



# *Discovering Your Inner Samurai*

The Entrepreneurial Woman's  
Journey to Business Success

Dr. Susan L. Reid

Discovering Your Inner Samurai: The Entrepreneurial  
Woman's Guide to Business Success

Copyright © 2007 by Susan L. Reid, DMA  
All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

ISBN-10: 1-934229-05-9  
ISBN-13: 978-1-934229-05-7

Editor: Yvonne DiVita  
Cover Design: Karin Marlett Choi  
Page Layout/Design: Karin Marlett Choi  
Cover illustration: Dana Weekley of [www.ninetomatoes.com](http://www.ninetomatoes.com)  
Copyright © 2007 by Dana Weekley

Published by:  
WME Books  
Windsor Media Enterprises, LLC  
Rochester, New York, USA

TrueType Font *Orient2*, used courtesy of **FreeFonts.com**

Available online at: **[www.WMEBooks.com](http://www.WMEBooks.com)**, as well as  
other booksellers and distributors worldwide.

**Special Sales:**

This and other WME Books titles are available at special discounts for bulk purchases, for use in sales promotions, or as premiums. Special editions, including personalized covers, excerpts of existing books, and corporate imprints, can be created in large quantities for special needs or projects.

For more information, please contact:  
Special Book Orders  
Windsor Media Enterprises, LLC  
282 Ballad Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14626  
1-877-947-BOOK (2665)  
[info@wmebooks.com](mailto:info@wmebooks.com)

This book is dedicated in loving memory to my parents:

Jane S. Reid  
Roseann B. Reid  
L. Leon Reid

*Amor aeternum*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**W**riting this book has been a labor of love, made all the more delightful by those who shared the journey with me. Many thanks to Andy Wibbels who provided the platform for a dozen or so aspiring authors to come together and write most intently, intensely, and ardently over a 45-day period.

Thank you to Verna Wilder, my first book editor, who told me the truth and to my current editor, Mary Ellen Whitaker, who made my text pop.

The folks at WME Books have been outstanding. I am so appreciative of Yvonne DiVita, my publisher and developing editor who believed in me, in my book, and most importantly, gave me the space to write — you are my messenger of Guan. I am grateful to Karin Marlett Choi for her inner inspired cover design and to Tom Collins and Karin for their page layout and design.

I've been blessed with a wonderful group of friends who supported me in fabulous ways during the writing of this book. To Jina Daigle and Linda Childs, who believe in the power of personal stories; to Robin Lipke for her expert psychological advice throughout this book; to Linda Franklin for her detailed proof reading; to the Ah-Ha Sisterhood whose spirit carried me forward.

Thank you to my colleagues, Carolyn Freeman for her fine-toothed proof reading of this book, to Carol McClelland who brainstormed with me and offered her been-there-done-that author perspective.

To Jordan Adler who walks the talk, to Jim Horan for his Zen inspiration, and to Susan Wiesner, Muzetta Swann, Max Wellspring, Sonya Baker, and BZ Riger for their reading. Special thanks to Susan Olson for her written-from-the-heart preface, and for giving me my first Abe tape.

Special thanks to the hundreds of clients who have shared their entrepreneurial journey with me. Your courage, conviction, and willingness to know your inner self, your Inner Samurai, formed the cornerstone of many of the ideas for this book. Your personal and business success greatly inspired me. Particular thanks to Dana Weekley for hearing the call and saying “yes.”

Finally, to my brother Larry for his attention to historical accuracy, and for knowing that *even Samurai need teddy bears.*



# *Table of Contents*

FOREWORD	xi
PREFACE	xv
INTRODUCTION	1
<b>PART I DEALING WITH CHANGE</b>	
<hr/>	
1 AND SO I BEGIN . . .	9
2 NOW WHAT?	31
3 THE SHIFT	45
4 TAO	57
<b>PART II THE ACCIDENTAL PREN-HER WAY</b>	
<hr/>	
5 DOING WHAT YOU LOVE MULTIPLE STREAMS OF PASSION	71
6 THE HERO'S JOURNEY A HEROINE'S APPROACH	95
7 THE STRENGTH OF INTUITION	117
<b>PART III DISCOVERING YOUR INNER SAMURAI</b>	
<hr/>	
8 WHAT IN THE HECK IS RESISTANCE? EFFORTLESS ACTION AND THE INNER SAMURAI	141
9 THE ART OF GOAL SETTING	159
10 SCAPEGOATS EXTRAORDINAIRE: TIME AND MONEY	185
11 CONNECT TO GIVE, NOT CONNECT TO GET	207
12 HOME ALONE: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ISOLATION AND SOLITUDE	227
13 SCHEDULING CHAOS	247
14 THE SECRET TO YOUR BUSINESS SUCCESS	263
RESOURCES	275
A NOTE FROM THE ILLUSTRATOR	277
NOTES	279
INDEX	283



## *Foreword*

---



*Get ready for the cheese to move — smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old.*

—Spencer Johnson, MD

*How many cares one loses when one decides not to be something, but to be someone.*

—Coco Chanel

**Y**ou're going to love this book — I did! I have known Susan nearly 20 years and, as a friend and avid choral music lover, have joyfully connected with the wonderful personal and professional journey of this talented, intelligent, innovative, competent, funny, open-minded, caring, often “out of the box,” and lovely spirit.

Susan is known as a loyal friend; you can trust her. This book is Susan; you can trust it. You will likely want to keep it by your bedside — and in your office. It will lead you with essential truths that pull you forward while winding back through your own unique self, your Inner Samurai, as Susan names it, happily teaching you to feel safe in its guidance.

*Discovering Your Inner Samurai* will encourage and excite you, while keeping you focused and grounded. She will tell you her story, always with that touch of “Susan humor,” and the inspiring stories of those she has helped; she will ask you questions about yourself, the answers to which she already knows because she’s been there, done that, and moved on.

Through my profession as a psychologist, I’ve seen women struggle with fears and doubts that have kept them from exploring their potentials and living their dreams. In this complicated era of information overload and high expectations, women often feel confused and overwhelmed attempting to spin too many plates on too many poles, coping but not really living. They need encouragement and simplicity to see through the fog.

You may be one of these women, a woman who wants to fulfill that entrepreneur dream whether it is big or small, and do it effortlessly. Look no further; I urge you to begin here with *Discovering Your Inner Samurai*. It is an important book whose yoke is light. The secrets of *The Secret* are available for you as Susan teaches you how to give your dream the clarity of being both grand and specific. Susan takes the fear out, takes the “shoulds” and “shouldn’ts” out. She knows you are “The Little Engine That Could” and how to help you gain the confidence to create your “can-do.” And she does it in the best and highest way — from the inside out.

How delicious to find that you can learn to think your passion into success and simply “know” the next logical step — always. You can even reframe the “dreaded” networking and sales into fun ways

of connecting. You are a woman; Susan says you're already good at it.

Here you will find your dreams without confining bars; they're planted in the soil of embracing your personal freedom. You will think and feel differently. You will find change purposeful and exciting rather than frightening. You will leave resistance behind and embrace yourself and your ideas with an open heart. You will become aware.

You will live your life from another place; you will honor yourself and your journey and you will own it. You will know the presence within you and you will become acquainted with your creative spirit.

Susan is giving you this book from her own Inner Samurai; it is yours from her personal self, and it is a beautiful gift. It speaks from her knowledge, her experience, her wisdom, and her success. It points the way to yours. It's a book you will read, remember, and use happily until its pages are tattered, because it is about you recreating you, maybe many times, and lovin' it!

Susan Olson, PhD  
Tacoma, WA



Reid

*Discovering Your Inner Samurai:  
The Entrepreneurial Woman's Journey to Business Success*

---

## *Preface*

---



*To see a world in a grain of sand, and heaven in  
a wildflower, hold infinity in the palm of your  
hand, and eternity in an hour.*

— William Blake

**T**he story you are about to read is my story. It's the chronicle of my journey from Accidental Pren-her™ to entrepreneurial woman.

However, I do not stand alone in its rendering; neither do I stand alone in its experience. My story is your story. Just as sure as your story is mine. In each chapter, on each page, will be stories and experiences you will recognize. On each page, in every paragraph, will be joys and sorrows that you will call your own. And within each paragraph will be words and phrases you will resonate with that you will swear you penned yourself.

This book is about discovering the Inner Samurai that all women carry deep within, at the center of our being. Our Inner Samurais are the repository of all our life experiences, alchemized from lead into pure gold. A woman's Inner Samurai is her place of absolute knowing and personal power. It is the seat

of her wisdom and inner strength. It is also the place of her extraordinary uniqueness.

The journey to discovering your Inner Samurai is the connective thread that unites us all.

## **FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON**

Whenever the unexpected lands in your path, it is always a stepping-stone to where you intend to go. Train wrecks are just trains changing tracks, and there is a reason and perfection for everything.

I first came to know this when I was a young child. My mother was diagnosed with cancer when I was three-and-a-half (you know, the “and-a-half” is important at that age). I remember exactly when I knew this, though I’m not sure I was actually ever told. I see it in my three-and-a-half-year-old eyes every time I look at a particular photo taken by my dad. It’s of my Grandmother Stewart, my mom and me. We were in Cape May, New Jersey — a place we often went on vacation. My grandmother is wearing a stylish dark blue hat with the mesh visor tucked carefully into the fold. She is standing slightly behind and to the left of my mother. My mom has on a fashionable short-sleeved dress, her long arms resting lightly on the boardwalk railing, her fingers casually intertwined. I am on my mom’s left in front of my grandmother. I am wearing black patent-leather shoes with white lace anklets and a dress with delicate purple flowers on it and a wide purple sash. I am gripping the second railing, lower down, with both hands.

What unites us is the look on our faces. We are all dour. Not one of us is smiling. My three-and-a-half-year-old eyes look serious. It’s as if a great knowing

---

was in them. Every time I look at that picture, the same involuntary expression comes to mind, and I think to myself, “You knew, didn’t you?” Yes, I did know, and my mom getting sicker and sicker as the cancer spread throughout her lymph system confirmed my knowing. This was my first brush with unexpected occurrences.

We had a housekeeper during that time, Mrs. McMillan. She lived with us during the week and went home on weekends. As my mom’s health declined, Mrs. McMillan began taking care of me more and more. While my dad was at work, Mrs. McMillan and I would fold clothes, read stories, and do nice things for my mom together. One day, we were outside scouting in our autumn flower garden for some blue hydrangeas. I was quite set about picking blue hydrangeas for my mom’s bedside table because that was my mother’s favorite flower.

Of course, being so late in the season, the blue hydrangeas by the side of the house were all gone. Undaunted, I made us search all the flower beds for blooming blue hydrangeas, telling Mrs. McMillan, “I’m sure there is one alive somewhere!” We could not find even one, and I could not be persuaded to substitute the rich yellow and maroon hardy mums for the blue hydrangeas. That’s when Mrs. McMillan turned to me and said, “You know, Susan, there is a time and season for everything.” I stopped, dead in my tracks, looking angrily up at her. She lovingly held my gaze. She looked sad. I felt my throat tighten with tears. I slowly unfolded my hand, releasing the few dried hydrangeas I’d been able to find. I said, “I know.” Then the child who was soon to experience the first major loss of her life quickly turned and ran to the house, into her mother’s arms, sobbing.

My mom died a couple weeks later. At her funeral, I heard, for the first time, the scripture verse associated with Mrs. McMillan's words. "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the sun. A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted,"<sup>1</sup> and on it goes. From those words sprung great knowing in my young five-year-old heart — as well as in my old soul.

## DEAR GOD

It took me a long time to cope with the loss of my mother. It took me even longer to gain perspective and insight about her death. Within a year after my mom's passing, my dad remarried. His new wife was someone I grew to love and who loved me fully as her daughter. Still, I suffered from self-worth and abandonment issues. I was angry with God for taking my mom, and even angrier with my new mom for taking her place. There was no outlet for that anger, so I turned it inward, becoming sullen and withdrawn. Then one day when I was seven, while doing homework at my desk in my playroom, I whipped out a sheet of paper and started writing a letter to God.

"Dear God," I began. "I am thankful for you sending me a new mommy but, what I really want to know is why you had to take my mom to be with you in heaven. Don't you have enough people there with you already?" I continued by extolling all of her many favorable qualities and the reasons why I needed her more than God did. I went on for two pages in careful cursive writing — I wanted God to be able to read every word I had written — and

ended with “Sincerely, Susan Lee Reid.” (The Lee part was important because I wanted God to know which Susan Reid was asking). Now that the letter was finished, I didn’t know what to do with it. Obviously, there was nowhere to send it. No one to give it to. Therefore, I stuffed it in my secret cubbyhole above my desk, waiting for God to find the letter.

Each day when I did my homework, I would take out that letter and look at it. Sometimes I would erase a word, add a word, and change a phrase around. Soon, my letter became quite smudged and hard to read. So, I wrote another one, careful to copy exactly what I had written from the first one. Now I had two letters addressed to God that were secretly squirreled away . . . waiting.

Months went by, and the collection of letters had grown to six. I stopped writing in pencil at draft number four. I thought ink was more formal and professional looking. I wanted God to know that my asking was in earnest, and that I was sincere. Then, it occurred to me that God might not know where my letter was, since it was hidden away in a special place. Therefore, at the end of my prayers each night, I began tacking on a p.s.: “God, the letter that I wrote to you is downstairs above my desk in the secret drawer.” Still, nothing happened.

Before long, I was leaving the secret drawer open, just a little, to make things easier for God. Don’t get me wrong; I understood God to be all-powerful and all-mighty. It was just that the letter was, after all, squirreled away in a *secret hiding place*. I thought God might need a little help finding it. Six more months went by. I was coming up on my eighth birthday

when I got the bright idea to put a yellow smiley face on the drawer. I let God know: "God, the letter is in the secret drawer above my desk with a yellow smiley face on it." And lo and behold . . . it finally worked! One day, I found a response, written carefully with a black fountain pen:

Susie Q, giving birth to you was your mother's greatest joy. She was never happier than when holding you in her arms, rocking you to sleep, and watching you explore the world around you. She was very sad to leave you, though hasn't gone far away. She is near and always will be with you. You are loved, doubly much, because you now have two moms: One in heaven to watch over you like a guardian angel, and the other one to guide and nurture you here on earth.

The collection of letters to God was gone, and in their place was this letter from my dad. Much better than any answer to the question, "Why did you have to take my mom to live with you in heaven," came the response that I was loved — doubly loved! My dad looked past the pain and hurt of a confused and still grieving child to answer the real question beneath. This unexpected response, from God's messenger, taught me a valuable lesson: It's not the answers to the questions that are important. What matters is that we allow our inner knowing to enter every situation. Ask the questions, sure! Then, be open to the real — sometimes unexpected — answers. Letting go of the need to know gives rise to something greater coming from within.

May your inner journey bring you great insight, delight, and knowing. And, when you've come to a place on your path where you can sit down, rest, and

enjoy the view, write and tell me all about it. I'll be waiting to hear from you. After all, your journey and mine are one and the same.



Reid

*Discovering Your Inner Samurai:  
The Entrepreneurial Woman's Journey to Business Success*

---

## *Introduction*

---



*Begin doing what you want to do now. We  
have only this moment, sparkling like a star  
in our hand — and melting like a snowflake.*

— Marie Beynon Ray

**T**his book was a year in the writing and three years in the making. Its humble beginnings were in the spiritual awakening that I had in June of 2004, though I did not know at that time, that that event would be the catalyst for the beginning of this book. From then until now, this book and what you are about to read has survived and been enriched by the passing of both my parents, the ending of several significant relationships, the selling of my family home, the settling of two estates, three years of change, two years of grief, the starting of two businesses, a career shift, one massive re-write . . . and a partridge in a pear tree.

In short, this book has survived and been made better by the alchemical transformation that has occurred within me. As a result of both inner and

outward forces that have come to bear in and on my life, I have been changed. I hope you, too, will be changed when you read about my journey and countless others from Accidental Pren-her to entrepreneurial woman.

As you read this book, it is likely that you will laugh, cry, smile, nod, and resonate with the experiences of my clients, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances (whose names and other identifying markers have been changed to honor their privacy). You might even feel angry or frustrated with some of them. In most cases, though, your heart will go out to them. You will admire their courage and reach out to support them as they face their fears.

"Mi viaje es tu viaje" are the words I use to describe this book. "Mi viaje es tu viaje" means "My journey is your journey." This is what you will come to know when you read this book. We are on this journey and in this journey together.

## **ACCIDENTAL PREN-HER**

There are two things you need to know at the start of our journey. The first is this: The underlying philosophy of this book is that there are no accidents. *Everything that happens in your life happens for a reason, for your higher good and greater well-being, even if you don't recognize it as such at the time. Consequently, every supposed accident is considered an "accident by design."*

The second thing you need to know is that I like to make up words. For instance, I playfully add endings to existing words, such as "womaning" to

explain the unique way that women get to know each other. You will also notice that I combine words to make completely new meanings.

Two terms in particular, *Accidental Pren-her* and *Inner Samurai*, are terms I have made up for this book. You won't find them anywhere else (except on my website, [www.Alkamae.com](http://www.Alkamae.com), and blog, [www.susanreid.typepad.com](http://www.susanreid.typepad.com)). I coined these terms because there were no other words to describe what I wanted to convey. Understanding them will make your reading all the more meaningful.

An Accidental Pren-her is a woman who finds herself starting up a business, perhaps for the very first time. She probably has had no, or very little, experience starting up a business, though she may have exhibited early entrepreneurial leanings as a child. It is most likely that she has a dream — something she has been thinking about for a very long time — although she has taken no significant action to foster that dream's development.

The “accidental” part comes in because most women, when faced with starting up a business for the very first time, say that they never anticipated doing so. They may have been happily working in corporate, academic, or other traditional workplaces for most of their adult lives until something happened. What happened? Some kind of activating event — something big enough that it required them to view life differently from that point on.

For some, they were downsized. For others, they lost their job by getting laid off or fired. Still others decided they wanted more out of life than working for a paycheck, so they quit. Sometimes the activating event was getting married, becoming a

mother, or children growing up and leaving home. The loss of a parent or other loved one caused some women to rethink life. Other activating events include divorce, near fatal accidents, recovery from a serious illness, and, as was the case for me, spiritual awakenings.

Whatever the activating event, all Accidental Pren-hers share a common theme: They know that something unexpected has happened to them and that this event is now shaping who they are and what they do.

## INNER SAMURAI

The next term I made up is *Inner Samurai*. This term is best defined by describing its opposite. Throughout this book, I use two phrases: *the voice inside your head* **and** *your inner voice*. These mean two very different things. The voice inside your head, for most people, is your most dominant voice, the voice that keeps up a steady chatter almost all the time. Often you are not even aware of it. Other times, it keeps you from getting any sleep. This is the voice of the mind, of the ego. It is ever focused on the past or the future. It is never focused in the present.

The opposite of that is your inner voice. Your inner voice is the voice within. Your inner voice, for most, is your secondary voice. (This book, though, will teach you ways to change that around). It is a quiet, sure voice. It is focused only in the present, and never on the past or future. Its place, power, and relevance are in the now.

Known by many names, it has been called the voice within, the inner knower, God Self, Soul,

God Within, and Spirit, to name a few. When I was younger, I used to call it “my still small voice.” Then, when I was in my 30s, “the voice within.” In my 40s, it became “my inner knower,” and now it is “my Inner Samurai.”

I began calling it my Inner Samurai when I realized how strong, vast, and powerful my inner voice is. *Inner* because the voice is deep within my being (to distinguish it from the voice inside my head) and *Samurai* because of how strong and powerful it is. Inner Samurais can move mountains, leap over tall buildings in a single bound, and stop charging wildebeests in their tracks. One of my clients calls her Inner Samurai her Inner Super Woman. I like that!

No matter what you call it, everyone has an inner voice. It is that part of you that is the repository of all your life experiences and all your hopes and dreams. Alchemized over the years from lead into pure gold, your Inner Samurai is your greatest source of strength and knowing. It is the seat of your wisdom. It is also the place of your extraordinary uniqueness.

The interesting thing about your Inner Samurai is that it speaks to you. Well, maybe not speaks. “Pulses” is a better word. Your Inner Samurai has a gentle, yet very recognizable, way of communicating with you. I like to call it “pulsing.” When you go inward and ask your Inner Samurai a question, you will feel a “pulse” answering you. This pulse will have one of two distinct qualities. It will feel like either a *yes* or a *no*.

## **DISCOVERING YOUR INNER SAMURAI**

This book is about discovering your Inner Samurai. It was written for the purpose of helping you as an entrepreneurial woman connect to your inner journey. It was written to empower you with the strength you will need to be successful in building a business. It was written to inspire you with helpful, practical, and relevant tips to make it easier to do so. Since I see no reason to reinvent the wheel, I have provided pointers along the way, directing you away from what to avoid, and accelerators pointing you toward what you can do to enhance your success.

This book serves as a guide to those wanting to build a different kind of business — a business from the inside out. From a place inside you that you as a woman intuitively know and understand. From your Inner Samurai place.

If you are an entrepreneurial woman committed to doing work that is meaningful and important, this book is for you. If you see your work as a mission, service, or calling, the stories in this book will inspire you. If you are someone who is highly ethical, service-oriented, and relationship-focused, you are going to find great value in this book.

If financial comfort is important to you and quality of life even more important, then this book is right up your alley. If your goal is to help other people transform their lives and make a difference in the world, then read on.

Mi viaje es tu viaje.

*Part I*



*Dealing with  
Change*



## Chapter 7

### AND SO I BEGIN . . .

*The two important things I did learn were that you are as powerful and strong as you allow yourself to be, and that the most difficult part of any endeavor is taking the first step, making the first decision.*

— Robyn Davidson

**O**n June 29, 2004, I finally did it. I handed in my resignation as associate professor of music and Director of Choral Activities at James Madison University and began packing up the formidable accumulation of books, music, and files from four educational degrees and 24 years of academic life. Distilled onto one little piece of paper that began with the words “Kindly accept my resignation,” and ending with “Sincerely,” my former life was over.

My new life as an Accidental Pren-her had begun. "Accidental" because I didn't anticipate it happening, and "pren-her" because I always knew I had it in me to be an entrepreneurial woman. In truth, it was an accident by design, though I could not see that at the time.

### **YIKES! WHAT THE HELL WAS I THINKING?**

I bet you have had that thought once or twice in your life, haven't you? Perhaps you've struggled with a decision, going back and forth over what to do a thousand times. Then, the minute you make up your mind — whoosh! The horse is out of the gate and pounding toward the finish line, with you just trying to stay seated, wondering "What the hell just happened?"

Or, you finally make up your mind that you want to do something — and nothing, absolutely nothing, happens. In fact, nothing does happen for a very long time (or at least it appears nothing is happening). Then, just about the time you've almost forgotten about it — whoosh! There you are again, having the ride of your life barreling down the track, horse kicking up dirt as you charge to the finish line shouting "Whoo-hoo!"

Well, that was how I felt that morning as I opened my briefcase, took out my leather embossed notebook folio and slid my resignation letter across the desk to the Dean. I was on my horse, and we were leaving the gate. My hands were shaking, my palms were damp, and I barely trusted my voice to speak. After thanking him for the opportunity to work with such wonderful students, "best wishes," and a round of handshakes, I walked out into the

warm Virginia sunlight feeling dazed, light-headed, and — strangely enough — right as rain.

As I stood there beside my car looking back at what had been my professional home for the past four years, I could hear the beginning grumble of the all-too-familiar voice inside my head criticizing: “Now, look what you’ve gone and done.” It rose steadily in volume and intensity the farther I drove away from campus until it was actually barking orders: “Wait! No! Stop! Go Back!”

I had done the unthinkable. I had resigned with no job lined up to go to and only a vague idea of what I was going to do next.

“Let’s take a moment to rethink all this, Susan,” the voice inside my head cajoled, taking another tack.

Then, just as quickly as it came, that voice was silenced. In the blessed space of that silence, I could hear my calm, inner voice — the voice I call my Inner Samurai — pulse *yes*, followed by a warm, calming, radiating flood of love. (The Inner Samurai has a gentle, yet very recognizable, way of communicating. I like to call it “pulsing.” When you go inward and ask your Inner Samurai a question, you will feel a “pulse” answering you. This pulse will have one of two distinct qualities. It will feel like either a *yes* or a *no*.)

Becoming a pre-her seemed, in retrospect, the most natural thing for me to do. However, the trek from resigning from a prestigious academic post to starting my own successful small business turned out to be fraught with more “start-up woes” than “start-up goes.”

## **HAPPINESS IS AN INSIDE JOB**

While at first I felt euphoric because I'd been liberated from corporate academia, I was soon slammed by the twin emotions of panic and fear. Since I had always been a full-time, traditionally employed woman, finding myself out of a job with no idea what I would do next was bloody overwhelming. I couldn't tell from one day to the next whether I was going to wake up feeling exhilarated at being free to do, be, and have whatever I wanted, or shocked by disbelief as the reality of what I had done began to sink in. Most of the time, I felt 98% excited and 2% scared.

Or was it 2% excitement and 98% scared? From one moment to the next it could change. That's what makes the process of becoming a pre-her so incredibly intense.

In truth, the act of following my Inner Samurai was not a new experience. I had been listening to her and following her all my life. When I was younger, I used to call her "my still small voice." Then, when I was in my 30s, "the voice within." In my 40s, it became "my inner knower," and now it is "my Inner Samurai." They all mean the same thing. I have heard others call their deep inner knowing God Self, Soul, God Within, and Spirit. No matter what we call it, we all have that voice of inner knowing.

That voice became my Inner Samurai when I realized how strong, vast and powerful my inner voice was. My Inner Samurai could move mountains, leap over tall buildings with a single bound, and stop charging wildebeests in their tracks. One of my clients calls her Inner Samurai her Inner Super Woman. It's all the same.

After my resignation, tapping into my Inner Samurai helped me know just what to do next. I needed to move in the general direction of what I wanted — I needed to feel for that pulse.

What was it that I wanted? I wanted to be happy.

My decision to leave academia was a step in that direction. Certainly, there was much raging, fear and doubting from the voice inside my head (a voice which, as we'll explore later, is very different from the knowing voice of the Inner Samurai). Still, I knew the step I had taken was the right step for me. I knew it because all the other times I'd listened to my Inner Samurai and done something apparently crazy (by all outward reckoning), it had all turned out better than expected. In fact, it had turned out perfectly.

*Yes!* my Inner Samurai pulsed as the feeling of love bathed me from within.

## **COURAGE: THE ANTI-DRUG**

Perhaps you've heard of Ambrose Hollingworth Redmoon. No? Well, he was the one who penned the popular quote: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." Does that ring a bell? What I discovered when I researched him was that this quote is only the first line of a much larger quote that he "wrote" as a paraplegic from the confines of a wheelchair.

Born in 1933 in Painesville, Ohio, as James Neil Hollingworth, Ambrose was a beatnik, hippie, and former manager of legendary rock band Quicksilver Messenger Service. At the age of 33, he was in a near-fatal car accident that left him confined to a

wheelchair, dependent on the care of others. With his former life gone, he turned to writing. Though he struggled to get his writings published and was little known beyond a relatively small circle of mystic followers, Redmoon kept writing until he passed away in 1996. Five years before his death he wrote an article for the fall issue of *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions*. In it, he gives the entire quote:

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than one's fear. The timid presume it is lack of fear that allows the brave to act when the timid do not. But to take action when one is not afraid is easy. To refrain when afraid is also easy. To take action regardless of fear is brave.<sup>1</sup>

We all know of times when, in the midst of abject fear, people perform courageous acts. We've all read the stories of a mother whose son was trapped underneath an overturned tractor. Desperate, and focused only on saving her son's life, she lifted the heavy farm tractor with one hand while rescuing her son with the other. Urban myth? On the contrary, these things happen all the time.

You and I both know what fear feels like. We know how debilitating it is, how it can stop us in our tracks, and how it can make us run away. The courage I am talking about — the courage a mother has when her child needs her — has to do with making the decision that something else is more important than fear. In the case of the mother rescuing her child, it was a matter of her

taking action *beyond the reach* of fear by moving in the direction of what she wanted. It wasn't about ignoring her fear. It was about choosing something greater.

In my case, I was choosing happiness. And my first step, after breaking the news to my parents, was to leave the ivory tower — resigning from my academic post took courage. Staying would have been giving in to fear. Giving in to fear would have meant that I had chosen to live a life of complacency, and living that kind of life was no kind of life for me. So, with the voice inside my head raging on and totally freaking out, I moved my hand out *beyond the reach* of fear and grabbed the hand of happiness.

On one level, resigning from academia seemed absolutely nuts. On the other hand, knowing what I know now, it was perfectly natural. However, it was one of the hardest decisions of my life. Still, it was the single most important decision I made in 2004. It meant that I was leaving behind two choirs of wonderful musicians whom I adored and thoroughly enjoyed making music with, as well as a handpicked group of graduate choral conducting students who were bright, fun, and talented. It meant leaving behind the world of academia I had known since I was a child to reach *beyond the reach* of fear for something more.

## **LINEAGE OF THE IVORY TOWER**

I come from a long line of professors. The world of academia and teaching is in my blood. My great-grandfather, Dr. Reid T. Stewart, was a professor of engineering at the University of

Pittsburgh. Among other things, he was interested in steel and was a well-known engineering authority of the time. I was born at the University of Virginia while my father was Chairman of the Departments of Counseling and Guidance. My Momacita (my dad's second wife and my "second mother" who raised me from age six onward), had been an assistant professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dad and Momacita used to tell a cute story of how they first met. Though they had been aware of each other in faculty meetings for quite some time, they had not been formally introduced. Because of their difference in rank and being from separate departments, opportunity had not presented itself for their meeting. Dad was a full professor and Coordinator of the Rehabilitation Counselor Training Program, and Momacita was a new faculty member and assistant professor in the Education Department. One day, while Momacita was walking in and Dad was walking out through the revolving doors of the Cathedral of Learning, their eyes met. "Hello, Dr. Reid," my soon-to-be new mom said as they entered the turn-style. "Hello, Dr. Bernardo," my dad politely replied upon his exit. Intrigued, Momacita soon arranged for him to be invited to dinner at the home of a mutual friend. The rest, as they say, is history.

Family life revolved around the University of Pittsburgh. I have many fond memories of taking the bus after school to Pitt to draw on the blackboards or do my homework in the "grown-up" desks with seats attached. To amuse myself until my parents came to collect me, I would go to the board with a piece of chalk in my hand, pretending

I was a professor teaching a whole classroom of students how to add, subtract, and write in cursive. Sometimes, I was even invited to sit in the back of the room when my parents were lecturing. Enthralled by the professor-student interactions, I was held captive by the debates, the discussions, and the discourse. I loved it!

When I was a little older, I became quite interested in swimming. In addition to taking swim classes at the downtown Pittsburgh YMCA, I also took lessons at Indiana University of Pennsylvania's indoor pool while my dad taught Saturday classes. I took my Basic Water Safety course and Canoe Instructor classes there. Diving to the bottom of the pool to rescue 10-pound bricks and bailing out canoes filled with water was all a part of going to school with Dad. During the summers, when my parents were both visiting professors at the University of Mississippi, I mastered butterfly and flip turns in Ole Miss's outdoor pool in between going to *Planet of the Apes* movies.

All of this left its imprint upon me. Education and learning were an important part of the Reid family lifestyle. They still are. So when I left academia, it seemed quite an unanticipated and surprising move to most people. Some expressed their concern, saying "You know, Susan, maybe you just need some time off. Take a sabbatical." Others were speechless that I would leave a perfectly good job without first securing another post. Then, there were those who thought what I was doing was great and cheered me on, saying "I so wish I had the guts to do what you are doing!" Or, "If I were ten years younger, I would do the same!" The comments that

meant the most to me were from those who had done the same thing I was doing and had come out the other side in one piece. They were the first ones to sagely counsel "Susan, life is too short to waste on being unhappy. Follow your heart and be true to you." Thank you!

### **WHAT'S BEHIND CURTAIN NUMBER ONE, MONTY?**

So here it was — the summer of 2004. I had had a spiritual awakening (more on that later on), had resigned from my academic position, didn't particularly have much of an idea what I was going to do, and didn't know where I was going. Wow, how many of you have felt like that? If you are reading this book, I bet you know exactly what I am talking about!

What did you do to help yourself when you faced a similarly confusing and uncertain time? Did you look to family and friends for help? Many of us do. Did you seek solace in shopping, drinking, or other activities? Perhaps you went into action and immediately shot out your killer résumé or curriculum vitae and started making calls, searching for leads. Or did you do what I did? Did you immediately look for some Divine interaction?

If you are like me, and I suspect you are (if the title of this book is one of the reasons you are reading), then you, too, have probably looked for signs from the Divine. Being the modern girl that I am, I wasn't looking for a burning bush. I figured a Divine fax or memo would do just fine.

I cannot tell you how many times during the day I would say aloud, “Anytime now, God. Send me a sign. Show me what to do next!” Partly said in jest, mostly said in earnest, I *was* looking for a sign.

This is about as good a time as any to say that, when I use the word “God” throughout this book, I do mean God, though not in the traditional meaning of the word. I consider God to be within me, not the old man in white robes with a long white beard keeping track of all my rights and wrongs. That was the God of my Presbyterian upbringing.

The God I’m talking about in this book has neither gender, name, nor form. The closest term that expresses its meaning is “Ein Sof,” a Kabalistic term meaning “without end,” denoting “boundlessness.”

As you read this book, you will see me use various words or phrases meaning God. Please feel free to substitute any other word or phrase, such as Source, Universe, Spirit, the Infinite, the Divine, Universal Thought, All That Is — whatever would be meaningful to you. Additionally, my use of the word God is not, in any way, to be misconstrued to mean the exclusion of Allah, Buddha, or anyone or anything that is representational of an All-Knowing Presence.

Getting back to the story — not only did I talk to God when I was alone, I also cracked up my friends with statements such as, “Maybe there’s something wrong with my fax line.” Or (and this was one of my favorite lines), “By any chance, did God give you a memo today for me?” Though everyone chuckled when I’d say such things, I could tell that they understood what I meant because they, too, were secretly wishing for a fax or memo from God.

Soon, I was desperate. I expanded my request to include messages ranging from carrier pigeons to angelic beings. I wasn't picky. I was even willing to go to some effort to obtain this message, and would gladly have climbed to the top of a mount for some tablets! All I wanted was a sign. "Just send me a sign!"

God, I am sure, was amused.

Then one day, while I was despondently watching an episode of *The West Wing*, I got my memo. The character "Father Cavanaugh," played by Karl Malden, was telling an allegory I had heard many times before. Perhaps you've heard it, too. There, before my eyes, my Divine memo was delivered through a TV program:

You know, you remind me of the man that lived by the river. He heard a radio report that the river was going to rush up and flood the town and that all the residents should evacuate their homes. But the man said 'I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me.' The waters rose up. A guy in a row boat came along and he shouted 'Hey, hey you! You in there. The town is flooding. Let me take you to safety.' But the man shouted back 'I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me.' A helicopter was hovering overhead. And a guy with a megaphone shouted 'Hey you, you down there. The town is flooding. Let me drop this ladder and I'll take you to safety.' But the man shouted back that he was religious, that he prayed, that God loved him and that God will take him to safety. Well . . . the man drowned. And standing at the gates of St. Peter, he demanded an audience with God. 'Lord,' he said, 'I'm a religious man, I pray. I thought you

loved me. Why did this happen?’ God said ‘I sent you a radio report, a guy in a rowboat, and a helicopter. What the hell are you doing here?’<sup>2</sup>

Everyone on the show laughed. But not me. I was dumbstruck. For months I had been asking for a sign. For months nothing had happened. Then — whoosh! In the space of the time it took for Father Cavanaugh to tell the story, I had gone from 0-200 miles per hour. With my body pressed against the back of the seat, hair flying everywhere, and a grin a mile wide across my face, I knew for sure that I had received my sign. Though not exactly as I had imagined it, it sure was a prime-time message — all pun intended.

While I was vegging-out in front of the TV with less than anything going on in my life, I got my memo. Not only did I get my sign, I was also slammed with full realization. Even though I couldn’t see evidence with my physical eyes that God had been listening or that there was anything being done upon my behalf, there had been lots going on behind the scenes. When I had thought nothing was happening, it was just an illusion. There had been many things happening behind the scenes. And with that realization, I felt my Inner Samurai pulse *yes*.

## THE UNCERTAIN CERTAINTY OF IT ALL

One morning, not long after my *West Wing* experience, I decided to revisit the day of my spiritual awakening, this time with notebook and pen in hand. I was interested in recording what happened that day and putting my experience into words. I began by using a four-line gata I had heard

Vietnamese monk, Thich Naht Hahn, instruct his students to use when preparing for meditation:

Breathing in I calm my body and mind.  
Breathing out I smile.  
Dwelling in the present moment;  
I know this is the only moment.

As I settled into my body while focusing on my breath, I felt my body and mind become calm as a serene smile curled the edges of my mouth. I remembered that, on the day of my spiritual awakening, I had been deeply meditating on the oneness of all when — whoosh! My mental state suddenly shifted. One minute I was focused on oneness, and the next, expansiveness. Without preamble or forewarning, my mind spontaneously and instantaneously broke open with a vastness and expansiveness brand new to me. Time stopped. I had no awareness of my body. I was beyond space and time.

Soon, though, something came into view. In my mind's eye, I saw two thick, coliseum-like white pillars reaching up and down as far as I could see. They reminded me of the Doric columns of the Parthenon in Athens, with the capital made of a circle topped by a square.

I remember the first time I visited the Parthenon many years ago. I had been captivated by the strength and beauty of those magnificent columns. That's how I felt as I saw the columns this time, in my mind's eye. Though the columns were quite some distance apart, I could see that there was someone holding each one up. Holding the two pillars in place

were two magnificent beings — archangels. They were tall and robust, like Rubens' archangels. Both were bathed in and radiating light. Where they started and the columns ended, I could not tell. They looked right at me, glowing with great love.

While I watched, the archangel columns began positioning themselves on either side of me. Then, coming closer and closer together until the archangels and the columns were inches away from me and the light had increased to such intensity that I thought I would either be squished or obliterated, we merged into one. I was the columns, I was the angelic beings, and I was me, all merged as one. Separation no longer existed. With that realization, my mind exploded outward with a sound and force very much like a sonic boom. Particles of me shot out everywhere, connecting me to everything, everywhere. In truth, I *was* everything, everywhere.

This was my first direct experience with oneness of being, and still, to this day, I have trouble finding the words to adequately describe my experience. Yet, what remained was simpler to explain — the idea that separation is an illusion. Oneness is. All is well and unfolding exactly as it is meant to be. This depth of knowing was so profound my body spilled over in joy. My heart felt so big I thought it would burst right out of my chest. Tears flowed freely down my face as laughter bubbled to the surface. I was bathed in a depth of love and light that was at once familiar and new. Suspended in a state of awareness, I sat in meditation that day for four hours, though it seemed no more than 15 minutes.

For about a week, I remained in this state of blissful awareness. Though I was in body, I knew

I was more than body. The veil between here and there was non-existent. I was living in both places at once. I was both here and there. The veil separating the two was gone. Here and there were one and I freely inhabited both at the same time.

As a result, I felt bigger. In all, I felt 18 feet tall and 12 feet wide. When I looked down, it seemed like my feet were floating about 12 inches above the ground, though when I walked I could feel my feet roll like they always did from heel to toe with each step. When I walked through doorways I instinctively ducked, thinking I was taller than I was. Then, I'd immediately laugh at myself for doing so. My favorite room of my home at this time was my office — the only room in the house with vaulted cathedral ceilings. One of the more amusing moments during this time was thinking as I was getting ready for bed that I'd never be able to fit into my nightshirt because I felt so big!

During this week, I noticed things around me had become richer, fuller, and greatly enhanced. Colors were more vivid. Smells were more piquant. My hearing, always very acute, became even more so. Touch fascinated me. I was enthralled with the energy exchange that occurred when I reached out to touch someone or something. Whenever I got within 12 to 18 inches of what I wanted to touch, two things happened. The first thing was that I could see my energy extending outward like tendrils from my hand toward that which I was intending to touch. The second thing was that what I intended to touch reached back, extending the same kind of wispy energy in the direction of my hand.

I was so fascinated by this exchange of energy that I played with it, totally absorbed, for hours at a time. I could do this with anything, though I found nature and animals the most actively responsive. The energy that danced in the space between my actual physical hand and the thing I intended to touch was alive with color, intensity, and pulsating life. Witnessing this, I remember thinking, "This must be how Jesus healed the sick and caused the lame to walk. He commingled with the energy, affecting the intended result in the space between the actual touch." It was all about the energy!

Well, it didn't take me long to focus my energetic touch in the direction of my sweet cat, Passion. Passion loved to be touched and was a very willing subject for my energetic explorations. As I reached toward her, she reached back. So, too, when she wanted to be touched or otherwise get my attention, she would first reach out to me energetically before she meowed or rubbed against my leg. First the energy, then the touch. First the energetic reaching out, then a physical reaching out would follow. It was all so natural.

The next thing I noticed was that once an energetic encounter was made, energies commingled to test the waters, so to speak. An energetic decision was being made. Sometimes the energies would increase in intensity, strengthening in preparation for physical touch. Other times one or both energies would touch and then recede back to each side. Often, Passion would respond with great enthusiasm when I reached out to pet her, her energetic tendrils leaping enthusiastically toward mine. By contrast,

the energy of a bird she was stalking would recede quickly, soon after the first wisp of energy exchange.

## **ENERGETICALLY PEACEFUL**

I was curious to see if I could observe this interaction between people. Therefore, I went people-watching at a park near my home. Sitting comfortably on a park bench, I looked around. Across from me, I spied a lovely young woman enjoying the day, reading a book. She had placed a slightly crumpled brown paper bag on the bench to her left and was absently picking up and biting into an apple, presumably leftover from lunch. After biting, she'd put the apple back down again, chewing contentedly until something she was reading caught her attention. Then she'd pause, mid-chew, to concentrate. Energetically, she looked peaceful. Physically, she looked relaxed and fully engaged in her reading, rarely looking up to glance about.

Then along came a nice-looking young man. (You knew this part was coming, didn't you?) He spotted and took an immediate interest in the young woman. With one quick glance to the right and another to the left, he sat down on the left side of her bench. The woman didn't look up. The man, by contrast, was openly checking her out. I could see the energy around him amping up, getting ready to expand, but their energy had not yet made contact, so she gave him no notice.

Next, he opened his backpack, pulled out a sketchbook and a pencil, and began sharpening the tip with a great display of activity. He stole a few surreptitious looks at his bench mate to see whether

she had taken any notice of him and soon settled into position. With his body turned in her direction, focusing his gaze slightly ahead of and to the left of her, he began to sketch.

I was fascinated. Neither paid me any attention. But, watching their energetic and physical interaction was mesmerizing. She, fully absorbed in her book, and he, fully absorbed in her — though pretending to be otherwise. I chuckled to myself, feeling very much like a clandestine interloper. Try as he might to get her attention, his bench partner was not paying him any mind. That is, until his amped up energy expanded several feet out from him in her direction, and the initial energetic encounter was made. Tendrils tentatively meeting, they had their first energy exchange as I watched. The way the tips of their energy tendrils met was gentle and exploratory. Energetic information was exchanged very quickly and I could see a rippling disturbance in her energetic field. In accord, the young woman shifted in her seat, still taking no direct notice of the young man.

Not to be deterred, the young man turned his body more in her direction, picked up his sketchbook, and began drawing her silhouette. While doing so, his energy expanded outward even further in her direction, and the quality of it was more intense. Now he had her attention. She shifted more visibly this time, uncrossed and recrossed her legs, and smiled distractedly in his direction while pulling her lunch bag closer to her. Her energy had completely receded and her body followed suit.

Encouraged by her glance in his direction and completely ignoring the quality of her smile, he

verbally pressed on. "Hi, my name is Mark. Isn't it a beautiful day?"

"Yes, it is." She darted a bothered look in his direction then ducked her head quickly back into her book. I could see that her energetic field was quite compact, dense, almost protective, and much closer to her body now. In agreement, her body turned away from the young man as she transferred the book from her left to her right hand. Her left arm crossed protectively across her stomach, resting tensely in the crook of her right arm.

Mark's energy had receded upon first contact with the young woman. Unaware of this, and oblivious to her body language, he put down his sketchbook, all pretense of drawing aside. He asked "So, what are you reading?"

Silence. Thirty seconds passed. I heard the distant sound of ducks on the pond.

Then — energetic mistake of mistakes, he slid several inches toward her, still hoping to engage her. My mouth dropped in disbelief. "Hey buddy," I wanted to counsel, "don't you see a train wreck in the making? You are about to have your hopes dashed. Back away from the girl!"

Instead, I heard him say, "Hey, be nice now. Tell me what you are reading." And with that, her energetic field decidedly compressed around her. She stood up and walked away briskly. Left behind were a brown paper bag, a half-eaten apple, and a baffled and miffed young man.

"Amazing," I said aloud, releasing the breath I had been holding.

## **PAY ATTENTION**

This was a moment of meaningful revelation for me. The occurrence in the park showed me the importance of paying attention to my energy and paying attention to what is going on inside of me. The couple on the park bench showed me that, long before any outer exchange, manifestation, or experience takes place, an inner energetic exploration for resonance and alignment has to occur.

That's when I knew that what may seem like chance meetings, strange coincidences, or unexpected events are not random accidents. They are accidents by design!

I picked up my belongings and left the park. I began thinking about how, by focusing on and making choices that lined up with my happiness, I had unleashed the powers of the Universe. Now those powers were orchestrating great movement and a brand new manifestation — a brand new now.

## NOTES FROM YOUR INNER SAMURAI

*It all begins when the soul would have  
its way with you.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson



Most new beginnings come at the end of a crash and burn experience.



Rethink endings. It isn't that something has ended. It's that something new has begun.



Accidents are never random. They are accidents by design.



You determine your happiness — not someone or something outside of you.



Remember the words of Ambrose Hollingworth Redmoon: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than one's fear."




When God sends you a rowboat, climb in.



Know that there are great and powerful forces acting on your behalf, even if you have not yet seen physical manifestation.



Trust that everything is unfolding exactly as it is meant to be.



---

*Chapter* **2**

## NOW WHAT?

*We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.*

— Joseph Campbell

### THAT'S GREAT! SO WHAT ARE YOU UP TO NOW?

**B**y August of 2004, I was in uncharted waters. Here it was, the start of a new academic year, and for the first time since kindergarten I was not, in one way or another, involved with school. I was neither going to school, getting ready to teach at school, nor involved with students preparing to go back to school. It felt weird not to be doing the familiar things I was so used to doing at this time of year. It also felt very freeing.

For the first time in my life, I wasn't feeling stressed, pressured, or anxious about the start of a school year. I wasn't feeling that rush of excitement about going back to school, meeting new students,

and greeting old ones, either. For the first time in many years, I hadn't spent my summer choosing music, writing syllabi, and wondering how many tenors I would have in my choir. Instead, I had spent my time off in a more relaxed and peaceful mode, writing, reading, hanging out with friends, and spending time with my parents. It was a remarkable moment in time for me. It was magical and precious.

## **WHO AM I NOW?**

### **GOOD QUESTION**

While sitting at my kitchen table one morning, drinking raspberry tea, I heard the local school bus pull up outside, stopping just long enough for the neighborhood children to pile aboard. With fingers of both hands curled idly around the comforting warmth of my mug and with the aroma of sweet raspberries tickling my nose, I paused and listened for the bus to continue on its way. There, in the space between the school bus loading and the next sip of tea, I wondered to myself "Who am I?" or more specifically, "Who am I now?"

Have you ever had that experience? When the most profound question arises, seemingly out of nowhere, causing a major life review and leaving you in a suspended state. Contemporary spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle humorously calls that state "the dash between the birth and death dates of our lives." Yogis reverently refer to this as the pause between the inhalation and exhalation of breath. I call it the place where all possibilities exist.

As the school bus pulled away with its familiar release of air brakes and roaring engine, I waited in

anticipation of the answer to my question. I waited, and waited some more. Nothing. (You knew that was coming.) So, I asked again, this time aloud, “Who am I?” Silence. More waiting. I took another tack. Instead of “who am I”, I asked, “Who *was* I?”

Relief washed over me. Now that was a question the voice inside my head could answer. I was no longer the Director of Choral Activities. Check. I was no longer an employee of the great Commonwealth of Virginia. Check, check. Okay, this is going well, I thought as I took another sip of tea, its heat warming my throat. I no longer work for a university. Check. I no longer have a boss. Yeah! I smiled at that one as I reached for a piece of freshly buttered toast. Keep going. No one was calling the shots for me and no one was expecting anything of me.

Hmm. What did *that* mean? I paused in mid-chew.

## LOTUS FLOWER OPENING

“No one is calling the shots for me and no one is expecting anything of me,” I said aloud, testing the air to see how that sounded. Then I felt it. Huh?!? What was that? There it was again, that odd sensation beneath my sternum like petals of some great flower opening, slowly, one at a time. What a peculiar feeling. When was the last time I had felt something like this, I mused?

No one is calling the shots for me and no one is expecting anything of me, I thought again, pausing to see what would happen. Then, as if on cue, another petal gently unfolded. What’s so special about that phrase? I repeated it again. How come each time I think it another petal opens? Then it

dawned on me: there had always been someone else, a person in authority, calling the shots for me and about my life, all my life. From the simple things like telling me that I had to finish my peas before I could have dessert, to the more complex issues like what college would be best for me, there had always been someone else who had either decided these things for me, or heavily influenced me. Then, as I grew older, without giving it much thought, I transferred that responsibility to my bosses.

Sure, I had been the independent sort. I had made many decisions autonomous of others. However, when it came down to the big decisions, I had always made them by either relying on the advice of others, or by keeping what I knew they would advise in mind. And here's the real kicker. Until that moment, I had not even known I had done so, or, at least, not to the full extent. In fact, if you had asked me earlier, I would have said without a moment's hesitation, "Of course, I'm an independent thinker. I definitely make my own decisions."

I suddenly realized the absurdity of that assumption. But now, now things were different. I was different. From this moment forward, I realized I was the one fully responsible for calling the shots, if I even cared to call any shots at all. I was ushering in a brand new era. With each petal opening I could feel myself morphing from someone who had worked all her life, living up to the expectations of others and the voice inside her head, into someone who was willing to chart her own course, guided by her own stars. The great flower slowly opening was . . . me.

Wow! For the first time in my life, I was *really* calling the shots. What an amazing feeling. Before,

I had listened to many voices inside and outside of my head. Now, I was listening to one. Now, I was listening to the great voice within, my Inner Samurai. As I sipped my tea, contemplatively nibbling around the edges of my buttered toast, a new thought arose: Susan, you can be anyone you want to be. Another petal uncurled. Who do you want to be, now?

Good question to have at the start of a new school year. “Good question,” I said to the now vacant spot where my neighborhood school children had once stood. As a reminder to myself, I called after them, “Remember to be who you are.”

## **ARE YOU MY MOTHER?**

By August, I had already started down the sole proprietor path by starting up and launching *Full Score Conducting* — my freelance conducting business. It seemed the logical thing to do. After all, I had been successfully conducting choirs and orchestras all my adult life. Conducting was something I knew very well. I loved doing it, teaching it, and watching it. After nearly 25 years in the music world, I knew lots of people and had great networking connections already in place. Plus, I had plenty of gigs lined up to get me started on my path as a freelance conductor. It just seemed like the natural next step for me.

Within just a few months, I had morphed from making wonderful music with choirs, employed by a university, to making wonderful music with choirs, employed by myself. I loved my new boss — me! She was organized, creative, and fun. She knew

what she wanted, kept the lines of communication open, and was on top of things. I loved working for her. Best of all, I loved what I was doing. I was conducting choirs and orchestras and working with music educators, adjudicating, and coaching. I was free as a bird, traveling here and there, doing exactly what I wanted to do. My friends who worked at traditional 9-to-5 jobs envied me. They also wondered what I did all day.

Somewhere along the way I realized that all the activity I was engaged in wasn't who *I was*. It was simply what I was *doing*. So, just who was I now? That question haunted me by day and stalked me by night. I pondered that question over and over, like a honeybee in search of nectar, all day, every day. You see, the problem was that I had grown so accustomed to identifying myself by what I had, what I did, and what I had accomplished — I had lost sight of *me*.

Not only had I lost sight of who I was in the past, I wasn't all that sure who I was in the present. It wasn't how much I earned or what others thought of me. That's what I used to think. Since who I was had been built around and upon the labels, titles, and achievements I had earned, it was difficult for me to see myself in any other way. Who was I *now*? And what did I want most?

I couldn't remember the last time I had thought about those questions, and I was beginning to wonder if I ever had. Now, they kept ringing in my ears and bouncing around inside my head. Until my current spiritual awakening, I had quite forgotten that I was, as author and speaker Wayne Dyer so eloquently puts it: "a unique portion of the essence

of God.”<sup>1</sup> I had forgotten about that part of me. Not only that, I had confused that part of me for outer labels and trappings. In short, I had substituted myself for things and thoughts.

Therefore, by September, 2004, I found myself in the midst of a full-blown identity crisis. Who am I? What do I want most? These questions addled my mind so much that soon I felt like the little bird in P. D. Eastman’s beloved children’s book, *Are You My Mother?* Do you know that story? It’s a wonderful story of a greatly confused baby bird who hatches from his egg while his mother is out scratching around for food. Because he hatches alone, with no siblings in site, the poor little guy can’t figure out who he is. He doesn’t know his identity.

Throughout the story, he (could be she; we aren’t really sure) walks around meeting various insects, animals, and even a tractor while searching for his mother. No matter who he meets or who he asks, the answer is always the same: “No, dear, I am not your mother.” Soon, the baby bird starts feeling anxious and begins to panic. “Are you my mother? Are you my mother?” he urgently asks. “No, I am not your mother.” Finally, the baby bird does find his mother. For a time, though, the reader is uncertain whether or not the story will end happily.

I could relate to the baby bird. I didn’t know who I was. It was as if I had just hatched. All the titles I had collected and things I had earned were just pointing me back to the self I assumed myself to be. Now it was time for me to find me. It was time for me to walk around my little world and look for clues

as to what my unique portion of God's essence was all about.

## **LISTENING TO WHAT MATTERS**

Okay. Let's review, I said to myself one day. I am a unique portion of God's essence. Right. Now what? My personal identity crisis continued. Months raged on. I reviewed my life from every angle looking for answers. I scoured family picture albums in search of clues. I looked to my parents and friends for crumbs of insight into who I was. I read books, took personality tests, and even consulted the stars. I was desperate. I looked everywhere I knew — outside myself — for the answers.

Finally, I remembered. Not so long ago, I vowed to make my Inner Samurai the dominant voice I listened to. How easily I had forgotten! How easily I had turned to my outer world for answers. I had forgotten to go within. Now, I knew what to do. It was time for me to quit seeking answers outside myself and go inward. Inward to hear the answers that I knew would come from my Inner Samurai. Inward to consult the one with all the answers: me, myself, and I. I? Yes. My Inner Samurai, of course!

I know you can relate to my experience. You know what it's like to look outside yourself for answers, don't you? It's all about thinking someone or something else knows the answer better than you do. Up until the summer of 2004, I did that on a regular basis. I looked outside of myself for the answers that were there all the time — inside of me.

How about you? How long have you been looking outside yourself for the answers to your

inner questions? We all do it sometimes. Partly, because we don't quite trust in ourselves to come up with the answers. And partly we do it because we think other people know best. Combined, these ingredients make for a looking-outside-yourself cocktail that is lethal — yes, it might kill you. Regardless of whether it actually sounds the death knell, though, at the very least it will render you powerless. Powerless to make decisions. Powerless to find your own answers. Powerless to stand unwavering in your truth. When we look outward for the answers, we take ourselves farther and farther away from the place of our greatest knowing.

This book is about discovering your Inner Samurai. That part of you that is the repository of all your life experiences and all your hopes and dreams. Alchemized over the years from lead into pure gold, your Inner Samurai is your greatest source of strength and knowing. It is the seat of your wisdom. It is also the place of your extraordinary uniqueness.

## THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER

What did I find when I went inward, seeking my Inner Samurai? Probably the same thing you will find, too. That we are all free to be anything and anyone we want to be. We can be trash collectors, book store owners, or chemical engineers. We can live as recluses, celebrities, or royalty. We can save the whales, fight for our country, or meditate on the tops of mountains. When we know we are free to be, then we know that “the world is my oyster,” as English poet and playwright William Shakespeare penned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

That's the beauty of going inward. That's the advantage of discovering the truth of who you are. Each of us is a unique portion of the essence of God, and each of us is free to be. Free to do amazing good in this world and free to wreak havoc. Free to travel the world over and free to stay close to home. Free to be wildly successful and free to just get by. "Free to be" means that the world truly is your oyster. And that, my friends, is one heck of a freeing feeling.

Freed from the outer expectations of others and the voice inside my head, I was now able to decide who I wanted to be. Instead of looking outward for the answers, I looked within. Now I could choose how I wanted to show up in the world. Instead of turning to others to figure out who I was, I turned inward to decide that for myself. Here is the revelation that came to me: It isn't a matter of figuring out who you are or what you need to do; it's about being who you are and letting the rest take care of itself.

This bears repeating: *It's about being who you are and letting the rest take care of itself.*

Being who I am as a unique portion of the essence of God means that what I do won't be limited to a specific job or career slot. Being who I am means that manifestations of what I do will be varied, change over time, and evolve as I grow. Being who I am means that there is no goal that needs to be reached, nothing to attain, and no one outside myself that I need to please. Being who I am means being free.

I can be a unique portion of God's essence and let the rest take care of itself. No worries about how something will occur. No need to fret about or

manipulate things to make them happen. As Mike Dooley, creator of Truly Unique Thoughts® says, “Let the Universe take care of the dreaded hows.” Our job is to be who we are — unique portions of God’s essence.

## **FREE TO BE**

The final four months of 2004 were momentous for me. Much to my surprise, I had gone through and survived a full-blown identity crisis. Surprised that I had even needed to do so, my mind now played catch up to my newly integrated self. Going through that identity crisis and coming out the other side in touch with who I am and what I most desire was a powerfully liberating and freeing experience.

From this new vantage point, I could now look back upon my life and see that every bend in the path and every fork in the road had been there for a reason. All those hairpin turns were there so I could more easily climb the hills and mountains of my life. Each long expansive stretch of roadway was there so I could reach my destination quickly and effortlessly. I could now see the perfection of the path I had taken. Every boulder, ice storm, sunny day, and cloud in the sky had been exactly what I needed it to be, to get me from Point A to B, from where I was to where I am now.

For the first time in my life, I had no desire to go back and do anything over. I saw my life for the perfection that it was and didn’t want to change a thing. I no longer regretted choices I’d made, conversations I’d had, or things I’d done. I was free. I was free to live a life of no regrets. I was free from

my past and free from my future. My past ceased to be a book with no ending and became, instead, a rich treasure trove of memories and experiences that I could revisit any time, though I no longer felt the need to dwell upon them. What was done was done. Anything left undone, I now knew, would take care of itself in the fullness of time.

I was free! Better said, I had been free all along and was just realizing it. "Duh," I exclaimed as the heel of my hand lightly smacked my forehead. "It was there all along! The beautiful gift I thought I had just now opened was there waiting for me all along!" I laughed aloud. I shook my head in disbelief. I was free — had always been. New and not new. Ah, the sweet dichotomy of that thought.

So, what could — what would — I do with this new beginning? What would you do? Knowing that you could be anyone you wanted to be and do anything you wanted to do, what would you choose? It's a daunting prospect, this freedom. In the end, the decision was easy for me. I would be happy. I would live a richly authentic life based on and in alignment with the greater knowing of who I knew myself to be.

## NOTES FROM YOUR INNER SAMURAI

*When I was going through my transition of being famous, I tried to ask God why was I here? What was my purpose? Surely, it wasn't just to win three gold medals. There has to be more to this life than that.*

— Wilma Rudolph



Big change often feels like death; as if an old part of us must die in order for the new part to be born. The birthing of something new does require a deep integration. Some things will cease to be. Others will take on new form. Allow the process.



It is never too late to start down another path, pursue your dream, or do what you want to do. Ever.



You are what you think you are. You bring into manifestation the things you think about. While you're doing all this thinking, don't forget who you are — a unique portion of God's essence.



Make your Inner Samurai the primary voice you listen to. Turn to others for support. Turn inward for guidance.



Today, begin living your life of no regrets. No need to wait until tomorrow.



Be who you are and let the rest take care of itself.



Reid

*Discovering Your Inner Samurai:  
The Entrepreneurial Woman's Journey to Business Success*

---