

Parenting Ourselves

an inner journey

By Lela Iselin

The Perfect Mother

If there was to be a perfect mother on this planet and by some fluke of the universe I was chosen to be it, how would I be different?

I would be there for my offspring 24/7 in one way or another. Happily so because seeing these beings grow, develop and learn new things every day, would fulfil me. Being wonderfully porous emotionally, spiritually and mentally I could tune into them on many different levels. They would feel so met in every aspect of themselves that they would never have to put on a show to try and please me or push me away. They would never need to resort to emotionally strategic behaviours to either defend themselves against an overbearing mother or get attention from an aloof one. As children of a *perfect mother*, they would neither know insecurity nor would they overestimate their potential. They would just be 'on', be at the right place at the right time, create into creation; they would be intelligence and love unfolding continuously. As well as raising happy kids I would find and follow my passion work and have a partnership with someone I can co-create and fulfil my destiny with. And so we would live into the days, grow fonder and fonder of each other, let intelligence and love flow day in and day out for years on end...

This image reminds me of my childhood when my first grade teacher described heaven with all the angels singing, dancing and playing the flute for God. These angels never slept, were always happy and smiling. They had to be careful to stay on God's good side, not to step on each other's toes or take up too much room or they would be expelled from heaven and land in hell which the teacher painted on the other side of the blackboard as utterly terrifying with scorching fires and people shouting at each other in pain and suffering.

I remember thinking that heaven was most likely going to be a bit boring and yet a risky place to inhabit because one could land in hell at a moment's notice and hell certainly was not a place to be in either. The best option at that time seemed to be purgatory. It felt at least somewhat ok to live in a place with other lost souls until we had expiated our sins. I imagined that there would be some communication with everyone having a certain drive and a common goal, heaven.

Pondering over this, I see how pro-

foundly this childish worldview has shaped me and my ideas of perfection, even though on a mental and spiritual level I have discarded the idea of this kind of heaven and hell long ago. On an emotional level I have lived my life as if it was purgatory. I always needed something to strive for. I have actively looked to fill life with meaning, in my search for enlightenment, emotional and physical health and wealth, raising children intelligently. Having life be heaven here and now has not been an actual desire, even though I told myself it was.

On an emotional level it is far more terrifying to let myself have what I want than to work for and dream of having it. Certain aspects of me still fear that if I had my dreams fulfilled I would be bored on one hand and could not really be myself either or my good luck would leave me. As an active ploy I strategically started to underestimate existence so I could control it. It has not worked. Whenever I master a tool to overcome failure and create happiness, it sooner or later cracks and collapses like a house of cards.

So how would I be if I were a perfect mother? I really don't know. I don't have a clue. As long as emotional congestions like my heaven-hell trauma remain unconscious and unhealed, good insights like letting love in rather than pouring it out, seeing my children's fullness and genius while acknowledging mine, living my life to the fullest so they can learn how to do that for themselves, become concepts that don't nourish fully. They work for a while and then they get crusted over with a dull lifelessness full of expectations on myself and my kids. They are subtle expectations, expectations that still look and sound good but when examined closely make life feel a bit grey.

I have come to the conclusion that good spiritual, psychological and educational tools both work and don't work because they never can capture the richness of life. Life cannot be lived by a tool or a formula.

Living into this paradox I have given myself the freedom to admit that being a perfect mother simply is not an option for me. This may sound like a cheap way out which would allow me to be unconscious and hurtful with the people I love most. Here I am glad to object that all the searching for meaning and truth has produced one tiny result: I can begin

to trust myself. If I act unconsciously I will recognise the pattern I am acting out of sooner or later and will be able to work with it. As I am becoming healthier emotionally, I recognise how much of my attempt to control life has been an effort to cover up unconscious feelings of unworthiness. Seeing that, I am now beginning to uncover the beauty and connectedness right beneath those feelings and am starting to relax. In that relaxation I am becoming available to a fuller creativity and joy in myself, life's mystery and my boys' many different levels of being and can meet and assist them in ways I did not dream of before.

What about allowing myself not to be a perfect mother then? I know it is another clever concept and as all of them it will most likely crack. Well when it does, it won't be so bad. There is a chance that when I will be falling through that crack I may be the perfect mother allowing for heaven to be now, full of unexpected openings.