



# Being Present

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Spiritual teachers tell us that heaven is to be found right here in this moment. “Be here now” is all we need to remember.

In my experience, I have always found this to be a difficult injunction to follow, because being here now means letting go of the future. And for me the future has always been the repository of my hopes and wishes for improvement. In that glorious, successful, fulfilling future all my pain will be healed, all my sense of inadequacy will be gone and I will at last be whole.

Sometimes life rips a big chunk of that future away from me: a relationship ends, a big plan collapses and then I find myself facing this present moment with no protection, without the hopes of improvement that my plans promised. What invariably happens is that I create a new plan and start living for that. It seems that being here now is not as easy as it sounds!

So what does it take for us to fully enjoy the life we have now? To bring ourselves so completely to this moment that it might contain everything we could want?

I am an intuitive storyteller and routinely bring such questions to my “inner storyteller.” The intuitive sto-

ries that come in response help illuminate my path in ways that rational thinking never could.

*There were once two villages, each with its own protector-knight. However, these two knights prepared for their duties in quite different ways. The knight in the first village would train so hard that every day he would go to bed sore. The knight in the second village would spend all day outside on his veranda — sipping tea, eating pastries and enjoying the view.*

*Sometimes people would travel from one village to another and questions would be raised.*

*“The other chap seems to be training hard for battle. What will you do when danger comes?”*

*The knight replied, “Do you know what the greatest danger in these parts is?”*

*No one seemed to know.*

*“Up in the mountains lives a fierce dragon who grows angrier each day. Before long he will come and then you will see which one of us is better prepared.”*

*One night that is exactly what happened. The dragon*



*arrived at the first village in such a rage that, despite all his preparations, the knight there could do nothing to repel him. Indeed, their confrontation drove the dragon into such a rage that soon even the knight was fleeing for his life, along with the rest of the village.*

*They arrived at the second village. "You must save us!" they all cried to the knight there.*

*In the darkness of the night, his armour glinting in the light of the dragon's fire, he simply raised his hand and stood motionless.*

*The fierce dragon simply stopped and all his rage drained away. The knight stood with such implacable stillness that the dragon was drawn — as if by an irresistible force — into the overwhelming peace of his presence.*

*All that was left of the dragon's anger was a bag of smoking hot stones. "These are not mine" he said. "I need to give them back to you."*

*And they all gathered in the village square as the dragon sifted through the stones and gave them back to their owners, each time telling the owner the story of the saddest day of their lives.*

*Some of the children only had one stone, of a day of shame, or of sadness — a day they wanted to forget and never be reminded of. Most of the babies had no stones at all.*

*But the old people had so many stories, like stones in their hearts, that it took all evening for the dragon to tell them.*

*The villagers brought blankets, flasks of tea and freshly baked pastries, and they sat and listened as the dragon told the stories of the days that sat like heavy stones in their hearts, preventing them from enjoying all the days that had followed.*

*And as the evening wore on, a great compassion grew amongst them. It became obvious that everyone there had been carrying such stones. In a mysterious way, it was a relief for the whole village each time another story was told.*

*Eventually, the dragon had no more stories. And then a*

*little boy turned to the knight and said "No stories for you. Why is that?"*

*And he explained that as part of his knightly training he had learned how to face his hurts and release his past, so that he would be ready to protect the village the next time the dragon came.*

*And then he removed his helmet and revealed himself to be far older than even the oldest people there. So old, in fact, that he was the only one who had been around the last time the dragon came and told stories to the village. His taste for tea and pastries had never left him!*

*To fully enjoy the life that is right in front of us, we need to let go of the hurts of the past and the plans of the future they spawn. This allows us to embrace this moment exactly as it is. Right here, right now, there is all the love, all the peace and all the beauty our hearts are calling for. All we need to do is show up fully — with no regrets, and no plans. €*



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