

The Happiest of All

The Best Kept Secret

It was a well-kept secret even among all the happiest places—where the happiest place on Earth is. Each happy place on all the different continents on Earth felt surely they must be the happiest of all. Of course they all knew that the manmade attempts at creating happy places were just fabricated to make a buck and that making an unnatural creation out of what is natural had nothing to do with happiness. The best you could squeeze out of all that theater of the unreal, unnatural was some pleasure out of all the profit the creators of it made. Everyone just went along for the ride of fantasy. But men and the imaginations of men had nothing to do with the really happy places of Earth. Not that men had never been to a truly happy place, it is true they only got there by accident and didn't know what they were experiencing when they were there. They just didn't recognize what true happiness is really like—being so used to pleasure and propping up their ego-I's as happiness. So, not really recognizing real happiness, they weren't able to recognize a truly happy place. This was a good thing because as man's egos are truly of a magnificent size, it never occurred to them to exploit these beautiful, very rich places of the Heart. And as few people know, exploiting someone or someplace could never amount to a pile of happiness, not even an anthill of it. It was ironic that the happiest places on Earth were never recognized by men for what they truly are: happy!, when all men are in pursuit of it (they think) their entire lives.

This story is about the happy places on Earth being so happy and happy and perhaps a little proud of being so happy that they wanted to share their place of happiness with the other places of happiness around the world. They wanted to spread the happiness around and show the Mother Earth, its great benefactor, how loved it is. And to determine once and for all what place is the favorite of Mother's—what place is the happiest of all. Word got out that the contest was on. This word of mouth got started by the animals that lived on or near or visited these happy places. During the great wilderbeast migration in Africa these wandering beasts spread the word at each waterhole or river crossing. "Did you hear? There is a contest to find out what place is the happiest place of all." Of course the wilderbeasts had their favorite water hole and a good long drink of water always made them happy by satisfying their thirst so they all were certain that their best waterhole was the happiest place of all.

As the lizards and rattlers scampered and slithered on the rocks and through the sandy washes of the southwest deserts, they too could talk of nothing else but the contest, and they felt that the sunny boulders that they loved to lounge on for the warming of their hides had to be the happiest place or boulder of all. Everywhere, on all lands, the animals were abuzz with the news. There were some truly awesome happy places under the sea so the fishes were in

their school talking about nothing else but what place would win. It surely had to be the great coral reef, as the beauty of life it contained was full of the pulse of life.

The birds on their great migration flights linked all the happy places together with the information they needed to get on with the contest and to decide what place of happiness is the happiest. Some of the happy places were also places of beauty that many people visited and mistook the power of beauty for happiness. Some places appeared as just part of the landscape with no separate apparent feature that could be defined as “that’s interesting”. Some places were high up, some were low down, some were deep inside, some were under. They were all made up of good earth material—all were part of the mother. All were imbibed with happiness and vibrated happiness as surely as birds call out their mating calls in spring to begin the joys of bringing their new life here. All these happy places from spectacular to apparently everyday mundane-looking, wanted the secret of the happy places and the happiest place of all to be known because happiness should never be secret, especially a best-kept secret. It should be known and shared. That was the inspiration behind the contest.

Each happy place had its own kind or version of happiness. The big, happy boulder in the high plateau desert surrounded by Joshua Trees vibrated with a tingle that caused itself to shake like a hiccup. Often a sleeping lizard found itself sliding over its edges, awakening abruptly before it hit the desert floor, laughing at the absurdity of its situation. The chief tree in the range of the giant forest giggled each time its pinecone dropped to the forest floor. Whenever a squirrel scampered across its branches, the chief felt the pulse of its life and the life of all the animals and birds that visited it, and this gave the mighty tree a sense of pleasure in its huge presence.

The high peaks of the pinnacles that were created by ancient lava flows felt a buzz with the heat of life. The post piles of parallel basalt logs shifted into song when the wind of winter, of snow and ice, pushed and pushed them. There were also places of happy hilarity, places where the laughter was absorbed deep into the earth, giving the Earth Mother another kind of hiccup or burp. Other places sighed and moved and vibrated with contentment, knowing life is enough and beautiful with its appearance and disappearance. There were places like a sheer cliff that gave the happiness of excitement and danger, the thrill of the extreme. There were places of mystery that were doorways beyond the physical, always wondering with the thrill of the unknown. Happiness was being lived and loved by all these places.

Happiness in these many places of happiness could be felt and expressed in many different ways. But where does happiness come from? Where is the first place of happiness? Where is the origin of happiness? The places of happiness never wondered about this. They were simply too busy, well, being happy. This made Mother Earth also happy that parts of her body were alive in happiness. She loved her body and all its elements. Her heart beat with a fire inside and she was cooled by the altitude of her mountains. She loved all the places of her body and how much it changed from season to season. She was getting a bit older now and had seen many changes occur to her body—a lot of birthing the new and a lot of death, change, rebirth

and more death. She loved how her different parts enjoyed her internal heat of love and were happy. It amused her that the children of her parts were putting on a contest of the happiest for her amusement and because they loved the happiness of her. The mother of them all—the lady Earth—had her own secret. The best kept secret of happiness. She knew happiness too, not just in all the parts and places of happiness that covered her. She knew happiness in another way. This secret was not too good to be true. It was not too good, it was instead so beautiful. It is the happiest place all and the best kept secret. But back to the contest.

There was one place in a bit of a rough neighborhood. It was neglected by the humans. They had abandoned it after jobs became scarce in their town. This place was struggling to return to its more natural state after humans had polluted it. It was struggling to stay alive. It was waiting for its rebirth. It wanted to be alive. It wanted to know and be a living part of the mother again. Each little blade of grass that managed to pull itself up towards the sun rejoiced in another day. Some days it could feel it—it would thrive again and life wouldn't just be a struggle to stay alive, it would bloom again. Each time it came back with renewed hope, there would be another setback—the bitter cold winter finally warmed into spring but a careless cigarette tossed from a car window torched its life and burned it to a stubble. This place of struggle heard of the contest, this place with just hope as its credential wanted to be not only a place of happiness—it wanted to win the contest and be the happiest place of all. Where did such a forsaken place come to have such high hopes? This place that didn't vibrate with hilarity or shake or shine with merriment, how could it be happy? How would it learn how to be happy?

How happiness is revealed or shown is part of the secret of happiness. Happiness is very big, bigger than all the parts or different places on the Mother Earth. Happiness is so big that even Mother Earth is contained in happiness and is alive in happiness. Happiness appeared to be a big secret, a place to get to after a long ordeal of searching or striving for it. Happiness seemed to be more obvious in some places and entirely absent in others. The places of happiness felt that their happiness was a gift of natural graciousness given to them by the Earth Mother. Other places that did not feel so happy most of the time were unaware of how big happiness actually is. No place lived outside the borders of happiness, so everyplace lived inside happiness. Somehow the piece of land in the rough neighborhood was being led by happiness into feeling happiness by planting the hope of winning the happy place contest. This place that was often polluted, burnt, and dumped on by humans had a name for itself and a name that no one knew of and you might laugh when you hear its name for itself—this neglected piece of rumble called itself “The Bird Of Paradise Homestead”. Can you imagine? The Bird Of Paradise Homestead? What? And Why? Well, one can imagine that since no one can really pinpoint where happiness comes from and where it goes when it seems to be gone and why it leaves, please have some humility about why a neglected, ugly tract of wasteland would call itself The Bird Of Paradise Homestead. Even the unhappiest still can hope and dream. A dream, a hope in the form of winning a contest of being happiness, that's audacity and this little place that was so neglected and ignored by humans had audacity and hope and a desire to not only be happy but to be recognized as the happiest. The Bird Of Paradise place called itself Paradise for short.

What Paradise had going for it was not a pride in itself, nor enjoyment in grooving on its happy vibes all day. It wanted to give pleasure in the form of winning the happy place contest for its Mother Earth. Paradise wanted to give its love to its mother by being happiest of all. And isn't happiness felt the best by giving love, by being unselfish?

The Bird Of Paradise Homestead kept its hopes up and waited for the opportunity to forward its application to be entered in the H.P. contest. The deadline was April 20 and the winner would be announced on Earth Day, April 22. It needed a bird to land on its back and ask it to fly its application to contest headquarters. So far, only flies had come around to snack on an old crusty pizza crust. I guess there weren't any birds that wanted to share a hard piece of pizza crust with some flies. All Paradise could do was to continue to wait and hope and stay alert for any opportunity. Movement from one place to another was not any place's forte—sometimes it was hard to tell when one place ended from another. After all, there weren't any real borders to a place, even though men might create borders by using fences and walls. Though a place was not as well defined as say a tree, it still had its own characteristics that made it one place and not the other place. Each place had its own heartbeat and beat its presence into the whole place. Paradise, besides having hope and audacity and good intent, had a strong heartbeat. It was this strong heartbeat that finally attracted an ally in its pursuit to enter and win the contest.

One day, a day when a grouchy fog was clinging to Paradise, a day that felt dank and dismal, a boy's footsteps could be heard crunching on the burnt stick-like plants. He came across Paradise and stepped on the pizza crust and stopped for a moment. He pulled on the burnt sticks and they released from the ground into his hands. He put one in his left hand and then one in his right hand and Paradise heard him begin to tap them together. Paradise's heart leaped as it heard the sound of its own heartbeat being sung out on those sticks. The boy was enjoying himself and played with more and more vigorous abandon. The taps were strong and hit well. The boy smiled and thought about how much fun he was having. He loved to hear rhythm and would tap on everything. I love this rhythm—it is wonderful, he thought. He played it over and over, standing there on The Bird Of Paradise Homestead. Paradise jiggled with joy—this boy is tapping out my vibration. The more the boy played, the happier Paradise felt and the happier Paradise felt, the boy was so happy that he also danced while he tapped. Both the boy and the place were in communion with each other and both the boy and the place felt the happiness of that communion. Neither one knew where all this happiness came from, but that didn't matter to either one. They enjoyed the relationship, the communion, and oddly enough that only happens when one surrenders itself, its separateness. As the boy stood there and tapped out their rhythm, the fog lifted and the warmth of the sun made both the boy and the land sweat. It was then that Paradise knew that it might never win the contest, it knew that it didn't matter. It knew it had nothing to prove. This boy tapping out his heart vibration had given it happiness without the boy even knowing it and that somehow it had also given the boy happiness too. Perhaps both the boy and the place called Paradise were also part of a bigger happiness.

Mother Earth did feel the love and their happiness that was

being lived and played on her. Her place was vibrating and living love and happiness on all the parts of her. All were her beauty. She was a big happiness, it is true and she also knew that she was contained in happiness and that happiness is so, so big that no one, no place could ever over-use it, possess it, own it, win at it, or lose at it. She didn't know if happiness could ever really have a beginning or an ending, but one could discover it over and over, and live in it and let it take one's life over despite the limitations of suffering and death here. How does happiness do it? She wondered. That is a very good secret, indeed.

After this day, Paradise began to attract a bird here and there. The spring rain brought a few dandelion flowers to grow and the winds had blown some maple seeds that began to sprout. The boy was growing into a man and began to garden Paradise. He planted flowers and vegetables and some artist friends came and made some metal sculptures to adorn the garden. This made Paradise feel beautiful and wanted and it enjoyed this form of happiness too. It knew that happiness could change its forms and it also knew that happiness didn't need much, even a wasted, misused place that Paradise used to be didn't have to be unhappy. Happiness was just too big to be contained. That's its secret, best kept of all. And the very special important part of happiness's secret is that it allows itself the place and home of being kept in the special place of each one, a place all call the Heart. A place that is even bigger than happiness! A place that you cannot find, a place that is who you really are. You are the place of already happy. You are your own best kept secret. I bet you knew it all along.

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