

## An Introduction...sort of

(*I Do Me Wed* and its acting process flourish in a class setting, and I welcome all inquiries. The intro below is from the book version. THANKS!)

This is a story...a parable really...about a frog. No Princesses. Just some poor little frog who was grateful for crumbs and wasn't paying attention to how she was feeling.

**Once Upon a Time** *there was a frog who found herself in a perfect bath of lukewarm water. She was so grateful to be out of the cold, dirty pond that she barely noticed that, little by little, someone (perhaps the person who had made the temperate pool seem so seductively attractive?) was gradually but steadily adding hot water until finally the poor little frog was boiled to death.*

*Now, she would never have gotten into that water in the first place if it had started out mind-numbingly hot. But it happened so imperceptibly. Subtle little shifts, until finally the little frog was cooked!*

*Oh...did I forget to mention that I was The Frog, and that this story was actually the beginning of my happy ending?*

I had always thrown myself into relationships with enthusiasm and optimism. My girlfriends often marveled at how I never allowed past disappointments to harden my heart. And although I hadn't remained unscathed, I'd always licked my exit-wounds, gorged on a brief diet of comfort foods, and gone on to love another day.

That is, until I plunged into a relationship in which my spirit, joy and autonomy eroded so gradually that I never realized I'd lost my laughter until it was gone. Then, abruptly, the relationship was terminated like a pink slip in a recession. And that was the good news! Really good, because it meant I was forcibly turned back toward my own life, finally asking the right questions:

- Why do I keep finding myself in similar relationships over and over?
- Why am I so grateful for so little?
- What can I adjust inside myself, because I don't ever want to go through this again?  
and,
- How can I create that change painlessly and quickly?

It stood to reason that if I was experiencing the same thing with different guys, and the only thing those relationships had in common was me, then I was somehow creating this in my life. My choices, conscious and unconscious; my high hopes and low expectations; my emotional baggage carried from childhood into adulthood. In the film version of "Eat, Pray, Love", the main character says, "Balance is not letting anyone else love you less than you love yourself." But what if your Self-love meter is set pretty low?

When I was rational (hardly ever during that three year "romance") I imagined I understood the Buddhist principle that ourselves and our environment are literally one, meaning that a change inside me would inevitably create a change outside.

*"First, be the change you want to see."* -Mohandas Gandhi-

But in my then-desperation I'd been interpreting that to mean, "If I change myself, then he (whoever the "he" is at that time) will treat me better," which is a fairly manipulative way of looking at the universe. It took plunging into deepest despair for the magnitude of that principle — that I had the power to influence my surroundings on a truly profound level — to finally click for me. A quantum leap of imagination if you're feeling powerless!

Then a breakthrough came when two girlfriends who were getting their Masters degrees in Spiritual Psychology said their class had written vows to themselves and read them to the group; that it was powerful and transformational. But when I asked what the process was they explained it wasn't a process, it was the culmination of two years of inner work toward their degrees and that, anyway, it was too amorphous to explain how. Still, I finally had a clue, something I could do!

Now I had a puzzle to solve. Me! Since childhood my strategy in tackling jigsaw puzzles has been to break the big picture into smaller, manageable bits, then fit those tamed sections together, a technique that served me pretty well here too. I settled down on my living room floor and made my first vow, which was to not get up from there until I'd come up with something!

Finally, I had a puzzle to solve.  
And the puzzle was ME.



Like a flower instinctively turning toward the I gravitated to the three areas of wisdom that had sustained for more than half my life: acting, art and Buddhism. I realized that:

1. I'd never lost a piece of myself in any relationship that I hadn't throw away first. It wasn't these men I was longing for. It was my Self. I was wanting my Self. And only I could give that to me.
2. I was much too eager to please. Hungering for affection and approval, I would instinctively revert to geisha-mode, catering to the emotional needs of guys while ignoring my own feelings. And greedy guys...greedy people...have a sixth sense that identifies the needy girls who will be grateful.

I conclude that:

3. Part of healing my pain was that I needed to figure out what I had yearned for from these people, and give that to myself before getting involved in yet another relationship.

I'd read too many self-help books that ambiguously concluded with, "It all comes back to you," without describing precisely what to do once you're back there. And my soul was in such pain I needed to feel a result right then. I required the difference between an ambulance speeding to the rescue (Yes, please!), not a PT Cruiser leisurely traveling to the accident site. I

needed a process! So I invented one. In one intensely dark night of the soul, harnessing three basic acting skills in combination with some focused writing techniques, I created a fun, fast, flexible "thing" that was easy and produced change. Real change.

### So... The Book?

Part One lays bare my diary (tears, fears, and drama) and illustrates how I came to create The Vow Process, and how that resulted in ultra personal vows addressed the obstacles that naturally arise as soon as we decide we are going to start doing things differently.

Part Two is the Process itself. Twenty questions that guide you to create your own life-altering promises.

And yes, there are cartoons in this book. Lots and lots of them! I was advised to call them "illustrations" when speaking to business people and left-brained adults, but yes, they are definitely cartoons! In rereading my diary I was struck by how relentlessly sad and heavy my words alone sounded. Yet because life is duality, even while I was living all the relationship drama, I'd often have flashes of, "This is so ludicrous" and "I can't believe I'm putting myself through this," yet that realistic irony was nowhere in sight. Life isn't all comedy or all drama (though sometimes it feels like all-drama-all-the time). It's more of a "dramedy." But how to convey it?

My voice teacher used to say that in musical theatre the characters burst into song when the emotion is too big for words to contain ("GLEE" anyone?). As for me, I burst into cartoon! That's why I inserted art wherever the feelings—happy or sad—were the most intense. Besides, I really am sort of a cartoon. My girlfriends, however, are actually much prettier than my artistic limitations would lead you to believe!

### And in the End?

You've probably heard that if you want to know how someone really feels about you, pay attention to what they do, not to what they say. It's my hope that by the last page of this book, not only will you have awakened a new appreciation, compassion and enthusiasm for your Self, but you'll have begun discovering practical ways to show your Self some of that love.