

Prologue

My mother died thirty-six years ago, but the truth is she's more alive to me now than ever before. At fifty-nine I have lived four years longer than my mother did. In the these last years as I wrote about Mom, as I felt certain that I too would die at fifty-five, as my extra bonus years became a precious gift, I realized that it's impossible to separate where a mother ends and a daughter begins. I realized that those we love never really die. But what surely did die, long before my mother did, were her dreams and her connection to her innate female wisdom. A gifted and successful artist, with a passionate spirit and a wildly colorful bohemian wardrobe, my mother gradually gave up her vivid individuality as she grew into her roles as wife, working mother, and aspiring member of an upscale conservative society. Then, wrestling with a fatal illness, she died too soon. The spiritual loss, more than the physical loss of my mother, has haunted me.

This loss of my mother's authentic self has shaped my life, propelling me around the globe to reclaim what she left behind, to retrace the series of small deaths she suffered each time she abandoned more of her instinctual wisdom. I, too,

betrayed my feminine, paying blind allegiance to the flag of the masculine with its bold stripes of workaholism, speed, and overdrive. Luckier than my mother, I realized that my feminine was dying before it was too late, before there was no turning back, before the spiritual dying entered my body and made me sick. With the consciousness and resources of my generation, I came to understand why I had sacrificed my interior life—the rich realm of feelings and moods, intuition and creativity, stillness and contemplation—to the overwhelming seduction of our dominant cultural values. I came to see why I had fallen under the spell of a culture that pays tribute to rational thought and exterior accomplishment, and at all costs, on all levels, encourages and rewards the principles of *bigger, more, and faster*.

This is the story of how I returned to my mother's house and reclaimed my own female wisdom, taking back what both Mom and I had betrayed. I see now how my story is so many of our stories. It is the story of both men and women who have abandoned their inner lives, leaving behind their hearts where deep dark feelings reside; putting aside their intuitive imagination where dreams flourish; ignoring the invisible worlds where the irrational and the mysterious offer their incomparable gifts; and disowning the realms of silence, simplicity, and solitude where the interior matures. Modern life rarely acknowledges or even allows space for such things. But we ignore these things at our peril, both as individual human beings and as an earth family.

Come, come, dear reader, return to the house of the Great Mother. Enter the soft rounded door and feel immediately welcome in the central room of the heart, fully open and exposing an enormous breadth of emotional intelligence. Sit down and rest in any of the ample cozy corners dedicated to the interior values of stillness and contemplation. Up, up, take the elegant

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grand staircase of relationships made up of collaboration, cooperation, communication, and caring. Only by taking these steps can you reach the upper levels of the Great Mother's house, where the rooms of intuition provide safe haven for the imagination, for dreams and symbols, for creativity and the arts. And don't forget to visit the secret dark spaces, chambers of the irrational, of death, of the wild and untamed. Take your time; these hidden spaces have much to offer. Arriving at the top of the house you find the numinous berth of the invisible, with its direct connection to the divine. I know how you feel up here in this sacred space; this is what has been missing from your life, this is what you have been so hungry for. You ache to sit here for a long time before you have to return to all that is concrete and reasonable and fast. I invite you to stay as long as you need. With all my heart I urge you to fully inhabit this house for yourself, for your children and grandchildren, and for our earth. Do this before it is too late.