

## ***Beyond the Veil of Fear***

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By Anita Allen

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It was a scorching Saturday afternoon, the type of day that has characterized summer weekends this year at our cottage near Georgian Bay, when I discovered a Garter snake basking on the rocks. As I watched it make its way all around my favorite spots at the cottage, I experienced a strange sensation of terror mixed with admiration for its grace and occasional bursts of speed. I felt waves of nausea rise up from time to time as old memories of imprinted fear rose to the surface. Breathing, I continued to observe. After all, it was my own experience that was being created and this creature was a part of it.

Last summer at about the same time, another Garter snake made its appearance. At that time, I was unable to be present to the experience and I asked my husband to "do something". He killed it. I remember his face and how shocking the experience was for him. He described how the snake had continued writhing and trying to flee even when half its body had been severed. He described how it wrapped its injured body around the shovel handle and how repeated tries had been required before he finally struck it behind the head and ended the battle. I remembered how I cried.

I still don't know how to express what those tears were for. I felt an overwhelming sense of grief for all the senseless things we do when driven by our own terror. I had requested the destruction of a creature innocently doing what nature intended. I was partly responsible for the look on my husband's face. I felt ashamed. I felt a deep resonance with a metaphor of my own creation.

I have long searched for deeper layers of meaning and mystery in my life and metaphor offers that. It is the key to a magical existence that is made more mystical when I consider that I am the creator of my own experiences. I leave myself clues to discover more about what rests just beyond the veil of my reality. I invite myself deeper into the mystery of life. It adds another dimension to what might otherwise appear to be a two dimensional tapestry. It is the sacred in daily life.

The metaphor of the snake carries a lot of meaning for me. It is transformation in motion. It is potent and powerful. It is revered and feared. There is stealth and grace and power in its movement. It is a creature tinged with mystery. It is dazzling and intricate in its outward design. A snake mesmerizes and it can strike its prey with lightening speed. It lives closer to the earth than many other things and yet has been linked to many other realms.

As I chose to stand in my fear and observe my own responses, I reached a new understanding of how it is that we can create our experiences. I knew that I could ask someone outside of myself to "deal" with this or I could step into it and reclaim some part of me that was steeped in terror from childhood experience with a phobic babysitter. I had a sense of having taken back a part of myself and I knew that this was of deep significance. I was filled with a sense of power from choosing to no longer be a victim of my own fear. More startling was a deep dream state late the same night in which I felt my body undergo an internal earthquake. Sitting up in bed in my dream/waking state, I felt my body convulsing, pulsing from my head to my solar plexus as this new experience became integrated and processed in my body.

As one week becomes two following this event, I am astonished to see how far reaching the implications this simple act of observation have been. I find myself moving through my life with a newfound sense of confidence. I carry with me a deep sense of safety and peace. In choosing to stay with a moment of profound and deeply conditioned fear, I dislodged a host of interconnected responses that were shaping my world outside of my own awareness.

I wonder what becomes possible for each of us when we are willing to step into our fears and discover how to create lives that are not based in mindless, conditioned responses? Who might we become as a collective by choosing to actively shape our world rather than remaining hostage to our fears? I believe our willingness to look beyond the veil of our fear is where our exponential potential lies.

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