

In the LAUGH! To Nourish Your Spirit chapter of my book, It Could Be Verse, there is a quote from George McDonald which goes, “It is the heart that is not yet sure of his God who is afraid to laugh in His presence.” I chose it because it reminded me of something that happened to me in the late 1980’s.

At that time I was living in New York and tended to use my ability to get a cab as an indicator of my spiritual alignment. Some amazing things happened when I was in spiritual harmony, like, in a sudden shower at the height of the rush hour, a cab stopped to let someone out right where I was standing trying to shelter with my toddler son – and I aced the ruthless NYC competition and stepped smoothly in. When I was frazzled and jangled and could not get a cab to save my life it was a sign to realign my spirit.

One evening, I was desperate to get a cab from W110th St home to 59th St and 2nd Avenue in rush hour and I offered up my usual cab prayer. We had plans to be collected by friends on the kerb-side en route to a smart dinner and I needed to change. I was running late and dreaded my husband’s righteous anger if I screwed up the plans with his friends. With a sudden shock I realised that after the strange way I had spent the afternoon I would probably never get a cab again. It had started well – a photographer friend had invited me to be part of a photo-shoot she had been commissioned to do in the Baptismal Chapel of the Cathedral of St John the Divine, so I had spent the bulk of the afternoon tranquilly needle-pointing and talking to the sumptuously robed cleric, 'The Star', as the shoot progressed in front of me.

As I prayed for a taxi to get me home in time to change and be ready to be collected for dinner, the bit that was running through my head was the result of a naughty impulse that had got a bit out of hand.

When Suzie had said to me during the long, drawn-out, light-setting process, “You look great today, I’d like to do some shots of you afterwards. Think about what you’d like to do,” I was conscious that, having lost a bit of weight, I was wearing a nice black lacy all-in-one. I told her I’d like to be photographed in the enormous stone font in my underwear – preferably with a champagne coupe (to echo the shape of the font) in my upheld hand.

It was a joke but Suzie liked the underwear-in-the-cathedral idea and later I

found myself sitting on a prie-dieu in my glam undies killing myself laughing in front of an enormous image of the crucifixion. The cathedral seemed deserted except for us but I was uneasily aware that if any of the clergy returned it might seem a bit of a bloomin' liberty. I always find forbidden laughter the most irresistible of all, so I was in fits.

This scene was what loomed in my mind as I scanned the empty road for a cab. As I watched, a cab breasted the hill going in a downtown direction. Its light was off but if I were a cabbie with an empty cab mine would have been too. So I peered into it as it passed. Darn! Two passengers. It pulled up at red lights a little way beyond me and the driver leaned out of the window.

"Where you headed?" he yelled.

"59th & 2nd," I yelled back in sudden hope.

"Get in," he shouted and, incredulously, I did.

Guess where it turned out that his passengers were going? 59th & 2nd EXACTLY. My head was reeling with the total amazingness of what had just happened. This was Manhattan. Things like this just didn't happen. This was a miracle which must mean – what? That I wasn't damned to all eternity for posing in front of a crucifix in my scanties and laughing fit to bust? It was all a mystery to me but I was home, changed and on the kerb at the appointed hour.

Suzie told me later that she had a blow-up of one of the laughing photos in her studio and a visiting university professor had insisted on buying a copy, with a long explanation about the brilliance of the image depicting laughter and spirituality. I have a copy of the picture. I don't own the copyright so am unable to publish it. But I must say I was disappointed. Well, it's not my best angle and I hadn't lost as much weight as I thought.

Laugh and Spring Clean Your Psyche

Laughter and Playfulness are vital life-skills which we possessed fully as babies and young children. Life and 'grown ups' help us take ourselves too seriously and swallow our vital laughter. Here are some ways to reclaim them:

- Learn to find the fun in everything you do
- "Angels fly because they take themselves lightly." Try taking your life and yourself

less seriously - eg: instead of looking in a mirror and critiquing your skin, hair and weight, give every mirror you see your cheekiest smile and a 'thumbs up'.

- Remember that in most Eastern religions, laughter is cherished as a spiritual practice.
- It is estimated that children laugh up to 400 times a day while most adults only manage it 15 times a day. Encourage your inner child.
- Find a laughter expert - babies and young children! - or contact your nearest Laughter Network member (laughternetwork.co.uk) who will help increase the laughter in your life.
- Choose films, books and television shows that make you laugh out loud.
- Get a copy of my book, *It Could Be Verse*, and keep it in the loo to remind yourself of all the wonderful reasons to laugh as much as you can every day of your life!

Blessings, Kit Hammond Stapely

Kit Hammond Stapely pulled off a miracle when her cancer diagnosis became critical in 1998 and credits laughter and humour for helping her ride lightly enough over heavy ground to triumph in the end.

You can read more about her at : www.miraclesdohappen.org.uk

She is a Laughter Leader – www.laughternetwork.co.uk,

a Health Creation Mentor – www.healthcreation.co.uk

and teaches the courses based on Louise Hay's Love Yourself Heal Your Life

www.dialogues.co.uk

It Could Be Verse, An Anthology of Laughter Quotations by Kit Hammond Stapely & Rhonda Blunden

Isn't it great to laugh in the face of stress? If you, or a loved one, is suffering from stress, this book could contain just the tonic you need. It's simple, it's easy and it's fun. The verses, quotes and insights are from an eclectic and esteemed group, including Lord Byron, Patricia Neal, Mark Twain, Charles Darwin, Katherine Mansfield, JFK, Plato and Dostoevsky. They serve to gently remind you that laughter is the very best of medicines. Gathered by laughter facilitators Kit Hammond Stapely and Rhonda Blunden, *It Could Be Verse* gives you the ammunition to blast the destructive power of stress out of your life. Make it your

constant companion in creating an antidote to stress.

You'll not only find relief from the current stress you're trying to deal with – but you'll be better equipped to fight it off in the future. Buy this book for yourself and, says Kit, in a few hours you could be feeling stress-free. Or, why not give this book to a loved one or friend and help them turn their life around?

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