:

I'm dreaming about us again.

OLDER LAURIE:

"I'm having feelings too but there's too great an age gap."

SAM:

I know but can't we pretend? We can write erotic letters in pseudonyms as a game so I can feel I have someone special in my life in case I don't make it.

OLDER LAURIE:

Well!!!!!!! Me, at 60 odd, who has had hardly any sex and won't even go there in my head because it's bad and is too emotionally painful, is going to write erotic letters! I go to the trusty Good for Her store to shop. While I'm paying at the counter I notice a brochure listing their winter workshops: Where Did It Go? On Discovering Your Lost Libido, Let It Go and Let It Flow, G-Spots and Female Ejaculation, Burlesque for Your Lover, and On Giving Great Head. I sign up for every one. I do all this to write better letters.

Sam enjoys my letters and I enjoy writing them. I don't know where they come from. I shock myself. I shock myself. And I experience.

Most of my letters are of a romantic nature but I have this black body suit I wore to a costume party as a cat. Maybe this triggered the following letter yet as I write I'm thinking,

"Oh my God, is this me? Is this bad? It feels like play."
Anyway...Here's what I write.

Dear Sam,

I hope you like this letter. It's a little different. I'm dressed in a black body suit, black elbow length gloves and black high heels.
The front door opens.

You call, "Are you home?"

I answer, "I'm upstairs."

I hear you climb the stairs two by two and I pounce on your back as you stride into the bedroom. I say,

"You have entered my den and you had better obey my orders if you know what is good for you."

You laugh and struggle playfully so I nip your ear and scratch down the back of your head as I slip off your back, and say,

"Turn and face me. Hiss. Don't touch!"

I bat your hand away. (aside This from me, the PLEASER?! I can't believe it. Where did it come from?) I look into your eyes with all my love and desire and squeeze your crotch. We laugh and you say,

"You are getting frisky!"

I say, "Don't encourage me."

I smile and then scratch down both sides of your face, and slowly unbutton your shirt and scratch down your body to your crotch. I feel your heat and squeeze again. I wave a finger naughty, naughty and grab you by the waist of your jeans. Bending slightly I drag my body up yours licking until we are face to face. I lick and nip your luscious lips while I am undoing your belt buckle and zipper. My hands slide in the sides of your jeans and underwear, my thumbs hook and I push down. Your clothes drop to the floor.

I say, "You are enjoying this."

I hear Mum in my head,

MUM:

Laurie, Laurie, Laurie, people are watching.”

OLDER LAURIE:

“It’s okay, Mum. I’m playing. It’s so much fun.”

As we write back and forth, I open to my sexual self. Friends tell me I look 20 years younger. ..I don’t want it to be pretend. He’s in my thoughts constantly. And the messages I keep sending are that I am too old. Eight months later, I don’t hear from him. Finally,

SAM:

Sorry for the silence. I know you worry. I got to speaking to an ex when I called my Mom.

OLDER LAURIE:

I know. I know they are reconnecting. I ignore my knowing. I can’t seem to write erotic letters anymore. A couple months later he writes,

SAM:

I’m really sorry, Laurie, I can’t keep writing. Things have changed. I know you’ll be happy for me.....

OLDER LAURIE:

My heart is smashed to smithereens. It can’t be true. I know we are soul mates. I have never shared so much with anyone. Soon I am being told I look 20 years older. I had recurrent cystitis every month for over a year. I had repeated accidents. But orgasm or not, emotional anguish or not, I maintain my three times a week self pleasure routine. I vow never to lose access to this part of myself again.

I don’t know how but I get myself to another level one workshop. AND I ENJOY IT! I’M IN THE EAST OF THE MEDICINE WHEEL!!!! THE PLACE OF PLEASURE! BUT. Returning home on Friday night, what do I do? You know how you can ignore a little niggle? I do. I’m parking and I get out of the car leaving it in reverse and go behind my car to check and see that I’m not too close to the next car. My car rolls back and pins my legs between the two cars just below the knees.

“My God I can’t move.”

I’m struggling and struggling and nothing happens. I feel a huge pressure building. I cry out,

“It’s going to crush my bones if I don’t do something fast.“

“It’s midnight. No one is around. I’ve got to do this myself”.

Mothers who save their babies by lifting cars flash into my mind and I pppppppush. There is a miniscule movement but its enough to free my legs. I TAKE MY POWER IN THE WEST!!! and hobble inside, make myself a cup of tea and take it to bed.

“OUCH!”

I spill the tea on my heart. Next day my legs are totally black and blue and the bones ache!!! THANKFULLY I AM AT A SEX WORKSHOP – in the safe, sacred container that Medicine ceremonies create.

All the medicine training to take 100% responsibility for my life, so I’m the creator of my life not the victim of my life, seeps in over the weekend. It starts dawning on me: I am following the messages in my own head so I had been perpetuating the abuse: I had called in punishment! I had called myself a very bad girl. I had labeled myself “inadequate”. I had believed I was undesirable and unlovable. I had recreated the fear. I had made myself a victim again and again. The light goes on. Other people’s choices say nothing about me. The negative messages I imbibed and made mine are NOT THE TRUTH.

Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying that others are not responsible for their own actions. It’s just not my responsibility to change them. The only person I have 100% responsibility for is ME. I have to change my beliefs. I have to change my behavior if I am to change MY life.

Furiously I rewind my mental tapes. I change my thoughts – well, work on it. My thoughts are on this treadmill going round and round and round the same stories - incessantly assessing them. I am still in my cage but the medicine tools help me see how I cage myself.

Universe sends me many other forms of powerful support from women seekers. Dancing at a women’s retreat, I meet my rage. I fly all over the dance floor, up, down, around, forwards, back, up! I stop blaming.

I see my sexual journey through the pervasive evil of dividing female sexuality into virgin/whore, beautiful/ugly,

good girl/bad girl for what it is. Soul destroying because it's effects are so silent and deadly and ignored. It is the very labeling and shaming and shutting down of our feelings that abuse our soul. The railing and raging judged so uncalled for by society, and that can be so self pitying, honoured, become wisdom and power.

The ending of this piece has gone through many permutations as I struggle with my concern that people will feel let down if I have not yet found my Beloved. Finally I realise the answer has always been there.

But first I want to say that I don't think the journey has to be as long and arduous as mine. There is much more support out there than when I started. And, yes, I desire with all my heart and soul having my Beloved by my side. AND I have had many wonderful gifts from this journey to date. I orgasm. But I'll probably need to practice a lot with my partner.

I keep learning more and more about female sexuality in the Pleasure Tribe. I learn that my hands work better than the magic wand although I am positive I needed the jump start in the early days. Apparently, doctors in the 19th century developed the dildo because they were getting carpal tunnel syndrome from treating women with hysteria.

I learn to pay close attention to my intuition. What's the phrase they use? "The Yoni never lies."

Sometimes I am the one who laughs at the sex joke. I may feel embarrassed but I no longer feel the stab of pain.

I know appearance isn't the issue. I have men tell me they love the soft cushion and roundness of a big woman. They don't want to make love to a skinny bag of bones!

I have at least tasted the relationship I desire and know it is possible.

Instead of saying sex is scary and bad, I say it is an edge and glorious life force energy.

I know, now, that the fear I learned from Mum was her attempt to protect me from getting hurt. I also now remember she said that good sexual relations are the glue that keep a marriage together in the rough times. This comment is probably the seed instigating my search.

I have followed my heart and soul to write and bring forward this piece and I have been richly rewarded with support.

However, the real treasure, is something far deeper. Its about the first title I had for this piece "Because I love you, scratch out the "you", and put "me" - "Because I Love Me", and is much more profound. It is about eliminating misogyny from my OWN being. Like the line from a Trudell song, "things weren't different because we weren't". Its about EMBODYING the power, the beauty and the aspect of Spirit that is a female sexual being in manifestation. ME allowing MY female sexual self to be alive and singing with passionate, joyous expression. Me loving me.

**I SHATTER MY MIRROR OF SELF REFLECTION..
ITS A NEW DAWN: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES.**

THANK YOU SACRED POWERS

