

Heather's Gift

**A Story of Five Miscarriages,
One Friendship, and Ten Thousand Miracles**

by Heather McLellan

with an introduction by Julia Indichova



**"Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness,
to pull another hand into the light."**

– Norman B. Rice

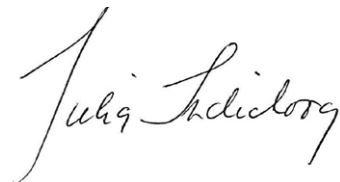
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The wisdom of Buddha, says the legendary mythologist Joseph Campbell, is broadcasting every minute of the day, but without a receiving set, there is not much chance that we will ever hear what the Buddha has to say. As I see it, the most accurate receiving set is placed in the center of every human heart. Our task is to clear the debris blocking access to that center and to keep polishing the receiving set for the rest of our lives.

Our reward is not only receiving Buddha wisdom. Our most precious reward is that the more open the heart-receptors, the easier it is to tune into the sound of Truth in the voice of another.

Something in Heather's voice, the first time she called into the Fertile Heart™ Phone Support Circle, was clearly the sound of Truth.

I treasure our friendship and this lovely offering, and pray that we continue to co-create a sacred, conception-friendly connection for the many creations yet to be born through each of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Julia Indichova". The signature is written in a dark blue or black ink.

Julia Indichova

Heather's Gift

I first became pregnant at age thirty six and miscarried at eight weeks. They determined it was a blighted ovum. Six months later I was pregnant again, and miscarried at five weeks. I decided at this point to see a fertility specialist. Within a week of that first appointment, I fell pregnant again and miscarried at ten weeks. We went through all the appropriate tests without any answers as to why I might be miscarrying. The next step was an intra uterine insemination with Clomid. Four more rounds of intrauterine inseminations (two with Clomid, one with Letrazole and one with injectables) and not a single pregnancy. After all this, I thought, There has to be a better way. I got off all the drugs, and really started to focus on getting myself back to health again, cleaning out my system of all the drugs. I became pregnant again a year later, and miscarried at twelve weeks. Then there was one more pregnancy followed by yet another miscarriage at eight weeks.

Soon after that fourth miscarriage a friend of mine recommended that I read Julia Indichova's book "The Fertile Female." As I began reading it I couldn't believe how each and every line spoke directly to me. Julia's wisdom of honoring your body and the power of life itself moved me. I logged on to Julia's website, listed in the book. On the site, I learned that Julia hosted support calls from her home in Woodstock, New York for women longing to become mothers. There was a call scheduled for that Sunday evening. I decided to participate, and together with complete strangers, began to share my story.

On the call were women who were choosing IVF or other assisted reproductive technologies together with women exploring a "less traveled road." What we shared was a desire to learn how to navigate the "infertil-

ity” terrain with as much self-loving compassion as possible.

Julia, dedicated to building a strong community, sent out an email after the call entitled, “Learning to Ask for Help.” In the email she shared how difficult it was for her to reach out for help, and asked for support with a project. In my soul, I related to this message. I, too, have a hard time asking for help. In an attempt to make everything look easy and under control, I lack trust in others and let a precious few people see the real me. I quickly emailed Julia and offered my help. At the time I had no idea that this simple gesture would change the course of my life.

On one of the community calls, I shared the fact that I was about to miscarry again. Something in my story touched Julia and a few days later while I was walking my dog in a nearby park, she called and suggested we work together for three months and see what unfolds. I agreed immediately, grateful for the opportunity.

Julia and I had our first session the evening after my D&C. I felt incapable of being comforted by anyone or anything, and worried about what my future may or may not bring. As I sat on the couch Julia and I began to become better acquainted. I followed her instructions as she led me through a series of images that provided peace and much comfort on one of the saddest days of my life.

Before saying goodbye, we set a date for our next session. But a few days later I scheduled a job interview at the exact time we were due to speak, grasping for anything that would make me feel as if my life was moving forward.

When I finally emailed Julia, I told her that we needed to set another time for the call. In our second session, Julia asked me to take a closer look at my actions as to why I didn't reach out sooner to reschedule. “This is beautiful,” she said. “What a great opportunity to gently observe your behavior and learn more about yourself.” Julia encouraged me to finish the sentence, “I didn't schedule a call with Julia this week because.” I heard myself say, “I didn't schedule a call because I didn't want to feel

vulnerable.” I started to cry. We then talked about how hard it was for me to trust people, to be vulnerable and to open myself up to the possibility of losing another baby.

Once again I was guided through an imagery exercise. At some point the pictures I saw struck a painful chord and I started sobbing, sorrow emanating from deep within me. Together we gently pushed this image aside and invited images of healing. The crying stopped. I was comforted. That night I had a dream that I wrote down to share with Julia when we spoke again.

“I am leaving my Mom in California and we are going our separate ways. I am traveling to New York City to be an extra in a movie. When I arrive on the set, which takes place underground, I am impatient because I don't know how things work and how long the process will take. I only have enough information to take it one step at a time, and this frustrates me. I ask a European woman standing next to me for advice. At that moment, I have a flicker of fear, not knowing if I can trust her, but decide that she can help me. As the dream concludes, I see an actress emerge on center stage. She is Greek, loud, dark, and confident. I don't recognize her at first. Then I realize that everything is perfect.”

As Julia and I began to read the dream, she pointed out that the dream takes places underground, mirroring my inner spiritual work. She and I laughed at the fact that I turned to a European woman for advice (Julia is originally from Eastern Europe). At first I have trouble trusting this woman. Julia suggested I take a look at how in the dream I'm an extra in a play. She asked: “How would it feel to be the star of the show?”

In our next session, we reviewed my diet and all of the supplements I've been taking. Julia recommended several food adjustments and offered information about a number of supplements that have been helpful to her clients over the years. She was careful to point out that it was up to me

to decide whether or not her suggestions made sense. One of the central ideas of the Fertile Heart™ practice is the notion of cultivating an Inner Authority. Consulting with experts was important but it was up to me to choose which recommendations I wanted to follow.

We also worked with the “Meeting Your Child Halfway” imagery exercise. In one of the images I saw myself driving my car with a little girl and boy in the back seat. It was Saturday morning and I was driving to the supermarket. My husband, Steve, was outside doing yard work. Julia guided me to work with the image and choose whether or not I wished to do what it takes to walk toward this reality. She assured me that as I moved toward my child, my child was moving toward me. I only needed to meet the child halfway.

Through practicing the imagery, I became the woman driving the car. In my mind, I sensed what it felt like to drive my healthy child to the market as a confident and happy mother. Julia concluded by saying, “This is your reality.”

The following week, Julia came into the session with Nine Hearts, an imagery she conceived the night before that felt like the perfect medicine.

That afternoon, I went to the store to buy a baby present for a friend. I was drawn to a little pink book called, “Bloom.” I opened the book and found little red hearts floating all over the first two pages. The book was about a little pig who falls in love, becomes broken-hearted, and learns to love again. I couldn't help but notice the parallel to my own story. I decided to buy the book.

Later that week a dream came:

“I am sitting in the front row of a church. I am breast feeding a baby on the left side of my body. It is 10:45 a.m., the same time Julia and I speak every week, and I am about to give a speech to a crowd of people in a church. I say out loud, “I'm proud of you, your body is working!”

Feeling strong again, Julia and I decided that it was time to uncover more of what was buried deep inside of me. Together, we talked about my feelings of rage at the fact that I've done all the right things to bring about my baby but have ended up in the same place, without a child. She encouraged me to give voice to the angry Orphan. (In the Fertile Heart™ Ovum Practice, the Orphans are the frightened parts of our nature that co-create suffering.) I heard myself saying, "I am soooo pissed. I've given up food, meditated, prayed and practiced yoga for an entire year and look where it's gotten me, nowhere!" For the first time in a long time, I gave myself permission to really get mad instead of pretending that I was strong and that everything was okay. I start to cry in a way that I haven't cried in months.

A few days later, I had another amazing dream:

"I am at a work function and we are planning an event. The tables are arranged in a semi-circle and I check in with my manager to ensure that everything is done. Steve is there sitting in one of the chairs. Knowing that everything is taken care of, I leave the event to make a quick trip home. I walk into my home and notice how warm and nice it feels. I walk into the family room and see my best friend from childhood babysitting a baby girl. Jen tells me that Steve arranged for her to babysit since we'd both be at the work function. I then start to focus on the baby girl sitting with Jen on the couch. I notice her mouth, tongue and eyes. I say to Jen that I must be visiting her in the future since I don't have a baby girl in present time. Jen is supportive and kind. She turns to the baby and encourages the baby girl to tell me that she loves me and she does."

In working with the dream, Julia guided me to really receive the feeling of having this baby girl in my home, knowing that it is my healthy child and that she loves me. She encouraged me to receive the dream as a gift from the Dream Teacher, the validation of my path. Real life not yet visible in physical reality. We talked about how wonderful it was to have my friend's

support. I allowed myself to open my heart and let it in.

Julia and I had committed to work together for three months. As we approached the third month, during one particularly difficult session, when I was once again filled with doubt, Julia challenged me: "What is this really about for you?" she queried. "Rather than asking yourself whether or not you are meant to have children, what if you asked yourself what would happen if you really showed up, really committed yourself to this work. What would that look like?"

After the call I was left thinking, Hadn't I already showed up? Hadn't I done the work? Didn't she realize that I have been doing the work well before she met me? I've been at it for three years. I was mad. But I also began to turn the question over and over in my mind. In our next call we talked about the idea of how tough it is to see "the Orphans" on your own, and how we all need support of trustworthy midwives when we're going through the next "contraction."

The idea of someday reaching out to other people and creating community brought tears to my eyes.

Soon after the session my husband and I made love. I was discouraged to learn a few days later that my ovulation happened a day later than expected, so our timing was a bit off. We resigned ourselves to the fact that we might have missed the window of opportunity that month. I then took off for a business trip to attend an inspiring conference about women finding their own voices and becoming catalysts of change in the world.

Just as I approached the date when my period was due, I planned a dinner for a friend of mine visiting from London. We originally meant to eat in San Francisco, but later changed the plan to eat at a restaurant called Milagros, closer to where I worked.

Prior to meeting my friend, I ran in to Target to buy a pregnancy test since I wanted to toast my friend with a drink at dinner and didn't want to do so if I was pregnant. I snuck into the bathroom at the restaurant, took

the test and waited. Three minutes later, the test read PREGNANT. I ran outside the restaurant to call my husband. The next day, I looked up the meaning of the name of the restaurant, Milagros. I learned that the word is of Spanish origin and means miracle, and also refers to the Virgin Mary.

The next day, I went ahead and got my first set of blood work to confirm the pregnancy. The numbers came back strong. Two days later, the numbers more than doubled.

I reached out to Julia, who made time to talk to me that weekend. Together we talked about the gift this pregnancy was giving me and about accepting that gift with gratitude. She gave me a few imagery exercises to help support implantation and to allow myself to really receive the pregnancy. "What is this beautiful life emerging inside of you trying to teach you? And, can you choose to accept this gift unconditionally, no matter what the outcome?" she asked.

I thought to myself, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What if my journey was all about helping me to walk in faith?

Although the first few months were a bit like leaning over the edge of the Grand Canyon filled with both fear and anticipation, I continued to use the tools Julia taught me to carry me through. Each week brought more information and the confidence that things looked really solid. I made an effort to slow down, take it easy and really connect with my baby.

As I entered into the final trimester, I was filled with joy and a deep gratitude for this journey, pregnancy and the gift that Julia gave me when she agreed to extend her hand to help. As I contemplated names for my baby girl, I landed on Elisabeth. The Catholic Saint Elisabeth of Hungary was the patron saint of deceased children, and the name Elisabeth in Hebrew translates into "dedicated to God." I'm Catholic and my husband is Jewish, so the name seemed even more perfect to me. I know that my baby Elisabeth is a special gift, whose mission is to bring light and love to this earth and a true example of faith well lived.

On July 14, 2010, at 6:31 p.m. Pacific Time, I gave birth to Elisabeth Rose, weighing in at 6 pounds 11.7 ounces.

It is hard to express how grateful I am to have had Julia as one of my angelic helpers. There is something in the way that she communicates and approaches life that touches me on a deep level. I can hardly wait to be the ambassador of this beautiful Fertile Heart™ work here on the West Coast.



P.S. In November of 2010, Julia came to teach a workshop in San Francisco, and wrote this moving letter that I hope one day to share with Elisabeth.

Dear Elisabeth,

I write this a couple of days before I get to meet you. I'm coming to San Francisco to teach a workshop and lead a Day of Compassion Gathering, but to tell the truth, the real reason I'm making the trip is to meet you.

In a way, I feel I have met you some time ago, even before your mom discovered that you were growing in her belly. As your mom might've told you, she and I met because she wanted a little girl like you very, very much and I am someone who helps moms and dads to prepare for the arrival of their babies.

As your mom and I got to know each other, she told me about your grandfather, whose family suffered a great deal during World War 2, because as you know your dad's family is Jewish.

Your grandfather's story touched me deeply. Many members of my family including my grandmothers and my aunt and my brother, who was just a little boy, were also killed for the crime of being born Jewish. So I never got to meet them and was often envious of children who had grandmothers and big brothers. I felt that something that was mine was taken from me.

It has always made me very sad to think of the awful things people do to each other because they don't stop to understand their own hearts. They do things without realizing that they are not only hurting others, they are hurting themselves. As I'm sure you already know, dear Elisabeth, you can't deliberately hurt someone else without hurting yourself.

When your mom became pregnant with you, she and I talked about how important it was for you to learn about the stories of both of the beautiful wisdom traditions you were born into. They are part of your sacred inheritance. And an inheritance deserves to be claimed.

Every human life is an unending stream of miracles even when we are not ready to see them. Your arrival into the world was a lovely chain of miracles, with the hand of God gently pointing the way for all of us who were privileged to be part of your story. So I thought I would give you two small pendants. One, which in the Jewish tradition symbolizes the holiness of Life, and the other, which our tradition calls the Hand of God. A guiding and protective hand of God.

May you, dear Elisabeth, be blessed with life, health, goodness and lots and lots of great times with your wonderful mom and dad. I hope I'll get to hear about your adventures from time to time. I would like that very much!

– Julia