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*'Ten measures of Magic came into the world. Egypt received nine of these. The rest of the world, only one.'*

The Talmud, Code of Jewish Law

## Living My "Bes" Life

Awakening the Alchemist Within

### **A** modern dose of 'divine' inspiration in an ancient land...

For some, Egypt is a destination; another sight to see or, perhaps, another experience to cross off the 'bucket-list'. For others, it is the cradle of civilization; home to the world's first super-power and a seemingly endless fount of ancient knowledge. For me, it is a continuing life-journey; a mesmerizing and transformative venue where miracles still happen. Florence Nightingale had it right when she said, 'One wonders that people come back from Egypt and live lives as they did before.'

Egypt is a land of striking contrasts, both natural and man-made. The lush greenery of the Nile Valley is juxtaposed against the stark gleam of the shimmering desert sands. Colossal stone monuments are silhouetted against modern high-rises. Cool crisp nights melt into sweltering summer days. Donkey carts travel alongside luxury automobiles. Camel drivers in exotic post-card perfect 'costumes' communicate on cellular phones. Women in fashionable modern attire chat with women covered in traditional black garb. The amplified tones of the Islamic call to worship resonate through neighborhoods decorated with iconic depictions of the ancient deities. The Old World collides with the New at every corner, and the Spiritual realm seems to permeate the Physical with exceptional frequency.

Perhaps it is this unusual duality, this virtual assault on our everyday senses that helps to catapult the mind of a willing traveler to an entirely different level of Being. For those willing to check their egos at the border and allow their spirits to flow freely, Egypt is a place pulsating with wonder, tantalizing mysteries and perhaps, if you set your mind to it, even modern day miracles. Where else can one be so vibrantly present while surrounded with such grand visions from the past?

What follows is the story of how my passion for ancient Egypt prompted a much needed mid-life course correction, profoundly altering the trajectory of my life-path and awakening the long dormant powers of the modern-day Alchemist within. The alchemical creative process to which I refer is not the old world physical science of transforming lead into gold, but rather the spiritual philosophy of harnessing the universal 'Law of Attraction' to manifest our intentions; the transformation of one's mettle, rather than the transformation of one's metal. Sometimes the Universe conspires in the achievement of our dreams, and in the process, guides us back to our true life-path. Have you ever noticed that the very thing we need or want has a magical way of appearing when we are ready to receive it? We all have the power to attract and manifest our thoughts and intentions. It is as if our minds act as powerful magnets, drawing us to the forces, the people and the circumstances of life that are most in sync with our dominating thoughts. To paraphrase the poet William Henley, we are all the masters of our fate; the captains of our souls — even though many of us are totally oblivious to the process, let alone how to control it.

It is believed that the study of Alchemy, both the practical science and its spiritual counterpart, originated in ancient Egypt. In fact, the essence or what we call the Law of Attraction was known to the ancients as *Heka* — the primeval life force that sparked the creation of the Universe and everything within it, and continues to imbue magical creative powers in all living and nonliving things. By adopting a consciousness of its deepest truths, the ancients believed it was possible to harness the power of *Heka*, tap into its creative

force and bend it to the will of the 'magician.' After all, if *Heka* had been a necessary element in the very creation of the Universe, it made sense that it would continue to play an invaluable role in the protection of that creation and everything in it. The ancient magicians recognized and practiced this Universal Law. Over the centuries as the spiritual realm devolved to make way for the physical, material realm, we discarded the wisdom of the ancients, and ridiculed any remnants as heresy or silly superstition. Only recently have we begun to rediscover the magic key to unleashing the long-forgotten alchemical power of manifestation locked within us all.

The easiest way to describe the Law of Attraction is to imagine yourself as a magnet, with the power to attract the essence of whatever you are thinking or feeling. There are just three basic steps. Step One: Ask. Step Two: Believe. Step Three: Receive.

It is a process so simple, and yet so difficult to embrace. Even a non-skeptic can fall victim to the nagging doubt, the dismissive denial, or the flat-out ridicule of a belief system that we, as modern and intelligent human beings, can actually influence our reality by harnessing invisible powers within. Why not just chase after the leprechaun at the end of the rainbow, or click the heels of our ruby slippers to obtain our heart's desire? After all, if the Law of Attraction were actually grounded in science or fact, wouldn't it be taught in mainstream business schools? Wouldn't books like *The Secret* be found in the Business or Motivational sections of the bookstore rather than relegated to the Metaphysical or New Age shelves? To that, I respond: Education does not always equal wisdom; just ask Copernicus. If there is one absolute in human history, it is that even the most absolute absolutes have a way of dissolving over time — absolutely.

As children, we do not question our inner power to manifest any adventure or reality of our choosing simply by pretending it to be so. By tapping into our abundant imaginations, we can go anywhere, do anything, or be anyone we wish. The manifestation process is not that different for grown-ups, even though our requests may be for

something more real ... Albert Einstein once said that imagination is the preview of life's coming attractions. In that event, the Universe must have known that Egypt would play an important role in my destiny as I was born with a boundless imagination and an innate affinity for all things Egyptian. As a child growing up on a farm in northwestern Indiana, it was easy to imagine myself in the starring role of life's coming attractions. Some of the fondest memories included times spent blissfully climbing the pyramid-shaped stone piles at my uncle's gravel pit pretending to be an Egyptian High Priestess, gazing down upon my minions from a secret perch atop the Great Pyramid by day, and carefully mapping the stars (especially the three beltstars of Orion) by night; Or Cleopatra watching her fleet safely navigate the turquoise blue seas surrounding the harbor of Alexandria from her royal watchtower high in the Pharos Lighthouse — which also doubled as the tiny arched window in our attic. More often than not, I would pretend to be a precursor to the now-popular 'Indiana Jones,' sifting through buckets of rubble in search of ancient treasures. Every rock pile presented an opportunity for a new adventure; every cluttered attic or abandoned garbage dump served as a veritable treasure-trove of ancient wonders waiting to be explored. These 'explorations' were not the means to any particular end. The joy came from being alive and present in the magical moment I had deliberately conjured from within.

So what happened to the imaginative and free-spirited child who believed herself capable of creating the reality of her own choosing? Did she follow the intuitive glimpse of her 'life's preview' and seek a promising career in the fields of Archaeology or Egyptology? Well, if I had, this would have been a very short and uninspiring story. Instead, my life path took a more convoluted route. Reluctantly following the advice of my 1970s era male college counselor (who snickered at the career plans of any female that did not include teaching or nursing), I majored in Elementary Education ... and then became a divorce lawyer. (Perhaps this abrupt career shift was in response to a subliminal intention to free long-suffering wives from closed-minded husbands like that old-school counselor.)



Soon after obtaining my law degree, I married the man of my dreams and began my 'happily ever after' life. The storybook ending, however, was only the beginning. To describe the ensuing decade as a blur of semi-controlled chaos would be an upgrade from the reality that went something like this: Moved to one-bedroom apartment. Took romantic vacations. Talked about everything. Spent quality time with friends and spouse. Bought a house. Had a baby. Changed diapers. Had another baby. Overcame gag reflex regarding poop, snot, vomit and any combination of the three. Mourned loss of mother. Stopped taking vacations, romantic or otherwise. Had another baby. Moved to bigger house in the country. Found out the hard way that oldest son is allergic to bees. Traded in 2-door coupe for mini-van. Mourned loss of father. Adopted a dog. Had roof and dog fixed. Scrambled to get kids up, fed and ready for school. Drove kids to school when they missed bus. Attended teacher conferences.

Raced to emergency room after middle-child accidentally ripped off ear in monkey-bars mishap. Attended Christmas programs, kindergarten graduations, Brownie meetings and field trips. Became more and more isolated from old friends and disconnected from self. Got another dog, and a couple of cats. Interviewed a series of potential child care givers. Neglected to get cat fixed. Cat had kittens in daughter's room. Replaced carpeting. Traded in minivan for full-sized van. Took family vacations. Hosted slumber parties. Buried beloved pets, large and small. Cheered at countless sporting events. Helped with homework and last minute projects. Nursed wounds; praised accomplishments. Took children to doctor. Took children to dentist. Took children to orthodontist. Refinanced home mortgage — again. And through it all, attempted to maintain a successful solo law practice... I had allowed myself to become controlled by circumstances; consumed with serving the needs of others, to the exclusion of everything else. The once imaginative girl who had so easily conjured up images of herself as an Egyptian Princess, had somehow morphed into the Queen of Denial! Mark Twain may have said it best: "Denial ain't just a river in Egypt".

Although I had chosen and welcomed marriage, children and a career, it seems that assuming an identity defined as someone's mother, someone's spouse, and someone's attorney left little room for a sense of self. On the outside, I was a veritable poster-child for the American ideal of a 'Superwoman' — that much celebrated modern-day heroine who wields her well-honed super powers to successfully maneuver the minefields of motherhood as well as the shark-infested waters of a career, magically achieving perfect balance, enviable success and joyful fulfillment in both worlds. The local newspaper even ran a feature article entitled 'My Mom Works'. Praise of my seemingly remarkable ability to 'have it all' included:

*Her schedule, while hectic and erratic, is now working like a well-oiled machine. That is due, in part, to ... the working mother's holy trinity — the microwave, the dust-buster, and the crock pot.*

Talk about a crock! This super-heroine archetype is a bigger fantasy than DC's Amazonian comic-book character who fights bad guys in a flag-emblazoned swimsuit, catches people in her magic lasso of truth, deflects bullets with her golden belt and bracelets, and pilots an invisible jet while saving the world on a weekly basis.

I wasn't consciously unhappy. I wasn't consciously happy. In fact, I was barely conscious at all; caught in the classic struggle of all working mothers. When I was at work, I felt guilty being away from the children. When I was at home, I felt guilty not being at work and devoting more time to my clients. When I was alone with my husband — oh, wait ... that never happened anymore. My life had been hijacked by a dysfunctional autopilot, drifting toward a soul-sucking black hole, and I seemed to have misplaced my escape pod. Even with the addition of the BlackBerry to the holy-trinity of maternal armaments, on the inside of every so-called Superwoman lurks a gaping hole where her authentic inner-self used to be. More likely than not, she is just too exhausted to recognize it.

Sometimes a seemingly random series of unexpected events can be life-changing. This Superwoman's transformation and formal introduction to the Law of Attraction began one cold and snowy Indiana night in the winter of 1997... Entranced by the hypnotic blinking of the cursor on the computer monitor, I found myself surfing the web with no particular purpose other than to stave off a recurring bout of cabin fever. For reasons unclear at the time, my fingers typed the words 'Ancient Egypt' into the search engine and a long list of Egyptian related items appeared on screen. Leisurely scanning the many hits, I soon came across the website of John Anthony West, self-styled rogue Egyptologist and author of several books I had read, remembered and respected. After eagerly devouring the information posted on the site, I playfully punched the button marked 'Upcoming Tours' and then, just for fun, I requested an itinerary of Mr. West's next 'Magical Egyptian Tour'.

The next morning while checking my e-mail, I was pleased to discover not only a copy of the requested trip itinerary, but also a personal note from John West advising that space was available for

the March, 1998 tour. Upon relating my concern that this sudden availability was most likely due to a mass exodus of potential travelers in the aftermath of a recent terrorist attack near Luxor, John (known for his irascible wit) was quick to point out the silver lining in that otherwise chilling cloud: the remaining group of travelers would be small and the crowds few. There was no better way to experience Egypt.

Egypt had captivated my imagination for as long as I could remember. This was my golden opportunity to finally go there. I could already picture myself standing at the paws of the Sphinx, hiking across the sands of the Giza Plateau, sailing a felucca on the gentle waters of the Nile. All I had to do to make it happen was say 'yes' ... So, I thanked Mr. West for the personal invitation — and promptly forwarded my sincere regrets ... *Wait!* What's wrong with this picture? In retrospect, it is clear that I was considering my circumstances, focusing on the impossibilities and, as a non-practicing alchemist, completely ignoring the powers within. Consumed with doubt, guilt and obligation, my own intellect was keeping me from my dreams. The list of excuses was long and daunting, and included the usual (albeit, self-perceived) matters of consequence: (1) I had a trial scheduled to take place during that particular period of time which could not be continued; (2) We had not included a 17 day international trip into the family budget; (3) This would be my first adventure beyond the friendly confines of North and Central America (4) and I would be taking it all by myself as none of my friends or family would agree to come along; (5) The additional expense of upgrading to a single supplement seemed especially prohibitive; (6) I had never been away from my law office for more than a week at a time, convinced it would self-destruct without my hands-on attention; AND (7) I had never been away from my children for more than a few days. (The Universe had its work cut out to awaken the Alchemist sleeping inside this 'Superwoman').

Two days later, the legal case in question — one that had been hotly contested for more than 2 years — settled unexpectedly. Still, I felt

guilty about spending that much time and money on a trip for myself, and continued to decline. As if on some cosmic cue, a certified check was delivered to my office for payment of an old fee nearly written off as uncollectible. Was it mere coincidence that the amount of the check was approximately equal to the price of the Egyptian tour? (The Alchemist within was slowly beginning to stir.)

Sometimes you have to turn off your conscious mind and allow the subconscious to take over. Unlike the conscious mind which filters our thoughts, the subconscious takes any order given to it in the spirit of absolute faith and acts upon that order — especially those that have been charged with emotion and handed over with feeling. As the connective link between the bonds of the natural world and the boundless creative possibility of the supernatural, the subconscious acts as the gateway to activation of the Universal alchemical process... It wasn't long before another female traveler materialized on the trip roster in need of a roommate, and the haze of oblivion and denial finally lifted. The Universe had issued a prime directive: *Get thee to Cairo*. Resistance was futile. The time had come for this Alchemist to return to the ancient power source for a much needed boost. As the remaining obstacles magically disappeared, I gratefully surrendered to the inevitable and mailed the registration fee. After all, I had learned early in life that when a mystery becomes too overpowering, one dare not disobey.

The sleeping Alchemist within had found a way to ask for the trip even though the outer Superwoman did not feel she was entitled to make this seemingly selfish request. It is also important to note that although the initial request was made "in fun" and not (at least not consciously) "in earnest", this subtle distinction did not dissuade the Universe from responding. The Universe does not pay attention to such nuances. (Hence the old adage: Be careful what you wish for.) The mere act of giving thought to the request served as the invitation, the continued thoughts along that line served as fuel to catapult the request onto the road to fruition, and the ultimate willingness to believe and receive allowed the Universe to drive it home, manifesting the request — just as ordered. While Superwoman

did not dare to believe in the power of her request, let alone render herself open to receive, the inner Alchemist knew better. The intuitive subconscious had been able to attract and manifest a necessary life-goal that the conscious mind had filed away as unattainable. So long, Superwoman. Score one for the Alchemist.

And so it was that on a cool March morning the newly revived Alchemist left home by herself to begin a journey to Cairo and beyond. As the plane neared Cairo, I remember gazing from the grimy window to glimpse the step-pyramids of Saqqara for the first time. In a sudden moment of clarity, the years peeled away. I was eight years old again, climbing the stone 'pyramids' of the family gravel pit, blissfully conjuring my own little chunk of reality. Before my feet had even touched ground, this ancient cradle of civilization had already helped me rediscover the joy that only comes from being aligned with one's inner and authentic self. The healing process had begun.

Egypt agreed with this former Superwoman, and vice versa. Few places could have been more foreign to a mid-western farm-girl, yet it was a natural fit. Egypt immediately reminded me of an ancient and spiritual 'Disneyland', where every scene is a ready-made photo opportunity and, more importantly, where one's senses are in a continuous state of awe and wonder at the overwhelmingly unique sights, scents and sounds resonating from the world's original (and literal) Magic Kingdoms: the great pyramid builders of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 3-6), the Theban Dynasties of the Middle Kingdom (11-14), and the glory days of the New Kingdom with its imposing statuary and harmonic architecture (Dynasties 18-20). I quickly understood what John West meant when he said only the "emotionally challenged and spiritually dyslexic" remain unaffected by the wonders of Egypt. I relished exploring the ancient and sacred sites with our group of like-minded travelers. But perhaps more importantly, I blissfully navigated the crowded streets of Cairo — by myself; bartered for treasured and not-so-treasured trinkets from the colorful street vendors — by myself; negotiated an appropriate fare and rode

an ill-tempered camel across the Giza Plateau — by myself, and never felt more alive.

Traveling alone changes a woman. Perhaps that is why so many women are reluctant to try it. Perhaps that is also why so many men discourage it. I highly encourage every woman to seek quality time alone and, whenever possible, outside of her natural habitat and/or comfort zone. Stepping out of the box not only forces one to be present in the moment and mindful of her surroundings, it also affords an opportunity to shed the constraints of our circumstances, and simply BE. I was no longer defined as somebody's mother, or somebody's wife, or somebody's lawyer. I was just Me — and what a truly exhilarating feeling that was!

Had I come to Egypt with a friend in tow, I may not have broken through the barrier of my natural shyness to interact with my traveling companions. I may not have had the nerve to venture off on my own, or to let go of my natural inhibitions and open the door to new experiences — like a soul-resonating group chant under the stars from the inner sanctum of the Luxor Temple, or the alert inner stillness of a silent meditation inside the infinite darkness of the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid of Khufu. Unlike the introductory gatherings I was used to, we spent little time discussing what we did for a living or how many cars we had parked in our garages back home. Instead, we immersed ourselves in the wonder of our immediate surroundings and remained completely in the moment. In the process, I gained life-long friends as well as a new sense of self-awareness, self-worth and the courage to live the life of my dreams. Trying to find our own bliss while blindly following someone else's, or identifying as something we are not, is a recipe for disappointment. Sometimes when we toss away our social crutches and limp off on our own, we find ourselves able to joyfully skip back home. Score another one for the inner Alchemist!

The newly awakened Alchemist kept a journal of that first trip to Egypt in the spring of 1998. The entry on Day Four contains the following triumphant exclamation, along with a preview of coming attractions:

'Important breakthrough today! I thought I came to Egypt to return to the source of my fondest childhood fantasies, and to find what was missing in my life. Seems the only thing that's been missing is ME. Now all I have to do is figure out how to inject a healthy dose of Vitamin ME, or ME-2, into my daily routine... Oh, I have also made a mysterious new friend. He is a bit on the short and squatty side, but he sports rock-hard abs. Actually, he is carved from stone. Still, he has an impish grin that reminds me of the old troll dolls we used to play with. Everywhere we go, he seems to pop out – in the form of a statue, a bas relief, or a figure drawn of papyrus. Who is this strange little man with the perpetually protruding tongue? His eyes, even drawn in stone, seem to twinkle. I think mine are beginning to do the same. I LOVE this place....'

My new-found state of Being begat yet another opportunity for the continued growth and transformation of the Alchemist within. It has been said that when the pupil is ready, the teacher will come. Who knew that this particular teacher would appear in the form of a short, squat, blue-skinned, bow-legged, curly-bearded, protruding-tongued, feathered headdress wearing warrior god of ancient Egypt? (When the creator gods were busy making all those tall, thin picture-perfect deities we have come to recognize through the art of the ancients, this little guy must have been out to lunch. He was far from perfect, with a face only a mother could love.) Emil, our Egyptian guide, told me this pint-sized hero of old was named Bes, and that first and foremost among his impressive list of deity duties was Protector of Women, followed closely by Entertainer and Guardian of Children. It couldn't have been a more perfect match, and a wonderful friendship ensued.

Bes's likeness seemed to appear everywhere, further piquing my interest. A more thorough background check revealed that this old-world version of a modern-day troll doll was also the holder of a wide range of other ancient deity-duties, including: Keeper of Domestic Happiness; Guardian against Snakes and Dangerous

Animals of the Night; Patron of Warriors; Protector of Childbirth; Guardian against Nightmares; Deity of Joy, Laughter and Merry-making; Guardian of Roads and Travelers; and my personal favorite, Encourager of Toilet-Training. (Where was this little guy when I was buried under seven-plus years of nonstop diapers?) Bes was a full-service, approachable god, especially popular among the common folk of ancient Egypt – revered as a fun-loving deity when times were good, and a fiercely protective 'go to' god when the going got tough. This strange modern-day attraction to the most physically unattractive member of the ancient Egyptian pantheon (whose face was meant to frighten away all manner of misfortune) soon spread throughout my fellow-travelers like a joyful virus, and Bes became our unofficial trip mascot.

Early one morning, our group sailed from Aswan to the picturesque island of Algikia, site of the beautiful Temple of Isis, and one of many homes of our feather-crowned mascot. The Isis Temple complex was originally constructed during the Ptolemaic period on the island of Philae, and then painstakingly reassembled on higher ground more than two millennia later to preserve it from being consumed by the floodwaters of the Aswan High Dam. Even in ruins, the location of this ancient site on a lush tropical island, surrounded on all sides by the purling Nile, is about as near to perfection as the senses can process. Imbued with feminine-inspired energy, the Temple of Isis radiates a vibrant, yet divinely tranquil, quality that rivals the mood created by even the most meltingly romantic movie set.

Nestled alongside the massive hypostyle halls of the Isis Temple is a small colonnade where ancient depictions of Bes can still be seen singing and dancing on stone columns carved by the ancients. After paying homage to our pint-size protector, I wandered to a nearby building called the Trojan's Kiosk. The Kiosk is distinctly Roman and not very interesting, but the view from the outer pylon was a thing of beauty; imagine a cloudless blue sky embracing Nile waters gently kissed by the sun. The mesmerizing effect was further enhanced by the simmering aroma of red hibiscus flowers

strategically decorating the lush green waterfront. Climbing upon the outer pylon, I reclined on my back, knees bent. I closed my eyes, allowing the glorious rays of the Egyptian sun to warm every pore of my upturned face as I attempted to forever commit to memory every aspect of this rare moment of complete sensory perfection; my heart filled with gratitude for the mysterious Universal powers that had successfully conspired to bring me to this magical place.

My private contemplation was interrupted all too soon by the arrival of two new visitors from another tour group. As much as I willed my mind to block this unwanted disruption, I couldn't help but hear the sadness lingering in the voice of the older woman, and I soon found myself involuntarily eavesdropping as she recounted to her companion the loss of a treasured Saint Christopher's medal given to her by her daughter as a talisman of protection for the trip. She explained that although the medal had been carefully pinned to her camisole, it had gone missing the previous afternoon following an outing to another site. Despite our near perfect surroundings, the woman was clearly distraught. I felt a measure of guilt knowing that she was not going to experience the same magical moment I had been enjoying. The least I could do was move out of the way and allow her to enjoy the magnificent view without obstruction.

I stood and motioned to the ladies, offering to take their picture in this particularly scenic spot. As we exchanged places, the older woman smiled, handed me her camera and, along with her companion, prepared to sit down for this unexpected photo opportunity. Before I could snap the shot, I heard a sharp gasp — immediately followed by an exclamation of pure joy and exhilaration. In the exact spot where I had been reclining only seconds before, a golden Saint Christopher's medal now glinted in the sunlight! The magic moment was contagious after all. I can't say it was Bes (in his ancient role as the 'Protector of Women') who actuated this particular moment of divine inspiration, but I can say with complete certainty that this was only the first of a long line of miracles I would experience during my many travels in Egypt.

The last night of that first 'Magical Egyptian Tour' with John

Anthony West was to culminate with an hour-long private meditation inside the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid of Khufu. Most of the other members of the group were well experienced in the practice of meditation, while my mind was much less disciplined. (To be frank, as a child, my mother used to compare my attention span to that of a winged gnat. Today, it is perhaps better described as an Attention Deficit Disorder.) As much as I looked forward to exploring the interior of the biggest and best of the pyramids, the thought of sitting in silence — on a stone floor — for an entire hour — in total darkness — was a bit daunting. Confiding this concern to my room-mate Toni (a master of meditation), she suggested I try thinking about Bes and simply go wherever he took me.

And so we climbed to the entrance of the Great Pyramid and began our ascent through the interior walkways; passing through the Grand Gallery before finally crawling through the small rectangular tunnel leading to the upper granite room known as the King's Chamber ... Soon, the lights were turned off. I sat cross-legged on the granite floor in the far corner of the ancient room, near the broken stone sarcophagus, clutching a tiny statue of Bes in my right hand. The first few moments were spent adjusting to the unimaginable darkness. Eyes open or closed; it made absolutely no difference. We were completely surrounded by mega-tons of solid granite and limestone. Eventually, I leaned against the wall, crossed my arms mummy-style and silently summoned Bes to the forefront of my mind's eye ... The next thing I knew, the lights were back on and my traveling companions were once again walking about the Chamber, preparing to leave. Bes had seen me through the darkness, literally and figuratively.

That night, I stuffed sand-riddled clothes and newly acquired Egyptian treasures into my bulging luggage for the long trip back home; all except for that little blue statue of Bes, which I continued to hold in one hand. After my bags were packed, I moved to the balcony of the hotel room, carefully positioning the chair so I could sit with my bare feet propped on the railing while gazing straight ahead at the Great Pyramid. For a while the massive monument

glowed majestically as the tourists enjoyed the nightly Sound and Light Show on the Giza Plateau. When the show ended and the pyramid was again encased in darkness, the ancient stone skyscraper continued to dominate the horizon, blocking a huge iconic triangle against the desert skyline. Above the dark triangle, the three belt stars of Orion twinkled like old friends. I smiled, remembering the many moments spent looking up at those same stars as a little girl back home on the farm in Indiana. Scenery so foreign, and yet so serenely familiar; I knew it was not only the external view that had triggered this vibrant feeling of Being, but also the inner transformation that had occurred there.

I had come to Egypt hoping to find what had been missing in my life, and with a bit of 'divine' inspiration from the ancient Protector of Women, I had found it in the Alchemist buried within. After devoting years to taking care of the demands of family and clients, I had neglected to attend to my own needs. By trying to become everything to everybody (aspiring to coveted role of Superwoman), I had stopped Being. This once powerful Alchemist had begun to disappear because I had grown apart from my soul. A basic realignment was in order to exchange the hollow accoutrements of external power for the authentic internal power that makes a soul sing. The journey to Bes's ancient homeland was just the medicine needed to fill the internal black hole that had threatened to swallow me whole. The last entry in the journal from that first magical trip read:

'Raising a triumphant glass to the silent stone sentinels of the Giza Plateau, I uttered a grateful toast to the ageless wonders — and to Bes, the ancient protector still nestled in my right hand. We're still here, I whispered [to the Pyramids, to Bes and to the Alchemist within]. Here's to us!'

### Alchemist Update

The result of that first sixty minute silent meditation in the Great Pyramid was an ancient Egyptian inspired novelette featuring Bes, Egypt's most uncomely and unlikely action hero. That book was published in 2000 as *The Story of Bes*. The 1998 'trip of a lifetime'

turned out to be the first of many such adventures in the land of Bes. (It seems this particular Alchemist requires a power boost from time to time. Perhaps it is an occupational hazard of the legal profession.) Anyway, several magical tours later I completed another Bes-inspired book of Egyptian mythology; a full-length novel dedicated to the child in all of us: *Falcon In The Nest*. Although I had always enjoyed creating stories in my mind, I had never expected to write anything other than the occasional legal brief or fact-filled memorandum of law. Thankfully, the self-journey that began with a simple e-mail request to John Anthony West one cold wintry evening also proved to be the key to opening the secret door to this creative and soul-satisfying outlet.

Ironically, the inspiration that began when this ancient Protector of Women/Guardian and Entertainer of Children first crossed my path has now come full-circle, as the newly rekindled interest in the pint-sized hero has allowed me to return to Egypt on a regular basis to research further stories and to co-host 'Bes Quest' tours, courtesy of Mohamed Nazmy, founder and president of Quest Travel. Co-hosting the 'Bes Quest' tours (for fun and not for profit) is my way of paying forward the life-altering transformation that Egypt offered to me.

If Egypt is an ancient and spiritual 'Disneyland', then Bes is its 'Mickey Mouse', welcoming all visitors to the world's real 'Magic Kingdom'. What better way to experience Egypt than through the eyes of one of its own? You might say Bes and I helped one another to reactivate our once latent and forgotten powers. In restoring and re-energizing ourselves, we became better equipped to restore and re-energize others. We all hold a piece of that 'divine' energy within us. Sometimes it just takes a bit of inspiration to remind us to take the time to tap into that Universal power source and bend it to our will. Who knew mine would be found in Egypt, in the form of an ancient feather-crowned dwarf with an impishly protruding tongue?

So how is this Alchemist's life's journey going now? Let's see ... Found my bliss. Reconnected with family and friends. Made new

friends who became extended family. Remembered daily dosage of Vitamin ME. Took kids to college. Cried. Laughed. Lived. Loved. Attended graduations. Traveled with friends. Continued to hone the creative powers of the Law of Attraction. Still divorcing people for a living, but domestic glow glimmers at home once again. Celebrated marriage of oldest son to girl of his dreams. Looking forward to many more adventures with Bes in his ancient homeland. Life is good...

### Author's Profile

**Shelli Wright Johnson** was born in LaPorte County, Indiana and raised on a farm near the tiny town of Hanna. She attended Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. Shelli taught 'language arts' in Coffee County, Georgia for a brief period before matriculating to Valparaiso University School of Law in Valparaiso, Indiana, where she received the degree of Juris Doctor. Shelli became the first woman to practice law in Portage, Indiana, and continues to maintain a law office there concentrating in Divorce, Adoptions and other Family Law related issues. A member of the American Association of Trial Law Attorneys, the American Bar Association, Indiana State Bar Association and Porter County Bar Association, Shelli is also licensed as a Family Law Mediator and has taught college level courses in both Family Law and Bankruptcy. Over the years, Shelli has been named to the National Directory of Who's Who in Executives and Professionals; Who's Who is American Law; Who's Who in America; the National Association of Professional Women, and other such publications.

Although an attorney by trade, Shelli is a lifelong enthusiast of ancient Egypt by natural design. Her first Egyptian tour in the spring of 1998 inspired a children's book featuring Bes, the ancient protruding-tongued hero who had captivated her from day one. That book was titled, *The Story of Bes*. Several return trips to Bes's

ancient homeland resulted in the publication of a second Egyptian-themed book, *Falcon In The Nest — A 'Story of Bes' Adventure*. Shelli became a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators in 2000. Her passion for Ancient Egypt and Egyptian Mythology has allowed her to become a frequent speaker in classrooms throughout northern Indiana.

In addition to her law practice and writing projects, Shelli also serves as a color and design consultant with Mark Roscoe Design. Interests include traveling and co-hosting 'Bes Quest' Egyptian tours through Mohamed Nazmy of Quest Travel. Shelli resides with her husband Jim in Valparaiso, Indiana, where they raised three extremely imaginative children, Andrew, Scott and Jenna — each of whom continue to consider Bes an essential member of the family.

For more information on Shelli and for a free autograph as well as a 25% saving off retail on a copy of either: *The Story of Bes* or *Falcon in the Nest* please visit: [www.storyofbes.com](http://www.storyofbes.com)