

Angels with wounded souls

By Ruth Ostrow

I RECENTLY helped a friend through a nasty break-up. Without going into too much detail, the story is scary because it's a common tale of an objet d'amour being awarded attributes he didn't have, and the black and imperfect bits being painted over with emotional white-out.

My friend simply fell in love and the rose-coloured goo obscured her vision so that she couldn't see certain things that were presenting themselves.

There is an actual chemical basis to being in love. Apparently the body produces an amphetamine, which is nature's secret weapon to help us bond and procreate in the first years of a relationship.

But that is no excuse for the blind adoration that she heaped on this man, even though a few of us kept presenting her with undeniable "facts". Anyway, to cut a long story short, one of these facts came to light a few months ago, and no amount of whiteout was going to cover the glaring reality of what had essentially been a game of deception and -more importantly -self-deception.

In the days that followed the break-up my girlfriend was particularly fragile, so I invited her to jump on a plane and stay with me for a few days. Then I took her to see another friend of mine who is a wise elder and mentor to me -a woman who has spent many years in India and is a deeply spiritual person.

My mentor listened to the story with a tender and patient expression for nearly two hours, hearing all the breathless cries of "And then he ...", "And then he ...", while tears of pain rolled down my girlfriend's face.

Finally, after listening to grievous tales of woe, my mentor opened her mouth and, with a glowing smile, took my friend's hand and gently said: "How wonderful for you to have met this man.

Our angels come in so many different shapes and sizes, don't they?"

"What do you mean?" spat my girlfriend, outraged at the suggestion that her lying devil of a boyfriend was an angel of any sort.

"I mean that this man has been sent to you as a gift. You should give thanks to him. He has helped you to see amazing things about yourself. He's helped you to grasp one of life's biggest lessons: you can't project your fantasies, hopes, dreams and expectations on to other people.

You can't give away your power to another, and allow them to obscure your life purpose.

"Look at you. You haven't been fulfilling your creative soul and doing what you love to do; rather, you've sacrificed your time totally to this man. You've been Sleeping Beauty awaiting the kiss of your prince to wake you up. And what an unexpected wake-up this perfect angel has brought to you," she said, continuing to smile gently through her razor-sharp words.

What she was saying was true. Not only for my friend but for all of us.

It is a very Buddhist concept -to pray for difficulties because Buddhists acknowledge that it's through the obstacles and hardships of life that we are forced to wake up and confront our inner demons. And that difficult people are our true angels. Because they come into our lives and act as mirrors for us.

The more we get distressed and freaked out by these angels, the deeper we go into our own damaged and wounded selves, and the more we can see what we've created in our lives, what we keep attracting due to our unresolved patterns and what we need to work on within ourselves. Difficult relationships are simply there as the sand in the oyster, catalysts helping us to make a pearl -or a change.

My girlfriend was struck dumb by my mentor and urged me to take her home. The next day she stayed in the spare room, sulking. But when she finally emerged, she seemed more relaxed and confident.

"I was thinking about those haunting words. They are true. I was so obsessed with D I stopped living my life. I started to believe things would work out. But at a level I knew they wouldn't, and it's been very exhausting for me. I feel relieved it's over.

"I was just so lonely and unfulfilled before I met him, and I hated the idea of being single again."

"But you were lonely and unfulfilled while you were with him too," I said, and we began discussing what she needed to do to make her own life meaningful and rich.

This story has a happy ending.

Because my friend went home and opened a practice that she'd been talking about for years, and she is now in regular therapy learning to take responsibility for her own happiness.

And when she recently bumped into her ex in the street, she went up and hugged him warmly. Expecting a lecture or a scene, he stood rigid with fear.

"Thank you," was all she said. And she walked away, leaving him to deal with his own poor, damaged soul.

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