

Foreword  
Death is a UFO

*Thus, in the very telling of our story to one another is the crux of our salvation:  
as we speak it true, we have new being, and are in the new time.*

—Laura (Riding) Jackson, *The Telling* (1972)

A few months ago, over a year after reading a draft of her book and having my life changed *much* for the better and stranger through a series of online coaching and hypnosis sessions with her, I finally got to meet Robin Lassiter in person. Trevor and I were eight days into a seven-week road trip and had been invited by Robin to her family's valley in southern Colorado to participate in a dedication ceremony for the Dream Dome she'd finished building earlier in the year. She'd agreed it would be fun to meet up first at the San Luis Valley's UFO Watchtower a couple of hours northwest of her home, and suggested it might also be fun to afterwards go soak in the completely unpretentious, talking-permitted hot springs at Sand Dunes Recreation only five minutes from the watchtower. Arriving a little before we did, Robin waited for us on the upper deck of the viewing platform and began making her way down the stairs as she spotted us stepping out of our Honda Fit.

"Is that *you*?" she smiled, arms outstretched.

"Is that *YOU*?!" I asked, going in for the kind of embrace that human bodies are born to want and to give.

The three of us ambled around the dusty watchtower grounds for a while, our heads and shoulders baking in the sun as we stopped and marvelled every so often at our actual, physical presence together. Together we took in the range of offerings placed lovingly in the dirt by over two decades of visitors to the site: pens, books, journals, business cards, Tarot cards; old license plates and empty liquor bottles; the odd rotting sneaker, sandal, or business pump; rusted carabiners and spray-painted pinecones; crusty floral bouquets and small Hindu idols; packs of crayons, condoms, and Altoids; a vintage Jabba the Hutt action figure; a toy gun; a pride flag; a Whoopie Cushion.

We'd been the only people at the watchtower until a motorcyclist arrived just as we were getting ready to leave. He offered to take a photo of us, and with an unexpected and delightful bravado he swoop-glided around us and snapped about thirty. Somehow, we looked awesome in all of them. Then Trevor and I got into the Fit and followed Robin's truck the short drive to our next destination, where Robin's sister met us and we all got half-naked before sliding into an almost intolerably hot pool shaped like a coffin.

If you've ever been materially and immaterially supported enough to be able to do death well, you will know there's something about using "the turn-towards-it tool," as Robin calls it in this book, that can transform an experience of catastrophic

closure into an experience of almost psychedelic disclosure. Instead of fleeing or freezing, we soften, open, and fail meaningfully and courageously to explain or cure. Time stops being its usual trap for the soul, intuition obliterates our more hardened grammars of identity and attachment, the nervous system begins to relax in the face of whatever mystery it's confronting, and the tiny atomic self remembers everything it needs to remember about the Bigger Whatever of which it is part...and so here may let itself die too. This kind of holy, whole-bodied surrender to the unknown—our “negative capability,” as the Romantic poet John Keats termed it—is what we might think of as the cost of communion, and it can happen within any context of contact, really, including in conversation and storytelling. As Emily Dickinson once put it: “If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.”

That is very much how being together felt in the too-hot coffin pool with Robin and her sister, the black boxes of everyone's speaking-and-listening selves somehow dilated as wide as our pores. It's how it felt when eight of us, including Robin's parents, sat in a circle in Robin's dome the next day, each taking a turn to voice visions or prayers for the future from some extremely weird and tender places within ourselves that I don't think we'll ever have any idea how to map, let alone program to upload into robots. It's how it feels when you cry instead of forget to cry, basically. And it's how it must *continue* to feel if we are going to do disclosure well—by which I mean, precisely, *without closure*, without settling for whatever limited truths about reality will continue to be given to us as the whole truth. That the term “experiencer” is “a word that describes nothing,” as Ralph Blumenthal remarked in his September 2021 *Debrief* article featuring Robin and others, is in this way actually the most important, strategic, and beautiful thing about it. It doesn't pretend to have the kinds of answers that have only ever led humans to violence.

Not that any of this has historically been made easy or safe by the death-killing cultures that some of us have created on Earth and are deliriously committed to calling “life.” Hence our life-or-death need, I think, to engage with stories like Robin's and to perhaps give our own experiences the benefit of the vibrant void. In *Earth: A Love Story*, a phenomenology as much as an autobiography of using the turn-towards-it tool in relation to trauma, addiction, and a full spectrum of anomalous experiences, Robin provides an urgently needed service: that of using her own negative capability—her poetry in the broadest sense—to tell how she came to tell the difference between bad death and good death, or what the renowned Jungian analyst and author Marion Woodman called “Death in the Service of Life.”

In a 2009 conversation with Woodman that Robin invited me to read after my first session with her last year, interviewer Daniela Sieff notes how “the word ‘apocalypse’ derives from the Greek word meaning ‘to reveal,’ or more specifically ‘to uncover that which has previously been hidden,’” before offering the term “Apocalyptic Mother” as a counterpoint to Woodman's elaboration of the Death Mother archetype. Whereas Death Mother energy, in Woodman's words, “prevents new life coming through” or otherwise “turns life into stone,” Apocalyptic Mother, she agrees, “shatters that stone. All change, all growth, presupposes the death of the

old. The death induced by Apocalyptic Mother is excruciating,” Woodman acknowledges, “but it instigates change. Apocalyptic Mother precipitates the death of values which are rooted in fear and power” and “creates space for the life we have yet to live. She brings about what Death Mother strives to prevent.” Sieff then asks, “What do we have to do when we meet Apocalyptic Mother?” To which Woodman replies, “The key is to stay awake, to listen to what comes into consciousness, and to open to it. If there is to be healing and growth there can be no cover-up in this meeting. Whether we grow or wither in this encounter depends on whether we cling to our ego’s rigid standpoint, or whether we choose to trust the Self and leap into the unknown.” The best-case scenario, then, in our encountering the unknown—be it death, the UFO, or some other impossible phenomenon—is that we become what Woodman calls “partners in the apocalyptic process.” The even-better-case scenario, as *Earth: A Love Story* will disclose for readers, is that we move altogether from “a paradigm of Evolution through Suffering to a paradigm of Evolution through Joy and Creativity.”

Still, there is not going to be *no death* in paradise. There is not going to be *no flesh* and *no tears*. The challenge before us isn’t to solve death, in other words, but to abolish as many shitty, unnecessary forms of it for as many beings as possible, thereby freeing ourselves up to rejoin, in love, what we really are. As Robin so crucially discerns, “There is an order that makes sense here on this planet, and then there is a bunch of nonsense.” The best and most obvious model of an order in which death can make sense? “Nature unfettered,” this book reminds us, “completely unapologetic and clear.”

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