

The Witch's Cloak

*Inspiration is some mysterious blessing which happens
when the wheels are turning smoothly.
~ Quentin Blake*

We become inspired throughout our lives in many, many ways. Even when we don't recognize the influence of inspiration or if it slips through our consciousness as ordinary thought or feeling, Spirit remains ever present, offering, filling, and moving us. Feelings of warmth and awe that draw us to a summer sunset, the artful creations of food stirred with love, a joy-filled quest for just the right gift, these are Spirit whisperings.

For me, personal inspiration comes mostly through creative outlets. Music, crafts, art, and writing are the very fabric of my DNA, woven through my being like luminous golden threads. They lovingly wrap me in times of turmoil, insistently prod me into action, and give voice to challenging thoughts and feelings that seek resolution.

Creativity has long been my closest and most loyal companion. Look at baby photos and you'll find a paintbrush strangled in my chubby, formula-crusted hand. (Actually,

that's an unfulfilled wish. Paint was far too messy for my mom. Pencils and oil pastels were more her speed.) As a small child, I frequently retreated into an inner world, a world birthed into the physical through multi-colored renderings of nature. Escaping outside to wash away the effects of our chaos-filled home, I'd build leaf dwellings for ants, dress up pets, chase field mice, and collect flowers. Wildlife's gifts kept me occupied and nurtured for hours. Still, years later, many forms of nature-inspired arts and crafts are the imaginative endeavors that bring joy, ways to touch into something innate and sacred.

Through all my years of experience, I have witnessed how inspirations surfaced with varying levels of persuasion. They pulled me in fluctuating potencies, calling out for conception, gestation, and birth. Seeds with a voice. Some screamed, others whispered, but none escaped my attention. As a result, I innately cycle through phases and different creative mediums like breathing – a natural and essential rhythm for living.

Do I ever find myself lacking in ideas and inspirations? That would be impossible. Scrapbooking, photography, sketching, sewing, painting, gardening, decorating, writing, or some other activity may poke at my consciousness, each taking turns to make their way into the world. It's fair to say that most days, I feel drawn to a project, drawn like a moth to a flame. The loving energy tugs at my center and ignites a well-spring of passion which flows from my divine internal essence, the same Sacred River that influences us all.

As swirling pools of jubilant anticipation – the check-the-mailbox-for-surprise-deliveries kind of excitement – spark joy and an expression of something much deeper than my

little self, frequently, I don't know what will emerge. This is the nature of the witch's cloak...



I want a cloak. The yearning burns in my heart, seemingly out of nowhere.

Accompanied by an image, the idea first appeared in my mind's eye infused with a feeling that pulled me to it, plopping itself down in an I'm-not-moving-until-you-find-this manner. My vision is crystal clear – a long, flowing garment of rich heather-gray wool, fastened at the neck and adorned with a generous hood. The elegant fabric pours over my form, reaching just above the ankle to fall in ample, smoky folds. Its beauty elicits a sense of sophisticated comfort, like being home lounging in my favorite sweatshirt or pajamas...fancy ones, that is.

I'm finding one to buy, is the unwavering determination behind this mysterious push. My mind is made up. Just like that.



Three weeks now, scouring stores and surfing the internet, but nothing to my liking has appeared. Yet, this gray phantom continues to haunt me, sending thoughts to intrude on every part of my day.

I guess I need to make one myself. A not-so-idle intention finds resolution. With it, I take the seed of my cloak's conception on a short journey – the garden of my mind – fertilizing the thought while planting it in the rich soil of my love to coax its growth.

Usually, when an idea presses on me, the urge to move – to act upon it and help it progress toward completion – is quite powerful. I feel consumed, again, on fire with creative juice. Hot Southern whiskey that burns, warming my insides. Intoxicated with enthusiasm, I'm tipsy, yet... focused.

So, the quest switches gears from a hunt to an altogether different adventure, and my plan takes form. *A trip to the fabric store is what I need to do!* As the next logical step for a seamstress on a mission, I feel certain that I'll get what I need there.



I'm in heaven, otherwise known as Joanne Fabrics. [*Sigh.*] Fabric stores are a playground of possibilities. Like craft or art stores, fabric stores can keep me occupied for hours, fantasizing and planning my next creation...and the next... and the next.... (It's easy for me to get carried away, as you can see.) In truth, stepping into any store that sparks creativity like Joanne's brings out my tow-headed, waif-like four-year-old. She skips spiritedly among the racks, basking in multicolored miracles, seeing something the adult in me cannot.

We could not be surrounded by more deliciousness. Every scrap, button, and lace beg to be touched with hands and eyes, eyes and hands. Intoxication bubbles forth again, and the four-year-old grins while my grown-up self burps with Joanne drunkenness.

Weaving in and out of the aisles at a steady pace, my search feels well underway. Drooling, I peruse bolts and bolts of every hue and texture. They stand erect and perfectly aligned, showing off a deserved vanity like tall

cloth storybooks in orderly displays. My eyes flirt with plaids and stripes, called in every direction. Cheeks playfully blush at polka dots and paisleys. *So many to choose from...*

Pay attention! Compare! A chastising thought snaps me back to the mission: to align this myriad of choices with my vision. And so, cloth by cloth, I continue, a gold miner looking for one perfect and gorgeous nugget.

Suddenly, *Eureka!* The perfect gray flannel wool nearly jumps off the rack. The flecks of charcoal and smoky-white sit perfectly balanced with rich slate overtones. Running my fingertips along the delicately woven threads, the four-year-old pipes up in exuberance. *This is it!*

Twenty-nine dollars a yard! A loud hiss escapes my lips as inner-child fantasies meet the reality of capitalism, a reality that undermines a budget begging to be ignored.

Maybe I need to check out patterns first, and then I'll worry about cost.

This internal chatter smooths my inner child's disappointment, and I pause to consider what's next.

Standing motionless under the glaring store lights, *I really hope...no pray...that I don't need yards and yards to do "flowing."*

Damn those visions. They're so demanding!

Marching straight to the back of the store on an unanticipated side route, I feverishly search the pattern section, scrutinizing (the theme for today's adventure) every book available. But tearing through the pages of McCall's, Vogue, Simplicity, and other lesser-known companies, irritation quickly replaces my enthusiasm. Not a single

pattern meets the job description. Funny (and not in a humorous way) how convinced I was that my perfect, hooded cloak lay coyly waiting among these carefully engineered designs.

Ugh! Now what? I deliberate, my nimble fingers tapping pensively on piles of books. (I'm not so easily deterred, you know.)

I can do this! My inner coach adds with self-assurance.

Yep, I'm gonna wing it!

So, back to the drawing board. And improvising...

Grabbing a hooded poncho pattern from a nearby open rack, the decision to blend this with others at home now replaces my old plans. A Frankenstein design of sorts – an arm from here and a head from there – mentally merges: begged and borrowed parts to create a whole.

Now to reconnect with my beloved gray wool.

Zigzagging through thread, batting, and zippers, I hum my way back to the fabric section. That's when I see it. Somewhere between the racks of colorful spools and piles of discarded cloth sits a plush-gray, brushed-cotton blend with pale, steely-lavender iridescence. And it serendipitously lies...*DA-DA-DA-DAAAHHHHH*...on the sale table! The unusual texture, I guess, caught my eye, or the angels were jumping up and down on it, waving "HERE!" signs. It's nothing short of a miracle, really, barely visible between all the sloppily stacked layers of miscellaneous material. Barely, that is, except for the magical effects of the overhead fluorescent lights. Coincidentally (or not), at four dollars a yard, it is perfect for my squeaky-tight budget!



It's been days since my Joanne's adventure. The material and patterns anxiously wait, sitting in my lair (otherwise known as the studio).

Unlike the supplies, visions poke and prod, urging me to continue my mission. Each insistent flash highlights the cloak's mysterious, graceful length and cavernous hood – a hood spacious enough to conceal the wearer's face. These images guide all ongoing crafting as they flow forth from the fountain of my artistic juices, inspiration in action. At times they seem to occupy their own hazy form, lingering in doorways and over my shoulder, a taskmaster filled with feverish passion.



Steady gestational vibrations stretch and poke the walls of my fertile womb; a developing seed desires birthing. It is, without a doubt, relentless. So, in the moments between working and being a single mom, I cut and patch, figure and place, piecing together one pattern with another as the powerful and seductive energy pulls at me. The synthesis of my curious creation gradually crystallizes into form: a grand amalgamation of poncho, coat, and cape with arms and a fleece lining for warmth and functionality.

Urged to a finale, I work diligently to finish by an upcoming spiritual retreat. Instead, life happens, making my steely-gray handiwork incomplete when its due date arrives. And though this late pregnancy lingers, I pray the extra time will clarify my burning desire to forge ahead.



I'm off to another retreat, the very retreat where I hoped to display weeks-worth of work. Instead, I arrive empty-handed, but I'm not disappointed. Our sacred weekends are potent, and I'm ready for whatever Spirit delivers.

These retreats offer the space and opportunity to offer many spiritual energy healings – the transmission of energy through the healer, followed by intuitive, psychic, or mediumistic messages to help complete the process. Using intuition and psychic faculties, I find the room to practice and grow through the weekend with all it holds. And so, I employ my gifts in ongoing evolution.

Up until now, most psychic information has come to me as feelings – clairsentience, to be precise. Sometimes I see images or visions aligned with mental mediumship, but they are currently brief and wispy.

It doesn't take long for me to discover that change is afoot. The energy flows now with ease. With it a new faculty emerges from the unseen, like the Universe flipped a switch, a mental video player projecting in my sixth chakra. Colorful 3D graphics in long-running scenes unfold in my mind's eye during each healing. What I share with the group meets with confirmation from other participants, those I trust much more than myself.

Another "side-effect" comes to light. Buzzed and excited with my "new ability" – tapping into the Akashic Records to witness past lives of those receiving healing – creates an unusual but welcome exuberance. It's considerably more than I anticipated.



The weekend progresses, learning and doing healings. Then on Saturday afternoon, the group readies to send healing to Marie, a member unable to attend until later this evening. We all envision her with us in our hearts and minds to offer remote healing. As such, the group lovingly connects to one another and Marie, heart to heart and Spirit to Spirit. For me, a doorway opens and once again, vivid images flood my mind's eye...

Deep in the woods, freshly fallen snow sits silently, a blanket of blanched, iridescent crystals that cover everything around me. It contrasts the sleepy, gray-brown branches.

I see Marie. She is walking with me on a wide path between the naked trees. We chat and giggle as our feet make first tracks across the untouched whiteness. Something else curiously drops into my awareness – matching long, gray, hooded wool cloaks. (You might think at this point that I'd be jumping out of my chair, screeching, "There it is! There it is!" However, this isn't the nature of Spirit or this kind of work. In truth, the information and energy drift in softly, as a quiet knowing. So, instead, I feel more of an "of course.")

As I continue to observe, the most brutal pieces of this vision remain hidden, resting on the cutting room floor. It's better this way, concealed. Regardless, the conclusion is clear: this lifetime, like many others connected with the healing arts, took a tragic turn. I know this from the brightly divergent crimson hues of life essence that tarnish the pure white landscape. It's all the evidence required to signal our unwelcome ending.

I focus on the stained snow, hoping for a different conclusion. But what bubbles forth without warning is a vicious sense of wrong-doing, malignantly laced with its twin – guilt. My gut sits disquieted, tinged with a whisper of something else: the question of why, why this guilt? The answer is offered before the thought is even complete. I either brought her into the craft or the woods that day, and I'm not sure which. Whatever the case, it appears to have sealed our fate and created self-blame.

In our barren resting place, Marie and I joined the many, many thousands of other healers, midwives, seers, and herbalists known to the masses as witches. Other than my vision, no signposts or words inform me of this; it's just a feeling that settles like an icy chill into my very bones.

When Marie finally arrives to join the group, I share the vision...the snow, the cloak, and the death we healed, together. It's a story she already knows, having received the lifetime during a reading in Lily Dale, a lifetime from Salem during the witch trials.

Taking in the news and confirmation from Marie, I try to absorb all that transpired. Multiple feelings flood in and compete for residence, but one thing stands steadfast in my heart: I know the origin of my gray cloak.

Why did this memory press so powerfully on my consciousness? Why now? Because my soul, moving with definite purpose, brought the gray wrapping as a delivery from the unseen. While it was meant to soothe and calm, the cloak, first, became a necessary catalyst for healing, a way to prepare me for deeper transformation. And as its memory's hideout turned thin and vaporous by weeks of unconscious preparation, what surfaced finally opened the way for vital work – to reconcile a lifetime that ended