

*The Struggle Within*



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Looking at photographs from my past fills my senses with deep emotions and memories. Each image is an entrance into my inner struggles—I can feel the air, the energy, and the grace of those moments as if I am reliving them. I wanted my children to understand my perceptions, so I began to write. Writing compelled me to confront moments I once tried to forget, and I discovered a new freedom and clarity in expressing my feelings. Once locked away, my secrets now spill onto the page, transforming burdens into connections with others. As my children have grown, I have also grown through telling my story. I want them to know they have helped me see the present.

Diane Dammeyer

## Birds

I never expected to become a bird-watcher. What draws people to stare into trees? Yet here I am, finding peace in the flurry outside my living room window. The birds trust that my feeders will be full, and I find comfort in their presence. We depend on each other: I provide them with food, and they offer serenity. Each morning we greet each other. As surely as the sun rises, they're always here for me.



Hluhluwe, South Africa June 30, 2006

## Roots

While my mother's lessons and strong values continue to guide me, I must adapt my skills and speed to keep pace with new technologies. I find this jarring. When I was born, life was much simpler; the news didn't tell us how to think or try to shape our opinions. Now, with each rapid change, it often feels as if my roots are being pulled out. Still, I want to stand firm in my mother's values and wisdom — not as an old timer, but as a person of resilience.



Botswana, Africa

July 6, 2006

## Daybreak

The sun always rises, sometimes veiled by mist or softened into unexpected hues. Even when hidden, it abides. Each new day brushes away the night's darkness, offering the world a gentle beginning. This rhythm reminds me that God, whose presence endures unseen, quietly exists, a constant whisper of reassurance.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

## Friendship

Friends and family have provided me with the resilience I need during difficult times. People have appeared in my life when I needed the most support, symbolizing God's love and sharing their own. Their generosity and selflessness amaze me. I am thankful. I am so blessed by their presence. I am never alone, no matter what I face.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

## Fragility

I am captivated by the tiny frog in Botswana's marshlands. Perched on a reed revealing its fragility, this little creature shows a hidden strength through both vulnerability and courage. Embracing uncertainty teaches me to adapt and survive - I, too am vulnerable.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

## Home

Home is where I seek meaning, striving to create order, safety, and belonging — like a spider weaving its web for protection. I am reminded of the promise in John 14:2 where God prepares a place for us. I want my home to radiate love and God's presence to all who enter.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

### Wild Disorder

Life unfolds in unexpected ways. I once valued order and following routines. But in today's world, I see constant change, plans unravel, schedules implode, people don't show, printers jam, and Wi-Fi fails. Yet from chaos, creativity emerges. Forced change makes me see differently, often in ways I never expected. Now at 85, I view change as an ally. I intend to eat out — and have dessert first.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

## Reflection

Morning tranquility fills me. The wind is still. In the unmoving branches, I imagine my reflection — arms stretched upward, as if I am the tree, reaching skyward, trying to touch the Holy Spirit. I know God and nature surround me. I whisper, "Please Lord, give me the day," softly asking for connection. In the water's silent surface, I see nature and the marshland's stillness, its eternal peace.



Botswana, Africa

July 7, 2006

## Torrey Pine Tree

The trunk of the Torrey Pine spirals and twists, and as the winds blow even harder, each branch grows in triumph and endurance. I see myself in their steadfast, imperfect reach: just as these trees face storms and grow stronger, I strive to resist the negative history that tries to reshape me. Like the trees, I aim to endure with quiet resilience, to grow through storm after storm—not in spite of challenges, but because of them.



Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Ca. June 14, 2015

## Prayer

I watch in awe as a Hindu swimmer prays. His humble posture inspires me. Praying for others—regardless of faith—lifts my spirits and draws me closer to God. My Christian faith and Southern upbringing have shaped my outlook, but learning about diverse worldviews has shown me our shared longing for the divine. My youthful boundaries dissolve, and I sense we are united in spirit.



Varanasi, India

February 8, 2017

## *Different Points of View*

*The shortest route between two viewpoints is to acknowledge and respect differences. Directly facing difficult discussions gives me much-needed insight — even if my feelings get hurt. With patience and kindness, I need to consider others' perspectives and viewpoints. While I haven't mastered this, I'm learning that people can differ and still have a loving connection.*



*Brahmaputra River, India*

*February 14, 2017*

## Shadows from the Past

The fisherman hopes for a good catch, even when his net is empty. Like Walt Whitman, I look to the sun so shadows fall behind me. I've learned to trust my negative feelings fade with time. This trust helps me stay in the present, enabling me to receive strength from those who surround me and love me.



Brahmaputra River, India

February 15, 2017

## Court Jester

With its vibrant colors, this delightful Euphorbia brings to mind a medieval jester—cheerful and full of life. Its vivid colors mirror the jester's hat, a timeless symbol of joy. I envision Elizabeth I, Queen of England, seated in splendor as a jester whirls about, filling her court with joy. Laughter truly nourishes my soul; nothing is better medicine.



Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, Ca.

June 24, 2019

## Two People

There are just two of us, together for 50 years. We know we can climb steep mountains if we work as one, even though we are opposites. Our values align, but we handle challenges differently. I find solace in water, while he prefers to stay dry. Our strengths diverge, and I often struggle to understand his way of thinking. We are like two triangles: alone, we have strong, distinct edges, but when joined, our different angles interlock and form a square—a symbol of stability. As long as our windows are open, we create opportunities for understanding and growth.



Blacks Beach, La Jolla

November 3, 2019

## Grief

Grief is a language without words, spoken in tears and silence. While I sense the world wants me to move on, heartache lingers and returns. My daughter's memory remains deeply ingrained in my soul. Even after many years, her loss is part of my daily life, and her love is always with me. Reflecting on the years since her death, I find comfort in 1 Corinthians 13: 7-8: "love bears all things... endures all things. Love never ends." This verse helps me live with grief.



La Jolla, California

November 16, 2019

## Joy

An emotional state swells within me as I gaze out over the vast Pacific, witnessing the miracle of the sun rising and the gentle surrender of night to day. Shimmering rays dance upon the water, each sparkle a whisper of hope from the Holy Spirit, a gentle reminder of God's infinite love. My heart is filled with profound joy as the morning fog lifts, and I feel embraced by a deep sense of well-being. I am in the boundless presence of the Divine Spirit, and I truly know it.



Blacks Beach, La Jolla

November 16, 2019

## Aging

As I age, I feel the same uncertainty I did as a child hanging from a tree — fear I might fall. That uncertainty lingers, deepening my longing for comfort and support. Letting go means loss, but it also allows me to challenge myself and grow.

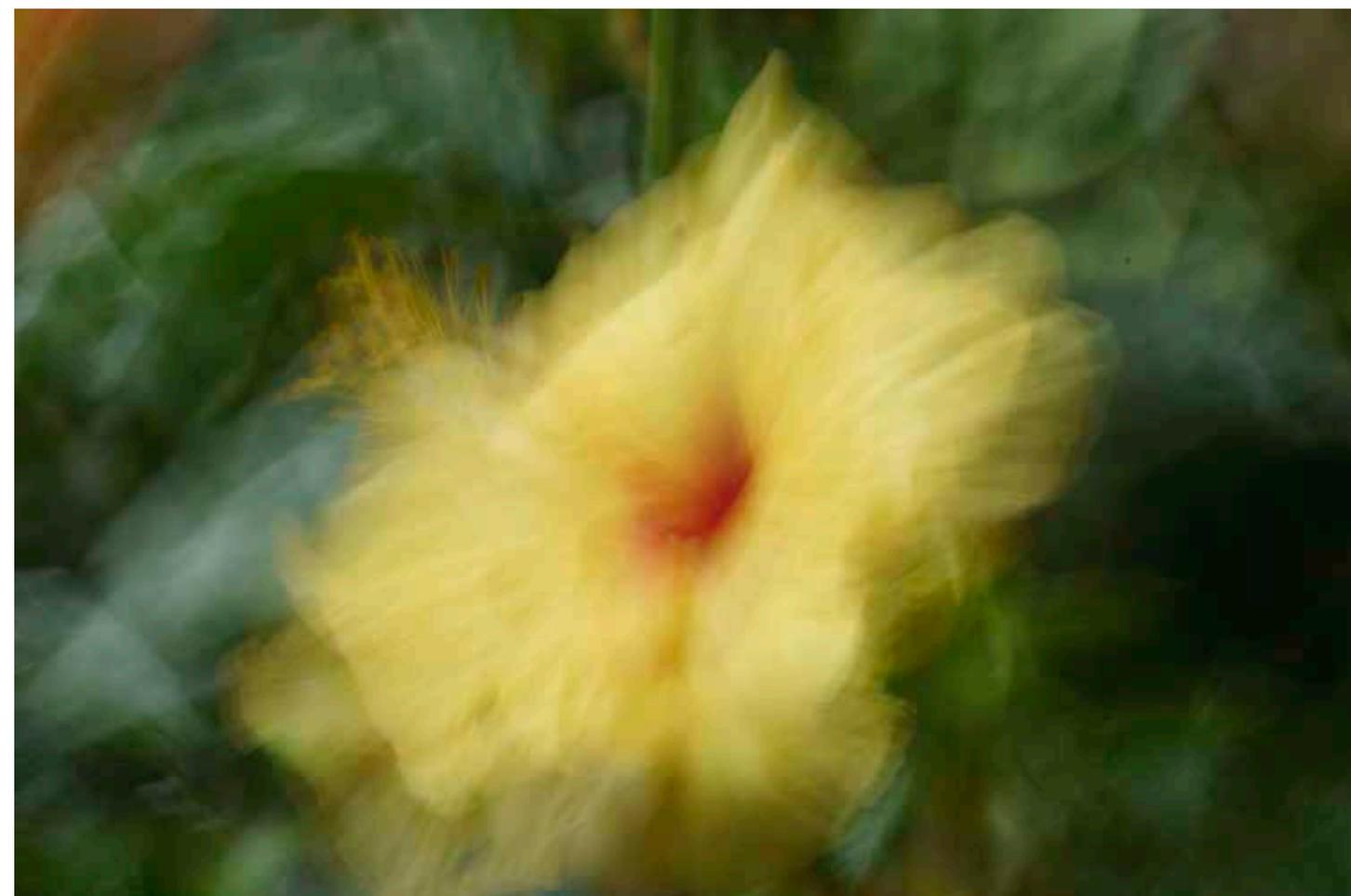


San Diego, California

July 21, 2020

## Broken Femur

My head hit the floor, and everything flashed yellow. I felt heavy, unable to move, my arms and legs awkwardly sprawled beneath me. As I tried to process what had just happened, the medic asked, "How is your fentanyl tolerance? My broken glasses cut the left side of my face, and blood soaked my hair. Shock coursed through my body. Looking back, it all started when my toe caught the edge of the front hall rug, sending me crashing into the hardwood floor. Three weeks after breaking my right femur, I came home from the hospital, grateful to be alive.



San Diego, California

July 28, 2020

## Depth of Life

My life has been broad and deep, with many ups and downs. Some have said I have endured more than a single person's share of grief. This may be true, but I feel I have been given the greatest gift of faith: a deep understanding and empathy for the lives of others. Like Emerson, "It is not the length of life, but the depth of life" that counts.



Gulf of Alaska

July 23, 2024

## Miracle

On the day of my five-year-old daughter's funeral, I fell to my knees in despair, as a radiant light—blinding as the sun—suddenly filled the room. An all-encompassing warmth spread throughout my body. I lost track of where I was, my surroundings began to fade away. A profound calm settled over me, like gentle, invisible arms holding me. Serenity and strength filled me; I was overflowing with boundless love. I felt a deep calm encircle me. A force beyond understanding embraced me. No longer of this world, I drifted upward. At that moment, I knew God was holding me. I realized I had an enormous amount of strength.



Gulf of Alaska

July 25, 2024



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