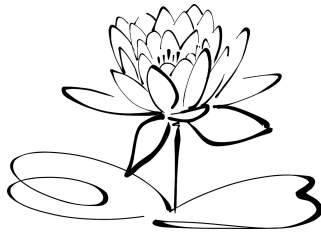


Jewel in the Mud
(Zen Musings)



Harmony Kent

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By Harmony Kent

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To all of my teachers, past, present, and future.

Author Note

For my non-British readers, please be aware that as a UK author, I have used British English spelling, grammar, and punctuation throughout, and in general, I prefer to follow the rules for the Oxford comma.

This means that readers used to different conventions, such as—say—US English, will notice differences in the spellings, etc., that they may have become used to. For example, I have ‘colour’ instead of ‘color’ and ‘behaviour’ instead of ‘behavior’ etc.

On the whole, I have attempted to use universal language and avoid words that could prove ambiguous between countries (such as ‘rubber’ and numerous others). Happily, with the great search engines we have these days, any you’re unsure of, can be looked up with ease.

Thank you for purchasing this book, and I hope that you get much from it.

Harmony

Foreword

What qualifies me to write a book such as this? Am I anything special? Have I learnt anything that you cannot?

In short, I am a Zen failure. I spent thirteen years in a Zen Buddhist Temple—ten of those ordained. And then I left.

End of story?

Not quite.

Before, during, and after, a few things happened to me along the way. And for sure, those thirteen years proved most fruitful.

I entered the monastery as a young (27 year old) woman lacking in confidence, painfully shy, massively inadequate, and terrified of everything ... including my own shadow. Put simply, normal life just felt like too much, and most of the time, I found myself overwhelmed.

I think that those years of discipline I undertook voluntarily were, in some ways, the hardest of my life. But oh so worth it.

I emerged at just short of forty like the proverbial butterfly, utterly transformed. To use a clutter of well-worn cliches, I faced my demons. I popped the balloon. I dragged my skeletons from the closet.

After finding myself disabled and back out in the world, alone, at forty years old, I began life again, from scratch. Built it up from nothing. Honestly, it felt way scarier coming back out than it did going in. But by then, I'd learnt to feel the fear and do it anyway. And, after all, I had to do something with my life. Like find a place to live. Once I got the basics taken care of, it came time to set a course and go for it, always allowing for the vagaries of the wind, of course.

These days, I live a life of contentment and fulfilment. I am happy, confident, and successful. And such success I do not measure in material things or possessions, or even in any typical worldly way of measuring achievement. Rather, I have set my internal compass, and it is from there that I

live my life.

Of course, I remain human and fallible, and I stumble sometimes. As do we all. That's perfectly okay. It's normal. We can't get it right all the time. In fact, one of my Musings talks about just that: Week Nineteen—It's Okay to Have a Meltdown. Just so long as you don't pack your bags and move into your dark place, that's all right. The trick is to pick yourself up when you fall down and get going again. Don't stay there.

So, what are you likely to get out of this book? Well, that depends largely upon you. The best results will come from an open attitude and a willingness to learn, listen, and question.

It is my sincerest hope that this book inspires you to dive deeper, search further, and discover your own jewels in the mud of everyday existence.

Wishing you all good things
Harmony

About this Book

The contents and offerings you will find within first found life on my blog, which you can find at <http://harmonykent.co.uk/> if you want to explore further. I wrote them as a series of 'Monday Musings', which posted every Monday.

Therefore, you will find that some Musings are event specific, such as falling around Christmas or the New Year, etc. I have put in notes at the start of each Musing where this happens, as I recognise that some of my readers will reach those sections well away from any relevant original dates. And, of course, a lot of Musings mention a Monday, but you don't have to read it on a Monday if you don't wish.

At the deepest reality, it doesn't matter for what day the original Musings were intended, as every day is the same, and time doesn't exist. Not in the way we think.

That said, we all approach these things in our own way. So, for those who would

like to read the entries on the significant dates, they run as follows, Musing One was originally posted on Monday May 30th 2016. Musings Thirty and Thirty-one relate to Christmas and Boxing Day. Musing Thirty-two relates to New Year, and finally, Musing Thirty-eight relates to Valentine's Day.

Many of the Musings link in to one another, so while you can dip in and out at random, I would recommend reading them in order at least for your first read through. After that, feel free to use it like a tool box and pick out whatever you want whenever you want.

Along with each Musing, I offer a thought for the week, and leave it entirely up to you how you use this. You can read this book straight through, or leave a week between readings, or however you like. Whatever works best for you.

All of the teachings herein have their basis in Zen Buddhism; however, I have kept them as religion neutral as possible

because they hold universal truths not dependent upon any particular dogma or creed. But, rather, relate to the human condition.

Some of you will have seen these teachings elsewhere (and probably in many places) given how popular and true and oft used they are. If you Google any one of them, you will come up with a multitude of entries, I am sure.

In these Musings, I have taken a condensed teaching and unpacked it for you, with the hope that you will continue to unpack it for yourself and study what it means for you.

I say this because we are all individual, and we are also all different people at different times. Not one of us is the same all the time. Our perceptions change according to what life experience we are going through right now. As do our needs and what catches our attention.

Okay, I'll stop rambling now and let you get on and enjoy the book.

Happy Reading!
Harmony

1. Right Here, Right Now
2. Be a Nobody
3. Let it Go
4. Mirror of Our Lives
5. Nobility of Silence
6. Don't Just Do Something
7. No Strings
8. Jewel in the Mud
9. The Teaching of Trees
10. First, Breathe
11. Reining in Rage
12. Dying to Live
13. The Great and the Small
14. Patient Perseverance
15. I Think, Therefore I Am
16. Knowing What's Yours
17. Own It
18. Life Before Death
19. It's Okay to Have a Meltdown
20. It's Never too Late
21. Painting Pain
22. Herd Animal
23. Forgiveness isn't What You Think
24. One Step
25. Boomerang
26. Ten Things to Forget
27. Keep it Simple
28. As Easy As 1-2-3
29. Your Life Purpose

30. The Best Gifts Cannot be Bought
31. Lighting a Lamp
32. Let the Adventure Begin
33. Remember Me
34. Be the First
35. The Tangled Webs We Weave
36. Shut Up
37. No Regrets
38. Two Loves
39. The Blame Game
40. Too Tired
41. Gatekeepers
42. The Curve that Sets Everything Straight
43. Dark Intent
44. Pride and Prejudice
45. Square Peg
46. An Eye For an Eye
47. Thief in the Night
48. Hearing No Words
49. Where there's a Will
50. Not Again!
51. On Death and Dying
52. After Enlightenment, The Laundry

Closing Words

Week One



***To live a life outside of time
is to live a life free.***

Musing One

Right here, right now.

Have you got that Monday feeling? The one where the whole rest of the week looms ahead and you wish that Friday would get a move on and get here already. Perhaps you felt like that on Sunday night?

I'm one of the lucky few who enjoys work; being self-employed helps. And, still, I prefer my days off. How much more so any of you folks who hate your job.

The trouble is, if we spend all week looking for Friday, we miss the precious time we have right now. The older I become, the faster time goes. I swear my watch has sprouted jet engines. These days, all I seem to ask is, 'Where did the time go?'

Each time I feel like the world's going too fast, it reminds me how little time I have left. Already, I've used up forty-five years of whatever allotment I have. And I don't want to waste it. I've stared death in the

face more than once, and I'm not ready yet. I have so much more life to live. However, if I know only one thing, it's that we don't get to choose when we go. When our time's up, it's up. End of.

Luckily, time doesn't exist. We made it up. If you've ever sat quietly, you'll probably have spotted this already. Have you noticed that when you have something unpleasant to do, time drags. And the opposite is true: when you're having fun, time flies. Strange, considering that your watch or clock ticks away the seconds at the same rate, regardless.

The only thing that's different is our perception. And this is good news. It means we have a choice. It means we're not enslaved to time. This is the key to stopping the clock and being *Right here, right now*.

Sure, time has its uses for keeping us on schedule for trains, meetings, and all that stuff. However, we have to realise that it doesn't have any intrinsic reality. To live a life outside of time is to live a life free.

I used to plan everything. Seriously, it bor-