

A close-up photograph of a woman with a red headscarf, looking directly at the camera. She is holding a white pen in her mouth and a dark, embossed book in her hands. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Diana Button

from Pen (elope)
with love xxx

Poetry and Prose

*For the family of man,
this miraculous journey
and the opportunity
to wake up
together.*

Acknowledgements

No book is ever the work of one person alone. Even if only one person puts pen to paper, it is always an act that happens with the support of many others whom I would like to honour here.

Thank you, Norbert, my dear husband, and Kevin and Erik, my dear sons for all your love and support. You enrich every moment of my life through your free spirits and creative hearts. A special mention to Kevin: it was your booklet, *Poetry on the Move* that inspired me to publish this work. Your offering reminded me how important it is to share our writing widely in the world.

Thank you, Sarah Mason, my dear friend of thirty-seven years, for walking the spiritual path with me and for our many rich, thought-provoking and heartwarming conversations along the way.

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Thank you, yogis and yoginis who practice yoga with me: I feel your beautiful energy flowing in my heart and into my writing.

Please forgive me if I have not mentioned you here by name. I bow to you now and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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Foreword

What a privilege it is to be asked to write a foreword to this moving and beautiful book that Diana has created. It is testament to her incredible fortitude, courage, tenacity and humility as well as a collection of intensely moving and intimate insights into a personal journey with which we can all, in some way, identify.

from Pen (elope) with love xxx is hard to put down once you begin, yet each entry calls for its own time and space, inviting the reader to linger and savour the richness of the imagery, the depths of emotion and thought, the beacons of hope and change that it encompasses.

It is the kind of book I will revisit many times, to dip in randomly and allow Pen (elope) to stimulate my creativity from within its varied offerings: It is a lighthouse for others undertaking a similar journey of self-discovery as it explores different terrains and differing routes to arrive at that place we all seek

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time¹

Diana, thank you for your courage in gifting us with this work of over twenty years to guide us on our personal journey.

With love,

Tricia Heriz-Smith xxx

¹ From Little Gidding, the last of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets. Printed with permission from Faber and Faber Ltd. Royalty Department Burnt Mill Elizabeth Way Harlow Essex, CM20 2HX England.

Preface

You are not
a troubled guest
on this earth,
you are not
an accident
amidst other accidents,
you were invited
from another and greater
night
than the one
from which
you have just emerged.²

Writing is my home. I have known this for years and yet it only became a mantra during my years in Italy. Moving was an adventure with many exciting moments, both challenging and stimulating. At times, I was inspired to create and explore new territory with gusto and delight, other times, I fell victim to my innermost human vulnerability and the thought that I was, indeed, 'a troubled guest on this earth'.

During those moments, not only did I feel disconnected from the outside world, the Italian language and culture, but also from my own inner world. I felt truly lost, physically and spiritually homeless. Yet, in that seemingly impossible place, if I kept quiet and patient, my creative voice would start to softly speak to me and I would begin to write. Just forming words, making sentences, putting thoughts down on paper

was enough to loosen the tight hold of the closed, rigid, or polarised mind I was caught in.

So that I do not forget that writing is my true north and trusted navigator through life, I have created this book, *from Pen (elope) with love xxx*. It contains a selection of poems, prose pieces and letters from the past two decades of my life.

Through my personal journey and experience, I have learned to trust that writing has the power to bring us back to ourselves, our humanness. It can take us out of depression, despair and darkness; a sense of hopelessness, separateness or not belonging, and back in touch with the larger, all-encompassing, interconnected beings that we are. In this way, writing can teach us how to be peaceful and wholehearted in relation to ourselves, others and all of life.

I further believe that writing (and in particular, poetry) is a mysterious messenger. We do not think poems and prose up, rather, they come to us. On fortunate days, I catch some as they float down to Earth.

Sometimes, writing comes in the form of a question; other times as a prayer or blessing. Sometimes, writing points to where I need to pay urgent attention; other times it brings important insights about who I am - who we are.

The title *from Pen (elope) with love xxx* is meant to hint at the intimate and personal nature of the work. It is, of course, how you might end a letter or message to someone near and dear to you. Despite some of the challenging ground covered as I explore many aspects of being human with its emotional messiness and difficulty, the title also hints at the playfulness, humour, and moments of childlike wonder that are also very much present in the work.

Indeed, you may have already noticed the playfulness in the way *Pen (elope)* is written, how it is made up of the words *pen* and *elope*.

Pen (elope) is the name I give my inner writer – the one who cares about me and the importance of creative writing in my life. She offers kind, but constructive criticism, and has accompanied me over the years. I consider her my muse, soul mate; as faithful and trustworthy as any a friend I have in the outer world.

Though I primarily chose the name Pen(elope) because it contains the word *pen*. I also like how the meaning of *elope* corresponds to my experience of the writing journey: it is as if Pen(elope) and I secretly run off together to be joined in a kind of holy (or spiritual) matrimony – a union of mind and heart and the oneness I trust is our inherent nature and relationship with all of life.

When putting this book together, I further got curious about the name Penelope and learned that it has origins in Ancient Greek, means *weaver* and that Penelope was the wife of Odysseus, the legendary hero in Greek mythology.

According to Homer's account in his epic poem, *The Odyssey*, Penelope waited twenty years for her husband to return home from his journey. Despite over a hundred suitors wooing her, she remained true to Odysseus and, for this reason, the name has come to be associated with faithfulness. I was very glad to be reminded of this because it resonated deeply with how I viewed my relationship with my writing muse. In Homer's work, Penelope is further portrayed as an embodiment of patience, strength and cunning. These qualities are also ones Pen (elope) cultivates in me through the gift of writing.

Another interesting detail in connection with the meaning *weaver*, is the weaving ruse Penelope used to deter suitors: she pretended to be weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus's elderly father Laertes, announcing that she will choose a suitor when she has finished. Yet, each evening she would unravel her work and thus could cunningly delay re-marrying. Similarly, I experience the process of writing as a kind of weaving that never really ends. When writing, I get

to interlace words and sometimes get to glimpse (if only briefly) at the inter-connected, cohesive whole that is the fabric of life. As soon as that moment is over, it is as if all has been unraveled and I begin again in front of a fresh loom and a new piece of writing. How many times have I inwardly celebrated what I consider a personal breakthrough, to wake up the next day (or next moment) to an empty loom and no other choice than to begin again - setting off once more, as if for the first time, my only guides: trust in the process and the faithfulness of Pen (elope).

Every piece included in the book has its unique place. Together, as a collection, the work is witness to the various flows and currents, turning of tides and points of orientation that can lead me to a larger, more connected and wholesome way of being in the world. I have purposely put the pieces in a loose order that is neither chronological, nor necessarily showing progression to a particular place (state) or conclusion; I have experienced the writing journey as far from orderly or cohesive. I would describe the process more like diving, sinking, floating, or spinning around and around and the overall progress, a spiraling - passing the same (or similar) place over and over, each time being given a chance to discover different meanings, views and perspectives not noticed before.

The intentions for creating this book are:

- as reminder of the spiritual quests I have been on to discover my true, authentic self;
- as a way of honouring the writer in me, in others and the sacredness of life itself;
- as a reminder of the above when I forget or get lost along the way.

I am thrilled every time any of my writing can inspire others, or provide nourishment to heart and soul. In that spirit, I hope you will find this book uplifting and encouraging.

² From the poem by David Whyte, What to Remember When Waking (The House of Belonging, 2011). Printed with permission from Many Rivers Press, www.davidwhyte.com. ©Many Rivers Press, Langley, WA USA.

POEMS ALL THE WAY

Hands

I thank you, hands
for holding this pen,
for turning this page,
for opening this door
and - for being here -
without conditions.

I thank you, hands
for reminding me of
tickling, caressing,
praying and dancing,
and for a simple touch:
hands on heart.

I thank you, hands.
I have been blessed by you
and with you
I can bless, too.

Muses of a Creative

It is my business to create - a business fated to those of sensitive hearts and perceiving eyes. I question all things I see - not with intellectual mind or scientific approach, not with skill or knowledge of current affairs, history, or economy - There is a knowing that is invisible. It comes in through my eyes, invisible; slips down my throat, invisible and does work in the dark, invisible. My business is to create: make visible the invisible, make tangible the intangible and make comprehensible the incomprehensible. At least it is my business to try. Try I must, for that is my call: call to create.

I have woken up

to the sight of snowflakes floating past my kitchen window; specks of softness on the other side of the pane. Yet in my messy mind, I am lost amid to-do lists, unfinished jobs, stalled projects and plans for the future. They waddle and hop, squabble and peck at me like vicious geese. And I am sent out into the blizzard of all that I am not, all that I never will be and all ways I am insufficient and shameful. So very shameful. Outside, all the while, snowflakes glide down to the ground, become a bright white lawn. I open my arms as if to catch some and instead catch my breath. And in that brief pause, I hear snowflake's song:

*It's
simple, they sing,
breath is here to breathe you,
we are here to teach you
how to go easy,
how to settle down,
how to come home to
yourself.*

Lion on the Sofa

You loaf there limp and lonely,
paws: jumbo fur balls off woolen limbs,
mane: a frowsy poodle's coat.

You sneaked through
my house after dark
and plonked down – a dream gift
to unwrap in the morning.

With ruffled, cuddly-toy look, you lure
my fingers to your dreadlocked coat.
Does your drooping jaw contain
real lion teeth?
Your fluffy paws,

real lion claws?

Your fierce glance is lost
in the frenzy of my fingering.
My mind is lost in compassion
- as it often is -
for all living things
in dreams and

in the waking world.

Who are you?
Certainly not Aslan the Great Lion?
The Cowardly Lion from Oz, perhaps?
Or does your foot hold a thorn

I have overlooked?

It becomes a game.
I dance around you,
excited with my new toy,
eager to unravel great mysteries
from the dreamworld.

I had forgotten:
you are lying on my sofa;
you are my dream,
my lion.

Where is the wildness?
That grand roar?
Power and majesty?

I cannot remember.
I am far from home.
I am not just lying on the sofa,
I lie in the real world -

I care for all living things
except one.

A Cup of Yogi Tea

On my tea-bag label this morning, the message:

Do not feed the fears!

I have to laugh. It is still early and

I have faithfully fed a family of ten:

Fear of failing to live my life well

Fear of letting others down

Fear of procrastination

Fear of neglecting my body

Fear of growing old and frail and ill

Fear of confusion, and mindless living

Fear of losing all I love or hold dear

Fear of not responding to the call to write

Fear of living from my limited human mind

Fear of not truly living from the heart

Fear of not touching the divine.

Then comes the refreshing cup of tea

and a second reading of my thoughts.

This time, I recognise the f-signs

and know

I need not

follow them.

Sun Salutations

*Surya*³ still rests
as I clear some space
(and my voice) at the crest
of the hill; I remove my shoes,
sharp sticks and stones
from the ground
and stand
*tadasana*⁴ tall,
hands
palm to palm:

*Om Suryaya Namaha*⁵

Arms reaching up, I greet Sky.
Body bending down, I greet Earth.
Legs lunging back, I greet Water.
Hips up, then down, I greet Mountain,
I greet Lake.
Flat on the grass,
I greet Worm,
I greet Snake.
Standing tall once more,
I greet Tree, Forest, Bird, Bee
and include myself:

I greet Me,
I greet You
I greet All
who do not believe

we belong
or have forgotten
we live with this
one same sun, this
one same breath.

No matter what we tell ourselves,
we are here,
in deep - all of us -
invitees.

³ *Surya*, sanskrit meaning sun.

⁴ *Tadasana*, sanskrit meaning 'mountain pose' or 'tree pose'

⁵ *Om Suryaya Namaha* - a mantra to the sun which honours the sun as life giver, a masculine force that dispels darkness and brings activity and transformation through light, heat and fire.

Your Birthday

All that was important was to sit with you.
No timetable. No 'things' to do - Just sit. Spend time.
Sixteen hours of space.

You didn't understand much I said, or remember
I now lived in Italy. You didn't know I would leave later,
or that it was our last day together.

You kept forgetting your age, that you were unable to
walk, shave, dress, or visit the bathroom
without the help of nurses.

You just knew moments, snap-shots of
past, present and you found the
sense of it all
in the patterns of your dressing gown.

Julie Andrews beaches	
in Wales	the
Tenors	your
daught-	ter's
voice old family house	

You followed the checkered lines with your index finger and
stored them there:
forever!
I may have been with you for just an hour,
for a week, a year, or had never left home at all.

To you, it was all the same
time.

In this place, you have everything you need:
peace.

Thank you, Daddy for your 87th birthday gift to me.