

I AM
WITH
YOU



Words of comfort & strength
for difficult times

STELLA
TOMLINSON

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Soul Forge
Press

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SAMPLE

OPENING WORDS



SAM

EE

Let me begin by promising you this.

Dear one, you are not alone.

No matter how life has battered you; no matter how bruised your heart feels; no matter how confused your mind is. You are not alone.

You are not alone in your sorrow, your grief, your confusion, or your sadness. You are not alone when you feel down, when you feel like giving up, or when you just cannot see the next step or the way out. You are not alone even if you feel utterly overwhelmed by your emotions and that no-one understands you.

Yes, you may feel lost. But you are not alone.

I am with you, and I know how it feels.

So, if you feel like this today, or have ever felt like this – please, please understand, that you are *not* alone.

While I can't wave a magic wand and take away the feelings, I can offer you the knowledge that other people feel this way too. That you're not the only person to feel what you feel so intensely. I feel it too. As do millions upon millions of fellow deep-feeling souls out there in the world.

It is valuable to realise that despite the messages you may have received from this superficial soulless mainstream culture we live in, it is natural and it is okay to feel challenging emotions such as anger, sorrow and heartache.

Because part of being human is to experience loss and grief and doubt (and wonder and contentment and joy too).

Perhaps you can find solace in the thought that your tendency to feel challenging emotions intensely comes with the ability to feel awe and fun and love and radiant happiness much more profoundly too.

It is human to feel deeply.

Yet how many of us truly share our pain with others? How many of us put on a brave face instead and soldier on, despite the burden of the emotional pain we're carrying?

And how many of us more deep-feeling souls attempt to bury our intense feelings to try and fit in because we've been told we're too sensitive, should develop a thicker skin and stop being so dramatic?

Too many, I'd say.

We all experience difficult times.

Things happen that leave us feeling insecure, confused, angry, wounded, overwhelmed, unsafe, sad, grieving, numb or fearful. We may experience periods of anxiety, low mood, maybe depression.

And all of these are natural human emotions, arising in response to experiencing difficult times.

But too often we feel lonely in our sadness, isolated in our anxiety, and abandoned when we feel down. We see the smiling faces and apparently perfect lives of our friends, associates and celebrities on social media and we feel shut out as if there's something wrong with us for not being able to move on or keep calm and carry on.

I know how lonely this can feel because I have felt that way too.

I know how the pain of confusion, grief and doubt can feel immensely challenging – overwhelming even.

And though I may not be using the same words as you to describe how you feel, can you find solace in knowing that here, as you read, there is another soul speaking to you, who also feels the challenges of being human?

Can you find comfort in my reaching out to you to say:

'It hurts, I know. I feel you. I hear you. It's okay to not feel okay. It's human. It's natural for your emotions to ebb and flow; to rise up and to spiral down. Life can be hard on a tender heart and a sensitive soul. I am with you in this. I understand'.

I know it helps me, when my heart feels heavy, to remember that this is all part of our common humanity. To truly live means to feel deeply. Both the sorrow *and* the joy; the pain *and* the bliss; the grief *and* the love. All of it. Ever-changing, just like the seasons, just like the moon.

And so, through the words in this book, may I offer you many more reminders that I am with you, and that you are not alone?

And may these words remind you that even though, at times, you may feel lost, *it is possible* to rediscover the good in yourself and the joy of life.

WHEN DARKNESS CALLS

I wrote the poems you will find here during a period in my life when I decided to surrender to the grief, anger and sorrow I had been struggling with, in truth, for many years.

Well, I say I 'decided'. It would be more realistic to say that I arrived at a fork in the path of my life. I could either continue along the route of swallowing my anger, numbing my grief, and being overcome by anxiety or I could surrender to what needed to be felt and let it in, up and through.

I chose the challenging path of surrender.

In the preceding years I had done much work – with a therapist and through my own personal development and psycho-spiritual practices – to meet, understand and offer compassion to the wounded inner child within me who had not received the unconditional love, affirmation, emotional support and holding she needed from her parents to feel safe, seen and fundamentally worthy. As a result, I had been struggling though life with a painful sense of never feeling good enough.

Along the way I had been to dark places where I wished I could just close my eyes and fade away. I'd experienced numb dullness, my inner landscape filled with a grey mist that made it

impossible to see or feel clearly. I'd been so anxious that my throat clamped shut, I couldn't catch hold of my breath and I'd lose sense of my feet, whole body throbbing, head full of crackly static.

But the insistent urge that I tend to the inner wounded child within me kept me going. I knew she was crucial to my wellbeing. I wouldn't abandon or reject her as she had been before. I wouldn't hurt her again. I could feel how she needed someone to be there for her and to love her, and I knew that person had to be me.

I came to understand that it was essential I found ways to be with and process my grief and anger so I could free 'Little Stella' from her prison of shame. I needed to believe in my essential goodness, root into self-worth and own my right to express the truth of my experiences and feelings. Only then would she finally feel seen and supported enough to relax so I could move forward with my life.

It is no coincidence that I was also in the rite of passage that is midlife and the peri/menopause transition. This is a time when darkness calls and demands that we turn inwards and descend to tend to our deepest hurts and wounds. A time we are called to enter the soul forge to be transformed on the anvil of an extended inner autumn and winter – a symbolic death of the old constricted, conditioned, wounded self – in order to be reborn.

By early 2022 I had arrived at a point where I had dug deeply and found myself closer and closer to the roots of my pain. I realised it was time to stop digging and to sit with what I had unearthed and to let myself feel the anger, the disappointment and frustration as well as the sorrow, loss and heartache that were yearning to be acknowledged and listened to.

And as I sat with all of this, a calm presence descended, and words began to arise. Words from my soul. Words from source. Words from the Great Mother – which is what I call the spiritual presence who is there through life's cycles of birth, growth, death and rebirth.

The poems you will read here are expressions of what I discovered when I sat with my complex and challenging feelings. And the accompanying reflections share with you some of the practices that have helped me and lessons I have learned along my healing path.

In receiving and writing these words, and in reading them to myself many, many times, I have found them to be a source of comfort and solace; of hope, healing and inspiration.

And now I share them with you so that you may feel affirmed and validated in your own difficult times and know there is someone there with you who understands.

[... ...]

MY WISH FOR YOU

Dear one, life will always be challenging.

The human condition is to love and lose, to soar high with joy and to sink low with grief – and all the myriad of emotional states in between.

The trick is to find ways to cope with the ups and downs.

To remember to savour and truly appreciate the joys without clinging onto them, because you appreciate that they will not last forever.

To weather the emotional storms without drowning in them because you realise that they too will pass.

Life is cyclic and change is our natural state. Life has its own rhythm.

There is much wisdom in truly coming to understand this and in courageously feeling all your feelings knowing that inner winters need to be experienced before spring can return.

And so with the poems, reflections, practices and questions I am sharing with you here, my wish for you is that you will feel less alone with challenging feelings and in difficult times.

They're words of comfort and strength for times when you're struggling and feeling down; times when grief, sorrow, regret or low self-worth are weighing heavily on your heart; times when you need some words of solace and hope, motivation and inspiration; and times when you need the friendly voice of someone who understands to both affirm your feelings *and* help you find perspective.

All parts of you are welcome here, dear one.

I hope that you can feel my presence with you as you read this book, and that you will realise that you are not alone in experiencing despair or sadness, bitterness or heartache so powerfully. I am with you in spirit as we journey through this challenging and enchanting experience that is a human life. I am with you in the common thread that binds us all: grief and love.

Let me be a companion speaking to you through these pages, offering you comfort and compassion, inspiration and strength. I hope you might feel the warmth of my hand gently placed on yours, and my consoling arm wrapped around your shoulders.

May these words offer balm for your heart and give you permission to feel deeply, whatever your mood. May you remember that shutting down your emotions leads to a dreary life. If you can open to sadness and grief, then you will likely experience delight and joy more intensely.

I offer each piece as a word potion: good medicine to bring you the self-compassion and healing you're perhaps longing for.

Read, receive and let these words work their magic in your soul. And whenever you find yourself consumed by wintry darkness, may these words be there for you, offering a flame of solace, warmth, hope and courage.

May you feel the spark of recognition when a piece speaks to how you're feeling.

May you feel seen and affirmed.

May you feel the tender glow of self-compassion warming your heart and spreading through your body and consoling and healing the wounded places within you.

And, in realising that it is human to experience life's losses, pains and challenges, and that you are not alone in your suffering, may you feel the strength of this common humanity holding you and encouraging you so that you need never feel alone again.

Stella Tomlinson
Hampshire, UK,
December 2022



DESCENDING



SAN

EE

I am angry. And it is burning me up.
I am heavy with grief. And it feels too much to bear.
I am falling. And it feels inevitable.
A force that I cannot resist is pulling me down.
Struggling against it makes it worse.
It wedges me into painful places that bruise my heart and tear at my soul.
But I know it is time to face the truth.
The truth of what has been lost or never was, the opportunities denied, the life (so far) unlived.
The truth of what must be left behind and the truth of what is leaving me.
The truth of what cannot be let go and so must be borne.
The truth of what is to come: the version of me who is demanding to be birthed.
But first I must fall.
First, I must be cracked open as I descend.
My old, over-protected, wounded self is crumbling.
And it hurts.
But I know I must take this journey.
It is time.
And I am ready.

*

This is the journey of descent.

Here you will find poems and reflections that speak to times when you feel overwhelmed by your emotions; when you feel you are struggling and being pulled under by a force beyond your control.

They offer words of affirmation, comfort and strength so you know you are not alone when it all feels too much.

Let me walk by your side. We are in this together. I have walked this path before. I know a way through. May I be your guide?



LET GO (I)

*She just couldn't let go.
She didn't dare let the feelings in.
Throat tight, heart pounding,
She felt trapped and numb and couldn't breathe.*

*She was afraid
Of the deep cavern within her.
Bleak and dark,
Terrifying and forbidding.
And she wasn't yet ready
To let herself fall into that place.*

*She was petrified
That she would never
Land safely
And would spin into free fall
For the rest of her life.*

FEAR OF LETTING GO

The invitation to 'let go' is common in spiritual and wellbeing circles. *Let go of tension... Let go of limiting beliefs...*

Sometimes these invitations bring much relief as they remind us how much we were in fact holding onto. But I've come to realise that it's not always as simple as that. For we may have very good reasons to feel afraid to let go.

Maybe we're in a domestic or work situation where we need to keep our guard up and letting go wouldn't be safe. Maybe there's unprocessed traumatic experiences locked in our body/mind, so our psychological defences are trying to keep us safe by not letting go. In these circumstances we need support and guidance to help us to learn to let go in a way that won't expose us to harm or re-traumatise us.

But perhaps the reason that so many of us find it difficult to let go is because our emotions feel so alien to us. Or we're fearful we'll be overwhelmed if we open that firmly locked door. Or maybe we've just got used to feeling numb. Or we're afraid we won't like what we find because we've been socialised to believe that anger is bad, displaying your emotions means you're irrational, articulating your feelings and desires makes you needy, or being sensitive is weak.

Are there emotions *you* are afraid of feeling? Maybe anger, regret, jealousy, fear, insecurity, loneliness, sorrow, grief? If so, could you at least name them?

How would it be to let go of some of the resistance around allowing in these feelings? What are you afraid will happen? What do you need to feel safer? What small step could you take today or tomorrow (or soon) towards meeting that need?



WHEN DARKNESS CALLS (I)

When darkness calls

It is time

To listen.

To part ways

With your everyday self,

For now.

When darkness calls

It is time

To let go.

To descend

And journey to the underworld

Where your soul awaits.

When darkness calls

It is time

To commit.

To honour

Your deepest self

And your needs and dreams.

When darkness calls

It is time

For courage.

To let yourself die

A thousand deaths.

So you can be

Reborn.

HEARING THE CALL

Like me, you may have spent many years oblivious to the parts of you that were longing to be seen, to be validated and accepted, to be heard.

Your sadness, your anger, your burning rage. Your self-judgment, your low self-worth, your confusion. Your loneliness, your sorrow, your fatigue.

But you kept going. You tried to keep calm and you carried on, hoping the nagging sensation that something needed attending to would go away. And perhaps, also like me, you wound up exhausted, feeling empty and drained of life.

Until something clicked inside, and you finally realised that you'd expended way too much energy bottling up your feelings and denying your own needs, afraid of what you might find if you let these feelings see the light of day.

And something shifted within you. You decided it was time to try something different. You heard the call. The call to attend to that within you which is longing to be listened to.

And so, I invite you to reflect on these questions – perhaps just quietly in your own mind, or write in a journal:

- What is calling to you for your attention?
- What feelings are challenging you?
- What led you to read this book?
- What do you need?

May you trust and honour that part of you which is courageous enough to attend to your deepest needs.

I AM WITH YOU

*May I sit with you?
Feel my presence here, at your side,
So you know that you are not alone.*

*Let me bear witness to your grief
Let me see your tears
Let me listen to words both voiced and unspoken.*

*For I too have been in these depths
I too have known despair, hopelessness and desolation
I too have felt invisible, broken and beyond repair
I too have gazed, shadow-eyed, into the abyss
Feeling oblivion calling me.*

*Yet I am still here.
Can you feel my presence?
Rooted in compassion.
Burning with fierce and tender love.
I am here, beside you
So you need never feel alone.*

THE COMMUNITY OF ALL THINGS

The truth is, even during my darkest times, I realise now that I was never alone. There was always something available to me to offer comfort and solace and companionship. I just needed to remember to look up and see it. And you can, too.

I'm not asking you to avoid or downplay your very real feelings and challenges. I'm inviting you to broaden your perspective, even if just a little, so you may feel how there is more in your life than the difficulties you're currently experiencing.

So, can you notice something now that helps you to feel that you are not alone, here in this moment? Maybe it's the presence of good people nearby or in your life, a photograph of a loved one, the presence or mental image of a pet, or even a favourite flower or tree.

Perhaps it's a sense of being part of a community – of people with similar interests, views or life experience. Whether you know them personally or not, can you sense this community is out there in the wider world and that you are a part of it?

Can you let yourself feel held by the rich tapestry of life? How would it be to soften into the knowledge that all beings on this planet are connected? We all breathe the same air. We are all walking on and nurtured by the same earth beneath us. We are all touched by the same sunlight that streams down from the sky.

And can you sense my presence? I am speaking to you now, across time, through the words on this page.

Dear one, I am with you. You are not alone.

[... ...]

A BLESSING FROM THE DEPTHS

May you find the courage to sink beneath the surface.

May you learn to see in the dark.

May you unearth the gifts buried within your pain.

May you discover answers in the void.

And through it all may you feel held

By the warm embrace of limitless self-compassion and kindness.



[...END OF SAMPLE FROM 'DESCENDING' SECTION...]

IN THE WINTRY UNDERWORLD



I speak to you from the heart of darkness.

That place where it feels like all the lights have gone out. Where nothing makes sense anymore. Where the past is tainted with sadness and the future seems unthinkable.

After a good while struggling, resisting, pretending all was okay, I have surrendered to this place – for it is where it seems I need to be.

The descent was messy and left me bruised.

But then I landed.

I landed in that place I had most feared and resisted.

And though it is a place that can feel lonely and isolating – as the muffled sounds of life continuing on the surface seem so far away – there is a curious comfort in finally allowing myself to be here.

This cave of not-knowing. The underworld.

And as I close my eyes and give myself to the darkness, I can hear-feel a sound. A throb.

Da-dum. Da-dum. A heartbeat... My heartbeat...? No, it is the pulse of life, throbbing in the darkness. A reminder that while part of me may have died, this is not the end.

Da-dum. Da-dum. And I realise... I am in the underworld tomb-womb of the Great Mother. And I am not alone.

Da-dum. Da-dum. And I know I must close my eyes and listen. I must allow myself to feel. All of it.

I am safe here. For She is holding me – the Great Mother who will cradle me in this wintry death-like place until I am ready to return.

*

Here I am sharing with you poems and reflections that offer validation for your pain and gently guide you to find meaning in your sorrow so you can feel that you aren't struggling in vain.

Here you will find pieces that invite you to pause and reflect on the nature of your feelings. They ask you to delve a little deeper so you can gain greater self-understanding and acceptance.

And they invite you to shift your perspective so you might discover seams of tender and fierce self-compassion as the soul-shaking tremors of the descent begin to subside.

Can you let yourself be here in the wintry underworld, if and when you need to be?

Can you close your eyes and hear the beating heart of Life?

And can you let yourself be held by the Great Mother and surrender to what needs to be felt... To be acknowledged... To be honoured and revered?

For this is the place where healing happens. This is the place where you can lay down the burdens you have carried for too long. This is the sanctuary into which you can crawl and

release the struggle. This is the soul forge of the underworld. And here you will be remoulded and then reborn.

It is time to land now, and rest awhile in this wintry place. May I guide you?



SAMPLE

WHEN DARKNESS CALLS (II)

*When darkness calls
Light a candle
So that you may make the darkness visible,
So you may turn to face your shadow,
So you may discover the gold in the depths.*

*When darkness calls
Light a candle
That is the light
In your heart
Bathing all parts of you
With love.*

*When darkness calls
Light a candle
That may slowly illumine
The complexity
And sacred splendour
Of your soul.*

THE GIFTS OF DARKNESS

When I speak of bringing light to the inner darkness, I am not speaking of bypassing your challenges or pain with false positivity; I am not speaking of choosing love over fear; nor am I speaking of prioritising the light over the dark.

Far from it. This light I speak of is not a false bravura designed to chase away the demons.

I speak of *making the darkness visible* NOT of lighting up the darkness.

This is a subtle but essential distinction.

So much of our inner turmoil, reactivity and pain arises from past woundings that remain unseen, uncared for, shamed, belittled, pushed down, rejected.

These parts of us do not need further rejection through bypassing them with fake positivity. These vulnerable and wounded parts require gentle coaxing.

They need us to build inner resources of self-worth and self-compassion. They long for our love.

So let your inner candle be the gentle focus of your kind attention.

May it illuminate your hidden parts so that they feel safe enough to reveal themselves – both the gold of your gifts and the shadows of your rejected traits – so you might begin to know them.

So you might learn to love all that you are.

WASTELAND

*Parched. Bereft. Hopeless.
Cracked. Crumbling. Dry.
This wasteland
Is a lifeless place.
A void of longing, confusion and doubt.*

*And yet I know
That being here
Is a necessary step
On the journey to wholeness.
A space to be navigated
That I now must call home.*

*And so I surrender to the bone-dry land,
Close my eyes and trust
Until I see the truth
That only I can revivify this parched earth of my heart.*

*So breath by breath
And step by step
I water the arid soil of my numbness
With hope and trust and tiny joys.*

*And I hold the vision
That, when it is ready,
A new green tendril of life
Will break through.*

YOUR INNER LANDSCAPE

The metaphor of the 'wasteland' representing something that is spiritually and emotionally arid and unsatisfying is one that speaks to the soul, I feel.

It's a powerful image of neglect and abandonment, used famously by the poet T.S. Eliot to represent the spiritual and intellectual decay of the modern world.

His poem was written in 1922, but there's an anonymous 13th century French poem called *The Elucidation* that uses this metaphor too.

This earlier poem recounts the story of a place long ago where well maidens were the guardian spirits of the land and would appear and serve food and drink to weary travellers.

That is, until one day when the avaricious and lustful king raped a well maiden and stole her sacred chalice. And hearing of what he had done, across the country men raped and stole from the well maidens too.

Now the maidens no longer came from their wells, and they no longer offered their abundance and waters.

And so, because of this crime the once moist and fertile land became arid and devoid of life and all goodness withered and died: it became a barren wasteland.

*

As well as being a startling metaphor that speaks to the conditions mankind has created through plundering the Earth of her resources, this story is also symbolic of how we may treat ourselves.

A wasteland is barren in soul. It has been taken for granted, mistreated, plundered until all that is creative and kind withers and dies.

Our hustle and grind culture encourages and rewards us for doing this to ourselves.

To keep going when we need to rest.

To compete when our soul would be better fed by collaboration.

To strive for the illusory comforts of materialism when our heart knows they are empty of meaning and will leave us feeling starved of purpose and true satisfaction.

When we blindly follow this paradigm or feel unavoidably coerced into following it, we are violating our own souls and stealing from our dreams and in doing so we deplete our life force to the extent that our inner landscape may become barren and devoid of life, hope and joy.

It feels like recognising this and taking steps to tend to our inner landscape with kindness and sincere care is essential work: vital for self-understanding and healing.

So may we each of us tend the wasteland in our hearts and souls so that we both resuscitate our self-respect and resurrect respect for the miracle of life itself.

May we find our way back to our wild and instinctual nature and may we tend to the longings of our soul.

May we lovingly accept the deep waters of our emotions so that we might feel again and tap into a powerful wellspring of compassion for ourselves, each other, and our planet – our home.

And may we remember that we live in a vast ocean of connection and harm done to one is harm done to us all.

*

Does the concept of an inner wasteland resonate with you?

If so, reflect on these questions:

- What does this wasteland look like?
- How does it feel?
- What does it need?
- How could you tend its parched soil?
- What tiny joys could you water it with?
- What hope might you cultivate?
- And do you have a sense of what the new green tendril of life returning would symbolise for you?



[... ...]

WINTERING

*In the harsh bleakness of winter
May you remember
That your roots are nourished
By this fertile darkness
That your heart is held safe
In the cocoon of stillness
That your confusion is dispelled
By the frost-cold winds.
May you embrace this inner winter
Wrapped up cosily by the fireside of your soul
And embrace the opportunity
To rest and be renewed.*

SAMPLE

INNER WINTERS

Let's take a moment to reflect on the season of winter.

Winter is the darkest point of the year. It can feel bleak and hopeless. The branches are bare. Cold air makes your teeth chatter and takes the breath away. Grey skies seem featureless and uninviting.

Yet while all seems barren above ground, deep in the soil seeds and plant roots are developing and growing, feeding the plant until warmer weather returns, ready to revivify and flourish when spring arrives.

Winter is a space between worlds. It's the centre of the spiral of life. The end of the out-breath of the year where all is silent and still ... before the inhale of spring comes, bringing rebirth, potential and new possibilities.

How would it be to reconsider difficult periods in your life as inner winters?

Just as seasonal winter is essential for plants and trees to rest and renew so they can grow again, if you can honour your own inner winters – those times of loss or low mood or other challenging feelings – then perhaps you too can let the mystery of life work through you; perhaps you can find the courage metaphorically to let die what needs to die; let the part of your life or identity that needs to leave, go; dig deep roots into the ground of courage; and metabolise the pain.

In our inner winters we may appear quiet and down. We may withdraw from the outside world, even from friends and loved ones. We may no longer find enjoyment in activities we used to. We separate from the world and go inwards.

But these inner winters can be a time of transformation too. They invite you to tend to your interior landscape; to dive deep into your psyche so you can understand yourself better and heal from past experiences and hurts.

Inner winters invite you to quieten your outer life so you can focus your energy inwards and spend time with yourself, listening to what needs to be heard.

How would it be to welcome an inner winter as an opportunity to nurture what is calling to be brought forth next in your life?

But don't rush now. Allow yourself to pause... This is a process that needs space and time to unfold. It asks for self-compassion and patience. You are suspended in the fertile void, that space between death and rebirth. Time has stopped. Past, present and future co-exist.

It is not linear or logical. It has its own sacred timing that you cannot consciously control or rush. In these depths, let all else drop away. In this space all is possible. This place has the capacity to offer renewal and rejuvenation. It offers opportunity for deep healing and personal growth.

But you will likely find this challenging.

Try to be kind to yourself if you find you'd rather reach for distractions than be with yourself. Go slowly. Tend to your needs, wants and desires. Comfort yourself with a hug. Treat yourself like a precious object... And know that you are certainly not alone in finding this difficult.

You may feel like you're going around in circles. Especially if you're dealing with emotional wounds from the past; you may find that you cannot believe something has come up again.

Remember that life is cyclic and while it seems as if you're going around in circles you're actually moving in spirals – in and out, in and out. Each spiral is a journey of descent and return. And each spiral is subtly different.

On one spiral down into the depths of your pain you learn a lesson which you bring out to the surface of your life, on the next spiral down you release something and return a little bit lighter and renewed.

There is a mystery to being in an inner winter – it asks you to surrender to the darkness and be held in the void and to open to your soul's whispers...

I believe that when an inner winter calls and we are pulled down into the underworld it is because our soul can no longer let us ignore what is needing to be felt, asking to be processed or yearning to be expressed.

And all in good time you will rise, stronger from your experience, nourished by what you have learned, ready to return to the next springtime of your life. Clearer and wiser.

So I invite you, when you're in the wintry underworld, to consider:

- What is falling away within you and your life?
- What are you ready to release and let die?
- What seeds of new life are buried deep within, asking to be nurtured?

May you receive the blessings of your inner winter: may you find the courage to release that which is ready to die and may you heed the wise whispers of your soul.



[...END OF SAMPLE FROM 'UNDERWORLD SECTION...]

RETURNING



SAMPLE

I have lain in winter's cave a while now.

I have wept, slept, dreamed and rested.

And now, as I open my eyes, I can feel the atmosphere has changed.

Even though it is still dark here my intuition tells me that the season has shifted. I can sense the awakening and promise of the earliest signs of spring.

And I feel different too. The heaviness has lifted. The weariness has faded. I feel more present and alert.

I can sense the loving presence of the Great Mother within my heart, and I feel stronger and clearer and ready to return.

There is a shaft of misty daylight shimmering into this place that I had not noticed before. And I realise it is showing me the way out; illuminating a pathway that I can see rises out of this place.

Now I know that I am ready to return to the surface; to re-engage with life with a renewed clarity and vision.

I have grieved.

I have faced the dreaded feelings and long-buried experiences and they have not killed me.

The hard knot of pain in my heart has transformed into a warm, tender yet fierce loving kindness and compassion for myself and all beings.

I am ready to return...

*

And now you are returning.

The poems and reflections in this final section offer you the strength and motivation to return and re-engage with life.

The pieces here invite you to shake off the shackles of old limiting beliefs and societal conditioning that keeps you small. They ask you to dig deep and embrace your wise and wild true self. They guide you to renewed clarity and vision. They encourage you to tend to the fire in your soul and to wholeheartedly embrace life.

So, are you ready now?

Are you ready to re-engage with life?

Are you ready to summon courage and wisdom, to be on your own side, and to try your best to live with an open heart?

For your capacity to feel deeply, to see into the intricacies of the human heart and soul and to empathise with the pain of others are gifts that this world needs. And they are gifts, when claimed, that will help you to live with greater meaning, purpose and satisfaction.

Let me guide you to summon the strength and presence that you need to stand tall with dignity, rooted in self-worth, as the wise, complex, compassionate and brilliantly sensitive being that you truly are!

THIS MUCH I KNOW

*I know now
That until I speak
With my true voice
I will remain
Trapped
In an exhausting cycle
Of not knowing
Who I am
Or what I am
Here for;
Comparing myself to others
Finding myself wanting
And collapsing
Into discombobulating despair.*

*I know now
It is time
To stop
Hiding
My truth.*

*I have arrived
Here
At this point
In my life
And now I am ready
To acknowledge all
I have experienced
And I am ready
To speak.*

*I know now
That by sharing
My pain
I will feel
Less alone
And be a light
To others
In their darkness.*

SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH

By sharing our stories, we feel less alone.

By speaking our truth, we can activate the truth in others.

By shining a light on our own dark places, we offer a lantern to help others illuminate what has been long been hidden within their depths.

However, in a culture where you're encouraged to keep calm and carry on and a society where happiness is the ultimate goal, speaking of your grief and sorrow, your frustrations and disappointments, your wounds and pain can be difficult.

You may be worried that you'll be judged (you probably will be).

You may be anxious that you'll be told you've got nothing to complain about (you probably will be).

You may be nervous that you'll be wilfully misunderstood (you probably will be).

You may be apprehensive of being accused of being ungrateful or too sensitive or that you're over-sharing (you probably will be).

Because unfortunately many of us are just not very adept at talking about feelings. I'm from England – birthplace of stiff upper-lipped stoicism where we still largely don't talk about how we truly feel.

It takes emotional maturity both to be able to talk about how we feel and to hear how our behaviour has impacted others.

Too often other family members don't have this level of emotional maturity and will accuse you of criticising or blaming them if you share how their words and conduct have landed with you.

Your honesty – even when carefully expressed with compassion and without blame – may activate unconscious wounds in others and they'll go on the attack because they lack the self-awareness to realise something has triggered them and their reaction is out of all proportion to the current situation.

Nevertheless, I believe that by sharing the truth of our feelings and experience with tender and fierce compassion towards ourselves and others we can contribute both to our own and to collective healing. That's because by sharing our stories we help ourselves and others to feel seen and heard – a fundamental human emotional need.

Start simply and with an audience who is likely to be sympathetic.

You might not yet feel ready to talk to your mother about how her constant criticism has hurt you, for example, but you could express your feelings through writing in a journal – for your eyes only.

Or you might talk with an empathetic family member, friend or colleague, or a therapist if you have the financial resources for that.

In time you might feel called to share your unique story through messages on social media, a newsletter, poetry or even in a book.

What life experiences might you share to be a light to help someone else in troubled times?



SAMPLE

SOME PEOPLE

*Some people mistake sensitivity for weakness
Some people assume calm equals placid
Some people dismiss quietness as emptiness.*

*Meanwhile, I watch and listen, I feel and notice
Meanwhile, I reflect in order to better understand
Meanwhile, I wait until I am ready to speak.*

*Some people don't understand the power
That sensitivity, calm and quiet
Brings to a soul that burns brightly
For love of truth, justice and life,*

*And the undervalued potency
In biding your time
Until what needs to be said
Pours forth with radiant power.*

YOU ARE NEEDED

Life can feel challenging for people who feel deeply, notice the subtleties in life and who are empathetic.

We live in a world of open-plan workspaces, of group work, of noise, stimulation, aggression and pushiness. And the world bombards us with constant stimulation through proliferating forms of media, including the ubiquitous smartphone.

Perhaps you can find solace in the thought that your tendency to experience life intensely and challenging emotions deeply, comes with the ability to feel joy and love and fun and radiant happiness much more deeply too.

But if that feels like a distant possibility, remember that life is not a linear journey from A to B. Life is a spiral of twists and turns and ups and downs and ins and outs ... and none of it lasts forever. All things change. Especially your emotions.

As a sensitive person you have gifts of insight, intuition, reflection, measured responses, and appreciation of the inter-connectedness of life. You are one of the wise counsellors, creatives and peace-bringers that this world sorely needs.

And if your sensitivity – or any aspect of you – has been misunderstood or used against you, may you offer yourself the tender and fierce balm of self-compassion.

May you accept your sensitivity.

May you find the strength in it.

And may you unlock its undoubted power.

LESSONS

When doubt comes

May it teach you the power of questioning.

When anger comes

May it teach you the power of clear boundaries.

When fear comes

May it teach you the power of freedom.

When grief comes

May it teach you the power of your heart.

And may your doubt lead to clarity.

May your anger lead to action.

May your fear lead to courage.

May your grief lead to love.

And may you accept all of this and more

Into the guest house of your body-mind

So that you may live wholeheartedly

Welcoming all that you are.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is a useful skill to cultivate in life.

I'm not talking about giving up to grim defeat or approving of things that go against your values, and I'm not suggesting you collapse into apathy.

No, what I'm speaking of is accepting the reality of what is in the moment and the feelings you have about that. And that includes accepting what you cannot change and the frustration and grief that may accompany that.

Maybe you have lost a loved one. Maybe a friend has betrayed you. Maybe you're upset by an unfair situation at work. Maybe you're full of anger and grief at the destruction of local woodland and how it is symptomatic of the wider devastation of the delicate ecosystems on this Earth.

Whatever the cause, I invite you to accept your feelings and to let them flow through you, so you don't get stuck and contracted into hopeless despair.

Instead try to remain open to spaciousness and freedom by accepting your feelings so you can keep moving forward through life.

Ultimately this is about accepting yourself – all parts and layers of you.

The anger and sadness, the flippancy and defensiveness, as well as the deeper layers that feel vulnerable, needy and scared.

I've experienced how accepting that which feels challenging or scary or shameful creates a feeling of release and freedom as the contraction of resistance subsides.

And this acceptance makes space for the parts of you that are loving and kind, joyful and playful, creative and purposeful, wise and caring, to spontaneously flow into your heart and mind.

But when we continue to reject our feelings, we close down and contract around a scared core whose vulnerability we defend at all costs.

And this contraction and closing down comes at the cost of losing touch with our passions and enthusiasms and our deepest heartfelt longings.

We cannot make space for joy without also allowing space for grief.

Otherwise we wind up allowing only a very narrow range of feeling – a safe but dreary life of dulled emotion and anxious avoidance.

There is a famous poem by the 13th-century Persian poet, Rumi, that describes being human as 'a guest house'¹ and how every day there is a new arrival of joys and sorrows, and he advises us to 'welcome and entertain them all':

¹ *The Guest House* By Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī as translated by Coleman Barks.

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

...Because they 'may be clearing you out for some new delight'.

So, when we welcome all emotional visitors to the guest house of our body-mind we are ensuring the door is always open to joy, passion and a life lived wholeheartedly.



A BLESSING OF RENEWAL

*May you find the courage to begin again.
May you open to see your path unfolding.
May you walk with hope and curiosity.
May you trust in your own potential.
And may you know
That you are worthy and that you are loved,
So you may rise, renewed.*



[...END OF SAMPLE FROM 'RETURNING SECTION...']

KEEP IN TOUCH

Join me for *Simple Soulful Words*, my free weekly letter offering heartfelt and inspiring words that speak to your soul.

Simple Soulful Words is for people who value depth and sensitivity, reflection and seeking meaning, and sensing the sacred in everyday life.

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Get inspiration to tend to your soul's whispers and longings.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stella Tomlinson is an author, poet and Priestess writing about the emotional realities of life and finding spiritual support in nature.

She helps her readers awaken from the trance of unworthiness and tend to the longings of their soul so they can feel a greater sense of peace, purpose and fulfilment.

Her dearest wish is to help you feel less alone in this challenging yet enchanting journey that is a human life.

Stella's offerings draw on her own healing journey to self-worth and are based on almost 25 years' experience in personal and spiritual development through meditation, yoga, mindfulness, energy healing, menstrual cycle awareness, Goddess and nature spirituality, and positive neuroplasticity. She's been teaching and writing since 2011.

When she's not writing or reading, you'll find her walking in woodland, taking pictures, gazing at the moon, sipping gin, or hanging out in her tiny temple meditating, journaling or taking a yoga nidra nap.

She lives with her husband (and extensive book collection) in Hampshire, UK.

Connect with Stella via her website **stellatomlinson.com** and on Instagram and Facebook **[@stellatomlinson.author](#)**



BUY THE BOOK



OUT ON FRIDAY MAY 19TH 2023

“Dear one, you are not alone. No matter how life has battered you; no matter how bruised your heart feels; no matter how confused your mind is. You are not alone. I am with you. And I know how it feels...”

I Am With You is a collection of poems and reflections to help you through difficult times when you're struggling and feeling down.

Offering wise insight into the human heart and mind, *I Am With You* gently guides you to soothe your pain and find peace with your inner demons.

Written for those of us with deeply felt emotions and hearts wounded by life, this honest and compassionate book will take you on a journey through the cold and lonely inner darkness to come home to the warming flame of courage and hope that resides within your soul.

With lessons learned from her own struggles with low self-worth, grief and anger, Stella Tomlinson's words help you to find the courage to listen to your feelings and to be kinder to yourself so you can re-engage with life with renewed clarity and vision and an open heart.

I Am With You is here to help you heal your heart's wounds, appreciate your own worth, nurture a new tender warm-heartedness towards yourself, and develop the compassionate grit to accept who you are so you can move forward with your life.

Read *I Am With You* and be guided on your healing journey towards greater peace, purpose and fulfilment.

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