

Funny's Story



"The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see."

Alexandra K. Trenfor

This is the story of **Funny** the horse, who lives here during the summer - and the horses who carefully pick up her memorial threads.

Last year (2021) Funny turned 30, and she wanted to celebrate. She's always liked parties. But then the pandemic got in the way, so it had to be a thirty-first birthday party instead. And not quite on the right date. Funny's birthday is in early summer, on Sweden's national day 6th June to be precise. But she preferred to wait with her celebration, until we had completed some necessary projects on the farm. So that we could celebrate with some satisfaction.

We were about twenty people who had gathered earlier that day. Tasks were assigned, since that was the way Funny wanted it. First we give something; to a greater whole. *We give of our time*. Like a reminder of what **Zintra** (another horse) explained a while ago. When you are born into this life, you are assigned two things: a body, and a certain amount of time.

When we later step out of time and leave the body, these are the two things we can no longer keep. Giving of one's time and using one's body is thus a very great gift.



Just recently, Funny raised the subject of time again, in a conversation with one of her students. The person in question experienced a strong internal stress, bordering on panic. It was as if there was a lack of air somehow, but it was difficult to describe. According to Funny, there was an important time aspect here. Because it was as if the people around this person were demanding to have a share of this person's time. Giving of your time to someone, that's one thing, Funny explained. But to take someone else's time - and to demand to do it (or take it for granted) - that's something else entirely.

Then there was an image of the herd, as a whole. It was no longer just Funny holding the conversation thread, it was more like a wheel. Several of the horses conveyed an image of how different individuals in the herd, at different times in their lives, achieved a kind of completion.

It wasn't necessarily about being at your strongest, or most vital, physically when this happened. It could just as easily happen late in life, if, for example, it involved deep spiritual insights. What was most evident in the picture was not the personal details, but how the light changed. Sometimes you gave way to someone else and backed up that individual's perfection. At other times, it could be the other way around.

The essential thing was the flow of the exchange. The wheel, upright, looked a bit like a Ferris wheel - although it was also more like a multi-dimensional sphere. Everything moved in relation to each other. And there was much for us humans to learn here.

We can't hold each other's time. In the end, it will be impossible. The spinning wheel was also about generational change. It reminded me of the Jordanian, Hashemite horses and their seven lines. The fifth line; adapting to new circumstances, addresses this topic. The ability to let go of what you have acquired and made your own. All that one has learned and experienced must sooner or later be returned to the world. Like the most generous of all gifts. So that the next generation can carry on the story.

If this does not happen, stagnation occurs. One may not be allowed to grow beyond one's origins. If we see death and ageing only as an inevitable end, and a painful decay - then we may not want to let go. Then we may try to hold on to the other's time. And we feed on a future that doesn't really belong to us.

Verse 50 of the Tao the Ching, highlights the emotion of this message:

***"The master gives himself up to
whatever the moment brings.
He knows that he is going to die,
and he has nothing left to hold on to:
no illusions in his mind,
no resistance in his body.
He doesn't think about his actions;
they flow from the core of his being.
He holds nothing back from life;
therefore he is ready for death,
as a man is ready for sleep
after a good day's work."***

We compete for time. Humanity's rampant consumption of the planet's resources is a consequence of this. We steal other people's time and push ourselves to the front of the line, instead of letting life flow through us. And when we are not prepared to give of ourselves, we can never get anything in return.

I may have told this story before, but it still belongs here. It's about rutabagas and dreams of a different world. And about a friend of mine, who many years ago (at least thirty) had a sudden realization. He had been sitting in a meeting of a barter ring, of which he had just become a member. And as usual, when it came to economics - in whatever form - it was all about profits. About the importance of not losing or making a bad deal. And about fairness.

My friend, who was interested in cultivation, had an unusually good harvest of swedes this year. He brought these newly harvested gifts to the meeting, gathered in a large bag.

His voice on the phone was so eager that at first it was hard to hear what he was saying. "Now I understand," he exclaimed. "It's not about what you get back at all. The only essential thing is to give everything you have, and then you have to wait and see what comes to you."

With this new-found insight, he had then distributed all his swedes to the meeting participants, who looked somewhat surprised at this unexpected gift. It's about giving everything you have, without expecting anything in return. It's not about being taken advantage of or taking advantage of someone else. That would be the opposite.

There are those who believe that the greatest gift one can give to this world is one's own presence. Your own time and the person you are meant to be. The gift one has been given - a body and a certain amount of time - one is meant to pass on.

Respect and reverence. Two concepts that humanity needs to define and deepen its understanding of, according to many other species. Only then can we take responsibility for our own being and complete our time here on earth, before handing over the baton to the next generation.



This morning, when I tried to find the cows as usual, in the big hilly pasture where they are right now - something strange happened. I walked alongside the river, down in the valley, to see if they might be resting at the far end of the grove of trees where the river bends. They weren't there, but instead I found something completely different. A movement in the water.

Suddenly the river was a "somebody". It was such a clear presence that I first turned around to see if anyone had followed. But how could this someone take shape when the water itself in the river was constantly new? There was no defined, stagnant water. Was it perhaps the spirit of the place making itself felt? But if so, what is the definition of a place?

The question, *who are you*, became highly relevant. The answer came as an immediate certainty. What was possibly animated here was *the movement*. The water came next, as an expression of this flow. The body of water was interchangeable, but the movement persisted. Or at least the possibility of movement.

It was so extremely real and tangible when it happened, at the same time my logical brain was struggling to catch up with the abstraction.

If the essence of a being is the very first thing that arises, when body and soul merge; like the spark of a personality. Then it was clear that this steam was genuinely kind, in character. Almost low-key in its caring.

It became important to convey that the impact on the environment, which could happen if the water overflowed or dried up, for example, was not an expression of the river's personal will. The river is benevolent and very generous. It doesn't want to make trouble.

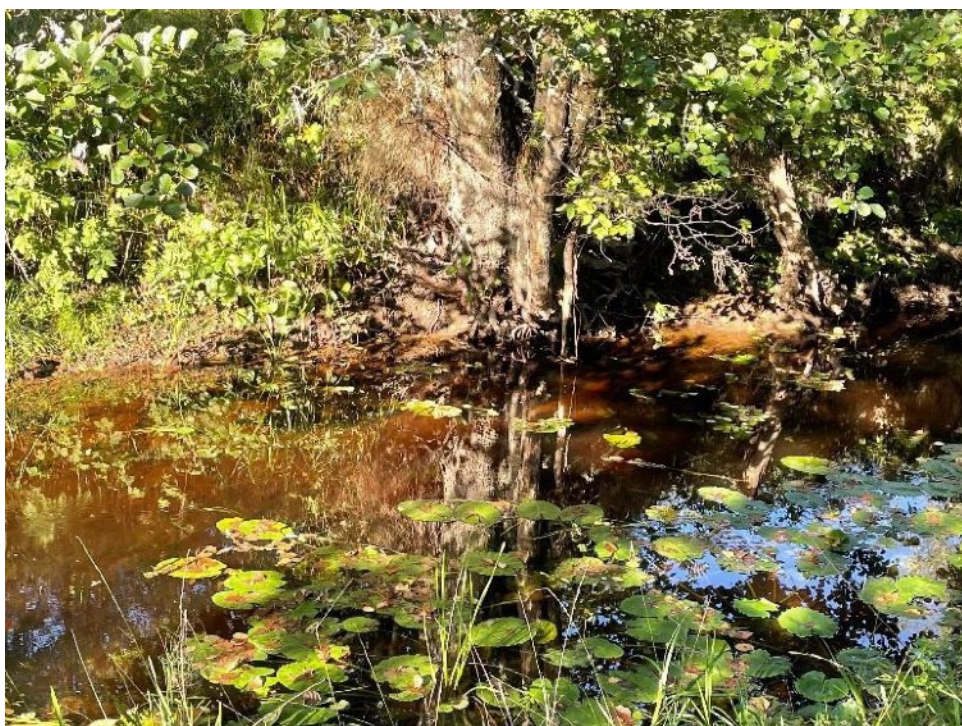
I'm thinking of the spring floods, and sometimes the high flows in the autumn, which almost always carry the fence we've put up along the edge. What madness to blame the river for that, I realize now, and apologize as best I can.

If the river cannot give the environment what it has adapted to receive - then it's as if the whole river is transformed into a prayer for balance to be restored. *An animated flow that becomes a prayer*. It's one of the most awe-inspiring things I have ever experienced.

Is this how nature survives? Perhaps it is not a law of nature, which makes everything strive for some kind of basic balance, where everything has room to live in coexistence. *Interbeing*. The earth is constantly balancing itself, through a prayer for benevolence.

As I stand there beside the river and am filled with this prayer, I also remember something else. Twenty-seven years ago, when I first moved here, it was exactly this feeling that lived in me. Before I was able to move into Friskeröd, I lived for a short time with a friend whose house is located right next to this river. It was the same longing that created the dream of this place. A breathing space in the world, albeit small, where everyone could live in balance with themselves and their surroundings - without a damaging, or diminishing, conformity.

Could it have been that the waters of this river passed through me - so that the flow of benevolence became part of my being for a long enough time. A large enough opening in time for such a longing to manifest itself... in a human being?



The same genuine sense of goodwill, also permeated Funny's birthday party. From the open window in the kitchen, I could hear people talking to each other - many of whom had never met before, and the conversations touched on a gentle sense of curiosity. I couldn't hear the words. But the friendliness was unmistakable.

None of us who were there that day had any thought of personal gain. Firewood was stacked, a door was built, the barn was cleaned, fences were mended, the water float was cleansed, the lodge was cleared, and in the tack-room halters and saddlery were hung up in their places. A little frog made his way into the kitchen and watched all that was going on with some wonder. Puppies, cats, pigs, chickens, and Muscovy ducks wandered about. And then Simon, of course. The Cashmere goat, who lives entirely on his own terms.

And all the time that feeling; the restfulness and continuity of the flow of the river. A farm, or a garden, is never finished. There is always something to do. And once it's done, there's something else that needs to be done again. No point in fighting it.

Better to stop, have a cup of coffee and look at all the millions of little yellow plums hanging from every single branch above the hammock. Or the scent of the occasional honeysuckle, lingering in the late summer heat.

There are certain basic principles of life, Funny argued, that modern man seems to have forgotten. The topic came up in a conversation with a student who was experiencing a certain culture clash in relation to memories of a previous (and very different) culture. In this earlier culture there were many injustices. Such as large class divisions, oppression, and corruption. And as a result, groups of people came together to fight to preserve things that were not immediately visible. Fundamental values, meaning that should not be lost. These people refused to be owned by anything other than what they deep down stood for.

These deeper values may not be so visible in the modern society we now live in. These ancient martial artists are not needed here. When enough people are well enough off, a sense of comfort may set in - affecting society at large. Money and other material things become more important.

What is there in our lives, right now, that is so important that we are willing to die to help preserve it? Or, as the mare **Kimba** once put it, what is so important in my life that I would rather die while alive - than not live at all?

Kimba follows in Funny's footsteps. And as an attacker, she is capable of following a student, or friend, into the deepest darkness - both inside and out. She fears nothing.

Focus and sharpness. It has characterized defending individuals through all times, and across all species. Kimba, like the people in Funny's story, bases her values on a number of invisible concepts. Like unwritten laws of nature. Values that persist through time and space. Even if they are sometimes forgotten, they never disappear completely.

Kimba feels a great sense of reverence and self-respect for her task of standing up for a kind of universal equality. Everything that lives has a value by virtue of its existence. That value is both immeasurable and exactly equal, at the same time. It doesn't matter how big or small, young, or old you are. The value of life is equal. Priceless.

Anything that cannot protect itself is worth preserving. That's how Funny described it in her story. The Jordanian horses call it the importance of protecting the internal and external vulnerability of a society - and within each individual. The rage that may be required to be brave enough to give one's protection (and life) to those who cannot protect themselves has nothing to do with the emotion of anger. It is more like a force of nature. Nor is it a species thing. It's about an instinct to protect and preserve living space for all possible life forms. This could be forests, animals, people, plants, and waterways.

Preserving does not mean that no change should take place. That would mean stagnation of the vital force over time. Preservation is more about giving autonomy, the independence, a place. So many animals and other species talk about how everything that lives have a natural drive towards autonomy. We move away from the creator, just as much as we long to return to our origins. Just as a young person strives to free himself from his parents. As if life itself longs to express its uniqueness, through us.

There is also a sense of awe here. You can never own anyone, whether another individual, or a part of nature. But you can contribute to maintaining living space.



Another invisible value in Funny's story was *to always let the speaker finish*. To speak to the point. To be allowed to express oneself to completion.

Tussen, another one of Funny's friends - a lively gelding - has expanded this concept. He was one of the first to pick up Mio's memory thread, the moment he left the body and stepped out of time. It's exciting that a horse as active and restless as Tussen, speaks of the importance of letting fulfillment happen in stillness, through *the empathetic gaze*. A state of empathic presence, which occurs when one meets the other in full presence and without the slightest trace of judgment. On one occasion he gave his students an exercise in this.

He clarified that the empathetic gaze is not about pity, on the contrary. Nor is it sympathetic, or eagerly supportive. It is primarily **allowing**.

Back to the Jordanian horses. In interpreting Mio's principles, they highlight the principle of allowing as one of the most fundamental. *The creator created this creation by allowing it to be*. Allowing someone to be/exist. To allow something to be - to let it be as it is. Not to control being. The creator created this creation by allowing it to be. Allowing the other to take shape, to blossom, to be fulfilled - in a complete state of unconditional love and compassion.



This also requires courage. The empathic gaze helps to bridge the gap between the individual and the greater whole. Indirectly, it influences the self-image of the individual. The empathic perception contributes to experiencing oneself in its full light. This also creates a contrast with how one saw oneself before. In this way, a longing for something greater may be awakened in all concerned. A longing that goes both inwards, towards the self - and outwards, towards everything at the same time.

The empathetic gaze can, without a single word, change an entire encounter.

In the exercise, which Tussen gave us that morning, we should walk a distance between two pastures. And along the way we would stop, preferably many times, to meet the plants and animals of the surroundings in this kind of empathetic state. In doing so, Tussen thought, the other will emerge. Like myself, in the meeting between us.

I'll leave you alone. I leave me alone. *I let you be. I let me be.*



On the way between the meadows I meet blades of grass, stones, insects, ground elder, raspberry thorns and an old apple tree. And I don't understand why I ever do anything but this? To be allowed to exist in the world; what could be greater than that? What could be more meaningful? To let someone speak to the point. To give room for fulfillment.



The image of a perfectly normal everyday situation. A lunchbox in the microwave, while looking at your phone. While the TV is on in the background. While thinking about something completely different. There is nothing that speaks to the point here.

Letting someone finish their story is about letting things settle, Funny explained. Let's say you're carrying in a pile of firewood. Then you don't move on to the next task until it's finished speaking. That might take a couple of days.

You don't start the next task until the previous one has faded away. But you can also have parallel tasks running at the same time. For example, cooking dinner takes less time than painting the house. You can eat dinner and paint the house in the same period of time. And to do that, you can have sub-goals, each of which is allowed to unwind separately. But if the house is painted at the same time as dinner is being cooked, no one is speaking to the point.

You cram in a lot of things that never get processed, because there are far too few empty spaces. The only empty space is sleep, but that's not enough. Sleep is not meant to be a substitute for these empty spaces, Funny clarified. You may not have time for this. And in that case, there may be things that have to take priority. But perhaps the quality and the presence of the experience, makes the feeling of not having enough time disappear?

In contemporary human existence, there is a danger that everything you do speaks in the mouth of each other. And then frustration arises. Modern man is frustrated. We live in a society with such a high level of frustration, Funny said. To juggle many balls at the same time becomes completely pointless if they are not just balls. Segments. Delineated, completed units that circle each other. You can hang laundry, and it gets to speak to the point. It might only take a few minutes, or seconds. But it will mean a lot to the next thing you do.

It can easily happen that you run in with the laundry basket, filled with other things that have not yet been completed. Along with the laundry basket have come thoughts of dinner, a meeting at work, ten unanswered text messages and the occasional TV series.

Preserving memories and knowledge is not about documenting them and putting them away in a box. Funny was clear about this. *Preserving is putting into practice.*

Which brought her to the next unspoken principle. It's not easy to find words for something using a language shaped by a culture that does not contain the memory of that thought. But perhaps it could be described as *respect for the sequence.*

Funny conveyed an image similar to friendship, sharing experiences. How one can expand the self to include more than oneself, while maintaining the integrity of all. Respect for the sequence. Not respect for any kind of hierarchy, subordination, or superiority.

The sequence moves like a wind-shaped flow. The grass billows gently, with a subtle precision. You can't just pluck a blade of grass and listen to a single story.

You can do it, but then the whole is lost.

If I step into a forest, out of curiosity, to listen to the trees. Then the tree that is first in turn will make itself felt - in one way or another. The story then spreads around the grove. This does not mean that the first tree is the most important, or the most relevant one in the context. But just as the wind pulls through the grass, so there is an order to follow. All these blades of grass will be affected by the wind, as a story is told gently and precisely. If you follow that story, it will be completed/fulfilled.

If you don't follow it, the story becomes disjointed. A bit haphazardly and at the spur of the moment, you put all these fragments together. Maybe you make them into truths.

Funny's advice to us moderns was to receive these stories primarily through the body, the heart, the capacity for empathy. Just as she conveyed to the founders of the Scenstudion (a school in performing arts/body poetry), when they were a bit worried about the future. *As long as you go through the body, it will be fine.*

Time. Empathy. We need to embrace the meaning of the natural sequential order. Otherwise, we'll get sick. Society falls ill. And we know what that's like, Funny reminded us, with seriously ill individuals. You have to tread carefully.

With great compassion, you get to take your human out into the world. And slowly, one step at a time, expand awareness of the fabric that surrounds us. Of the great life of which we are a small part. *We carry inside us, the wonders we seek outside us.* Rumi's words.

Perhaps the empathic state is what we are made of at heart. The consciousness of the soul, which sees everything without judgement. The immediate consequence of our actions becomes apparent when the self embraces everything. Then malice and all ideas of personal gain cease.

The joint work during the day, when Funny celebrated her birthday, turned into a feast in the evening. People and animals shared food and drink. Then songs and ceremonies, from different cultures and traditions. Towards the end, we had to face our own longing. What do we want to take forward, and what can we leave behind? All these people, gathered to celebrate a little pony, who in different ways helped to change our lives. There was a hopefulness in that, unlike anything else. Perhaps we can come together, as a species, in coexistence with the rest of the world? If we practice, patiently. Just as Funny listens to our stories again and again. So that we gently awaken; as from a dream, inside of a dream.



Thank you Funny