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**Gunilla Blomqvist**

**The Magic  
of Being Human**

## Foreword from the Editor

The following is a chapter from an upcoming book, *What Sustains Me*. It is a collaborative book. Each chapter is written by a different author, stands on its own, and is released independently. When all chapters are ready, the book will be published as a regular book as well as an e-book.

The central question in this project is: *What sustains you?*

More specifically: *What gives you a sense of peace, meaning and purpose in everyday life? What keeps you going when times are tough? What gives you the strength to face moments of crisis or despair?*

The book's topic could be described as an 'existential quest' or a 'spiritual quest'. We are consciously avoiding these phrases because they can be misleading. For instance, 'spiritual quest' often conveys the sense of a search for outside resources, beyond the realm of the physical world. Such a definition would exclude experiences that involve inner resources.

Our focus is on describing what we experience, as opposed to the philosophical or religious terms under which these experiences are usually framed. We are not describing a specific path, a 'right way' to do things, or a 'correct' narrative of how it all works out. To the

contrary, we are coming at it from different approaches and belief systems, including agnostic and atheist perspectives.

A key characteristic of this project is that each author is writing in a personal and experiential manner. The key word here is 'experience'. We hope that, by talking in terms of experiences rather than beliefs, we can find a bridge whereby people who come from different traditions or beliefs can be nourished by each other's experiences.

You can follow the progress of this project at <http://WhatSustainsMe.com>

Serge Prengel

# The Magic of Being Human

Gunilla Blomqvist

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There is a reason it has taken me so long to start to write this chapter. It is about the intimacy involved. Should these experiences and feelings of what sustained me when life was hard really be publicly exposed? It feels like betraying something. As I am writing this, I am still struggling with the feeling. And I feel a pressure over my chest and a feeling of sadness.

Could I let these most intimate experiences out? How should I do that? How could I do it? I will give it a try. Thanks to friends who did it before me I feel courage. In friendship is nourishment. They have done it, I can do it. They would even like me to do it! Or would they? What would they say, do or think? Not all the people, I don't bother so much about public opinion, I have always gone my own way. But those I call my friends, those I really care about, do they really like what I do, think and say? Do they really like *me*?

Or could the nice face and smile cover the opposite? The voice behind the words, what does it really say? Something a friend doesn't want to uncover? About me or what? I have always found this kind of experience difficult and it has made me confused and bewildered. Now as time has passed I have been able to touch the fear that comes from the thought: "Ha! You thought they loved you! But they really hate you and want you just dead and gone!"

But before that... before I managed to touch and stand the dark cavern of the fear of being unseen, and

neglected, even hated, without one reason that I could understand... what sustained me then? What has sustained me through the years when I was a little girl, when I was growing up as a teenager? What supported me to continue to feel happy, lively energetic and curious? To be the person I was from the beginning and always have been through the years. And what helped sustain me as me even when the face that I looked at lacked in clarity of expression and the voice did not touch my heart?

It feels like betraying something. There is a saying in Taoism that "you should not talk about Tao, then it disappears." So what is Tao? Another saying goes: "Don't mention the name of the Holiest, just call *him* the Lord." So who is the Lord? Is the most supporting and sustaining force in life a Lord? We can't talk about what we don't know, and it is difficult to give form and name to experiences that are out of the ordinary but still real for the one who has them.

I called my friend for life God since my mother had taught me to say the night prayer to *him*, the prayer which ended with: "Look to me that is little". So for the reason of simplicity, I will use my childhood's God and "*him*" further on for a while. When writing this I again feel the pressure over my chest and the sadness coming up to my eyes and face. I feel that need for intimacy with *him* again! To tell *him* what is on my chest, what burdens me, that he should see to me that is little. OK, now my eyes are filled with tears so I take a short break. I need to stay with the feeling for a while...

Back again. The thing is: I broke up with *him* recently - - it has been about half a year. The honesty I ask from myself before starting to write required me to do so. I wanted to test what it would be like to get into the feeling of being totally exposed to the toughness of the world without the magic support I usually had felt all my life when in crises. The special experiences which I felt were connected to my childhood's intimacy with God. At now seventy plus, I needed to stand on my own legs all alone and support myself. And so I trusted that *he* could take it if I considered *him* not to exist!

*If there is No God  
Shall the refreshing Summer Rain  
Still Shower my Face?  
And the Wings of the Wind still Enfold Me?*

*If I am Not but You are Me  
Will You See with My Eyes  
Through the Heat of Pain and Darkness?  
And the Tears in My Eyes... in Your Eyes  
Will they Comfort You then?*

### **To be enfolded by Nature**

In Nature my body feels at ease and relaxed. Surrounded by the big trees in a forest and feeling the damp freshness in the air, I am in my element! The wind gives me a variety of sensual feelings. The caress of a warm breeze and the stormy wind vibrate both with my core. That inspires me to paint and write lyrics. So do my dreams.

I have had vivid dreams as long as I can remember, even as a child, and I still remember what were to me the most important ones. I have a continuing dialogue with that dreaming part of me even when I am awake. When in the land of in-between, the dawn and the dusk, I am in my special time for magic.

Something from within that I don't control becomes visualized at moments like this. It inspires my feelings and thoughts about what is going on inside me as well as what step I am supposed to go further with in my art, in my work as psychotherapist, as well as in everyday life and relationships. I really need these moments in the morning and afternoon, all by myself, with myself. A feeling of being at home, being safe and complete.

As I am writing this, I am alone in the summerhouse. My man is somewhere else for the weekend and it is calm and warm inside the house. Outside, it is a stormy December weather. The first snow has just melted away and the wind is not cold but harsh. Actually there is a warning for not going out. I am feeling good and contained. Do I miss the sense of closeness and intimacy with someone? Not at the moment.

*Did you Ever go to Swim in November?*

*Frozen Grass*

*Like Glass*

*Under Feet that Remember*

**Hard times**

One can argue that closeness and intimacy are supposed to be between humans. Of course animals too can get attached to a partner, an attachment that can last a lifetime. I just saw something on TV about birds that would stay together for twenty years and that showed real grief when their partner did not turn up at the yearly mating place.

Maybe I was lonely in some way as a child, maybe my God became a substitute at times for my beloved father who was mostly away during my first three years of life, guarding the Swedish coast during World War II. I do not fully know why I have had this strong help and protection coming through my body and mind through the years. Maybe it could be described the other way round as well: That something inside made me susceptible from the beginning to benefitting from my own magic experiences. Especially during hard times, when no human support was there, but also for my own pleasure and joy.

Compassion and empathy have always been important to me. When I was around ten, I used to think that I would never do anything that I felt was bad to any child as a grown up. I had a little blue notebook where I wrote down these sincere thoughts. The notebook is now gone but not the memory of it. What was the impulse for these pronouncements? I can't recall having been treated badly, but I might have heard or seen something that led me to make this important choice about myself. It was natural for me as a quiet youth when confronted with an inhuman act of any kind to

reflect that I would never act that way even if I had the power. It has taken me a long life to realize that this is not an obvious choice for everyone. I think I was a sensitive child. And I had an early awareness of the sacred value of being a human.

### **Sustaining magical experiences**

I have a memory of being alone in hospital, as a twelve year old girl with flying long blond hair and long legs. I do not remember for sure why I was there. It could have been when I had scarlet fever and was in an isolation room. My parents could not visit me, just wave through a window.

But I was also hospitalized later that same year because of an operation of a non malignant tumor on the side of my neck. It is very possible it was on that occasion that I saw a strong light on the hospital wall that took the form of a light figure for my eyes, a figure that was familiar to me as Jesus.

When I left the hospital alone I felt the sensation of my legs walking on the street and got this special strong feeling in my legs and my body, and my mind became filled with the understanding that "from now on I am standing and walking on my own". That felt like a good and liberating experience and, I think, a natural understanding of myself at that age.

Later, around my forties, I had another very special experience: I was in a foreign country meeting

colleagues at a training conference. But the atmosphere was not good since the training situation was intertwined with organizational politics in a way that was unforeseen and surprising for most of us.

I was sitting alone on my bed in my hotel room before leaving, reflecting over the whole business and looking out through the window over the roofs of the big city. I could not understand what had been going on and was confused by the duplicity as I perceived it, especially from one person in the staff that I had trusted as being a good professional trainer. The roofs outside the window then started to move and undulate.

I experienced a short moment of being lost but then it felt like someone was coming from behind and I was enfolded by wings on both sides, and there was this strong special light all around me again to hold me. I felt calm, back to myself again.

As a girl of twelve, I had had a body/mind experience of being an independent individual standing and walking on my own two feet. And later, in a foreign country, in a state of strong confusion and lack of trust, my body felt a holding and securing sensation and had an enlightening experience.

These incidents among others alike connect with a feeling of trust and an "inner knowing" of being helped, protected and held. This gives a happy and light tune to my life, like a full and rich stream flowing beneath whatever hard times and sorrows that are passing over my inner home, like changing weather.

## **I Am Who I Am**

When I was around four years old, adults liked to make a fuss with me and ask: "What will you become as a grown up?", meaning whether I had thought of a profession. I remember experiencing this question as a very stupid one, and I always answered I would not become anything else: "I am Gunilla."

I had an early sense of the difference between my own self-awareness and the idea that ego achievement over the years would turn you into something else than what you truly are.

My self-awareness has been deeply rooted in my body since my childhood. I feel happy when I enjoy life in dancing and music. As an artist I like to move around almost like dancing when making expressive paintings and I like how the movement comes out in color and form in my paintings.

Movement and the sensuality in movement, alone and together, are as valuable to me as the magic of being all alone with myself in a meditative mood, quietly contained. Waiting for a deeper part of me to come to terms and to be understood, loved and given a form that can be communicated.

## **Dreams, visions and expression**

Two dreams, or rather an early morning vision and a dream that I had around my fifties, come to mind as I

am writing this. At that time, I needed a change in my life. And it was not quite clear to me what the restlessness and dissatisfaction that I felt were about. I had moved out from the marriage bedroom and was sleeping in an open room with space and bigger windows.

In the dawn between sleep and wakefulness I saw a circling round fireball that tried to speak to me. I saw a mouth that was not in place but moving around as well as eyes that tried to become visible. It was a very strong image, almost too strong to look at. And then a lot of small black snakes came in the air and knotted themselves together in the shape of hearts that were like an iron fence between me and the circling fire.

This gave me a feeling of compassion. Compassion for the thing that could not express itself, that had difficulty in finding form. I got the feeling that this thing needed me, because I had a mouth and eyes.

Just some days after that vision I had a dream that felt connected to it. There was this circling thing again, but now it was within black and yellow fields, revolving slowly, and there was now a voice talking to me.

I heard a question: "Who are you?" And I heard myself answer in the dream: "A dutiful academic". The voice then continued: "What would you want to be?" I heard myself answer: "Spontaneous." I perceived there was a waiting for the me in the dream to have a second wish and I said that I would like to Share Mutually in Love. After that there was once more a waiting and I

said that I wanted to Communicate. The scene then changed. In my dream picture, there was a black something and from it came a strong white light. This dream of inner communication was the start of big changes in my life.

Among other things, I finally acted on a commitment I had made in my twenties when I had stopped going to Art school. At that time, my parents and my teachers felt that I was too bright for not studying Math at the University. The promise I then made to myself was that I would go back to studying art and developing as an artist when I had lived longer and had more to tell.

And so, within a few years, I had divorced from a thirty-year marriage, started a new education, found a new love (the person I am still with), and was happily painting.

My paintings are fiery and forceful, some people say. That's how I like to express myself and give a form to what comes from deep inside. I get very energetic and passionate as I do this. The strong energy from within is fuel for creativity and change, which I can ride on for a while. Giving these energies color and form makes it possible to communicate and touch hearts and feelings. Mine as well as others'. And I really appreciate the communication that takes place when I am having an exhibition.

*Flying with Flames of Fire*  
*Thought I was carried*

*Lost Touch of the Fiery Body  
That fell Dead to the Ground  
Me still Floating in the Air*

### **Being a woman**

At times I have difficulty to express myself strongly and deeply in close relationships. I can lose myself in intellectual argumentations instead of being more spontaneous and daring in what I say. But I fear that, without the intellectual framing, what I express would be like a burning fire that can hurt.

The forceful energy from within is my inspiration, my spark of life. It still needs my aging body and the feeling of pulsating life in my heart to come through in communication, to find the word and expression that reaches another human being.

As a woman, I have sometimes felt that I should not be too bright in a discussion... that it is easy to be looked upon as self-righteous, when you stand for the right to know something. My father always supported and encouraged me. In our discussions I felt free to express my own thoughts. But, with my mother, this could lead to fights.

Dad used to say it was good that I was straightforward and didn't lie. This could have been felt as pressure to behave in a certain way, but I didn't experience it that way. It felt more like his personal wish for the world and the humans in it to be like that.

For me, this is just an easier way to communicate. But some people are different in this matter, maybe brought up in other ways. My partner is more circumspect and polite. On one occasion, he got annoyed at me for being, in his opinion, lecturing. He called me arrogant. There we were -- me hurt in my best intentions, and he in his! Life was playing with our differences and difficulties. Contact lost! I went away, sad and hurt, to rest by myself in the garden.

I looked up at a birch tree where a breeze suddenly moved the leaves. In my inner sight, there was a vision of Mary in the middle of the tree on a cross holding baby Jesus in her arms. That sight was so comforting: I felt held like the little child I was at that moment. At the same time, I could identify with the crucified Mary. And I became all warm and at ease and alive again in my whole body.

## **Epilogue**

All my experiences taken together sustain me in that they are combined with a natural feeling in my body, a feeling of myself being myself, a sense that I am well taken care of somehow. They bring me back to myself again after being lost. They give me inspiration, trust and courage to continue to communicate with others, with a warm loving feeling inside.

On the way to finish writing this chapter, I had a short dream that told me my mother was dead. She has actually been dead for twelve years! But at the same time I saw her very vivid and alive in this dream that had bright and warm colors, She was at home, active with something, as she usually was!

It brought up good memories of my mother, her happy laughs, the songs she sang and the stories she told. And it suddenly became clear to me that she had given nourishment to the deep images in me with her own fantasy and storytelling and with her faith in God. I got a sense of that she is associated and connected to my own inner world of images in a warm and playful way.

From her, I also learned to care for what is vulnerable and small. Saying the prayer "See to me that is little" made me understand that a little girl is valuable and should be cared for. I have been called weak-strong, a nickname I like. This is when I succeed in communicating the feelings in my heart to the hearts of other human beings in a way that vibrates with our cores.

## About the author



*Gunilla Blomqvist is an artist and poet as well as one of the first registered psychotherapists in Sweden, where she counts as the "grand old lady" of body psychotherapy, specializing in psychosomatic illness. She brought Body Psychotherapy to Sweden from the USA in collaboration with Alexander Lowen in the later part of twentieth century. She was also trained as a Jungian Psychoanalyst in Zurich. She started her career as a primary school teacher, and has written and illustrated books for children on existential topics. She*

*shares her time between painting, writing, client work and supervision, with also space for downhill skiing and dancing and a growing group of grandchildren. She has a special feeling for all human beings, grown ups and children, that are "falling out of the frame" and a strong trust in the continuing evolutionary and spiritual growth of humanity. Website: [www.gunillablomqvist.com](http://www.gunillablomqvist.com)*

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