



On Earth As It Is

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## Guru

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# on earth as it is

*prayer as story, story as prayer*

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*photo by matthew simmons*

## *Guru*

*Amy Minton*

It has come to my attention through the wisdom of Guru Jaua Opi that directly behind my navel exists a terrifying labyrinth of decaying gas pipes, one of which is leaking a weak blue flame.

The Guru says, *This is your life force*. Or I think he said that. His accent is very heavy and the screeching war planes overhead mute all sound for a minute and a half, but he keeps talking. *It holds the fire*, I think he says. He pounds his own navel. *What does your flame look like?*

We, seated on yoga mats in the air base's community health center, visualize our personal flames. We paid \$99 to sit on yoga mats in the air base's community health center. Must it not go without saying that our flames are low-ish?

*Logs*, he says, or I think he says. He might have said, *Locks*. It's not easy to keep the orbit of breath moving—in through the nose, hold, feel the blood circulating oxygen to expand my mind, and out through the mouth—due to the rapid-fire imagery of padlocks, deadbolts, combination locks, lockers, manacles, child-resistant safety caps, Rastafarians, locketts, locks of hair, and cargo ships bobbing inside the Panama Canal. My mind is way open, just as the Guru asked it to be in the flyer.

*What will you need to build the fire?* he might have just asked.

Now I'm fairly certain he said, *Logs*. That makes sense. Breathe in through the nose, load up the cargo ship bobbing in the Panama Canal with all the locks and Rastafarians, and exhale through the nose and out into the sea. The breathing orbit works better now. Deciding something with certainty always helps. The oxygen in my blood is expanding my mind in the right direction now. *Logs*.

Except I've got a mess of worn pipes leaking a weak blue flame. Can't just toss a log onto that and expect a full life force ignition. Guru Jaua Opi's navel must enshrine a raging bonfire of telephone poles spouting sixty-foot flames fueled by an accelerant of pure bliss and chakra balance. Perhaps that's why he suggested *logs* for us, his students on the mats. *Logs* would be the baby step I would offer to a beginner, especially if I had telephone poles blazing behind my navel, which I do not.

A quick look around the group confirms that I'm alone in this predicament. The others appear so content on their mats. They are all flowing with this log instruction. Apparently mine is the only life force emanating from faulty plumbing. I'm dangerously flammable. An errant spark will annihilate me. I'm going to have to renovate quickly to catch up with the group. It's easily accomplished. I just take the Guru Log and smack the shit out of the pipes until they all detach from my intestinal wall. They offer surprisingly little resistance. Quickly, so I don't lose my life force altogether, I imagine up a small tee-pee of twigs and rub two sticks together for friction, which never works in real life, but I'm imagining it with great success. A spark. An orange bloom. Some smoke. More like a life smoke screen than a life source, but the certainty with which I'm moving is very comforting. I know it's too early for a log. Just sit and wait. Wait gently. Blow. Nurture the wee fire. Keep the orbit of breath moving.

Except all the bits of broken plumbing are littering my life force area. How am I supposed to build a guru-like telephone pole bonfire here? Those bits of metal won't burn. Will they?

Collect it, stack it up like kindling—but the Guru is saying more. Something how *every choice grows the fire or destroys it*. He's saying more, but another warplane is circling overhead, screaming in for a landing at the base, and I accidentally breach breath orbit to curse our president for this war. Right then my life force smoke screen goes out. Whoosh. Gone.

Panic. Back to the breath. Back to the orbit. Try not to be negative. Don't want to go back to anger management classes again. Not again.

Getting creative with this pipe situation, I build a crude, primitive circle—a druid-like mysterious configuration surrounding my tee-pee. The pieces don't quite fit together right with all the straight bits and U-shaped bits not coming together for any recognizable shape, so my life force area is looking more and more like an industrial accident than a sacred ruin. Like an explosion. Like the leftovers of a Humvee in the sand after a metal mess of pipes and wires gets triggered by rolling tires and whatever is alive is blown straight to God and whatever is metal is on fire. Can fire melt metal?

No. No. I have saved myself from that already. I got out of bed. I got dressed. Took a shower, even. Drove to the community health center. Paid by check. \$99.

Guru Jaua Opi is talking again, but I can't hear him because another war plane is screeching overhead and he will not wait for it to pass, will not stop moving his lips which may be telling me right now if fire can melt metal. We all know that you can't talk when the bombers pass over, because *God Almighty!* they rattle the windows with their death shrieks and all any of us can do is plug our ears and wait and pray it doesn't circle around a second time.

My fingers are in my ears. My breath is holding, holding. My legs are splayed off the mat. The orangey embers under the smoke screen evaporate.

I look out the window now to stare the warplane down. The mechanical beast hangs in the sky, impossibly still. How can something so enormous *not* fall? The belly of it droops low, pregnant with the machinery of war. Humvees. Bombs. Metal caskets enshrining bits of flesh picked from the sand.

*Give it up to God*, the Guru may be saying.

The Guru folds his hands into a prayer pose. His brown skin, his white beard tickling his navel, his deep forehead wrapped high with piles of

white cotton. His long fingers with yellow nails point his life force up to God.

I fold my hands in the same way, fingers pointing up to the belly of the war machine. What I have inside of me cannot be made holy.

Amy Minton is a badass writer who lives in San Antonio.

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