

Episode 31: Clark Strand
Now Is the Hour of Her Return
Thursday, August 20, 2020

[music] *You are not moving, you are being moved.
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.*

Janet Conner You are not moving; you are being moved. You are not singing; you are being sung. You are not praying. No matter how many times I say that I still cannot get over when you give those words [were?] because you know I didn't write them. They were given to me, and I think it'll take me the rest of my life to understand what they mean. You are not praying; you are being prayed, prayed at the speed of love.

I'm so glad you're here. I'm Janet Connor, *Prayer Artist*, deep soul explorer, field guide in the mystic. All of that is true, but in the center of my heart, the source that feeds absolutely everything, the one thing I want to say about myself is that I am a devoted daughter of the Feminine Divine and her prayers—original prayers. From the moment she whispered *Prayer Artist* in my left ear... it was the wee hours. I didn't turn on the clock, so I can't tell you exactly when. But I'm going to guess probably around 4 AM on February 25, 2018. Those two words, two words, completely changed everything.

The very next morning, the minute I said in deep soul writing, "If you want me to be your Prayer Artist—I don't know what this is—but okay, I'll be your *Prayer Artist*," immediately, I found myself writing prayers. But they were prayers like, "Wait a second. I've never seen a prayer that looks like this," and it took me a while to figure out that they're lyrics, they're lyrics. These are the songs at the wedding of the sacred marriage, your sacred marriage. These are love songs. I never heard any priest or nun say that prayer is a love song.

And then that led to co-teaching some pretty radical prayer intensives, and what happens in those intensives isn't that I teach you anything or my guests teach you anything. What happens is that a memory starts to bubble up, and it's a memory that's in your bones. I can't tell you what that memory is, but you begin to feel these love songs moving through your body. "Oh, oh, this is the way we prayed before patriarchy." This is original prayer.

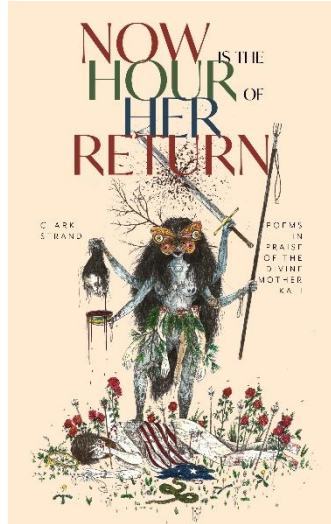
So my definition of original prayer is that it is forever ancient. I mean, we were praying this way, I don't know, 25,000 years ago. It's forever ancient and, yet, in the moment that you pray, in the moment you say the Rosary, in the moment you walk a labyrinth, in the moment you cut Ho'oponopono cords, in the moment you are doing your anointing, what's happening is that it is so fresh. It's brand new. So how is that possible? How can prayers be so ancient and in the moment absolutely brand new? Well, that's paradox, right? And where does the Divine Feminine live? That's her home. That's her cave. She loves paradox.

Oh, and then I also had to let go of my previous radio show, which I sort of liked, but it was obvious. "Nope. You have to have conversations with people about their intimate prayer lives," and I did sort of push back on this one. "Excuse me. You really think authors want to talk about their intimate prayer lives and how their prayer lives have changed? Are you sure about this?" She was sure [laughter].

So today on Episode 31... now, pay attention to the number 31. Three plus one is a four. What is four? It's a foundation, a new foundation. And what is 2020? Oh, excuse me. It's a four year. The entire decade is a four. We are being asked to build a new foundation, a new way of living together. So I don't think it's an accident that we are here on Episode 31, and what we're going to do is enter deep time, that ancient bone memory time, to meet the Feminine Divine. But we're going to meet her in her most awesome, and sometimes awe can be like holy shit awe [laughter]. We're going to meet her in her most awesome form: Mother Kali, the Queen of the Dark, the Black Mother. And you know who our guide is? Our guide is Mother Kali's boy: Clark Strand.

You know him because he and his wife, Perdita Finn, were on this show twice, twice, at the end of 2019 with the glorious book, *The Way of the Rose*... what's the subtitle? I got to get it right. The hidden path of the divine... no, no. *The Radical Path of the Divine Feminine Hidden in the Rosary*. There it is. *The Radical Path of the Divine Feminine Hidden in the Rosary*. But before the Rosary book, Clark wrote a book that, I don't know, it has to be wrapped in a silver bag or something; it's so important to me. And it's called *Waking Up to the Dark*.

Now, here's what we're going to talk about today. Before all those books is the book we're going to talk about today, so even though it's just coming out now, August of 2020, it was written in 2011. And the book is called *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*. Now, listen to the subtitle: *Poems*—Clark can call them poems if he likes to; for me they're prayers—*Poems in Praise of the Divine Mother Kali*.



I promise you, in this conversation, there is something... you know what? I shouldn't say something. I should say someone [laughter] waiting for you. There is some kiss of her love hovering in the air, waiting to enter your heart, and if you let it enter your heart, you know what? Your life is going to be transformed. So let us begin this conversation listening to the voice of the Tibetan Bowl as she calls us to open, open, open your invisible ears that you may finally hear what wants to be heard.

[the bowl rings]

You have to listen really hard to hear that. She has a really tiny, tiny voice today, so I think she wants us to lean in and really, really listen to her boy, Clark Strand. So Clark, how should we begin? Let's have an invocation to Mother Kali.

Clark Strand Right. Well, *Jai Kali Ma, Ave Maria, Jai Kali Ma*. That's, "Hail Kali Ma, the Great Mother," and that's the cry traditionally to evoke her presence and to welcome her into the room.

Janet Conner All right, if that's it, everybody needs to not just hear you say that but say it. All right, so say it again and then leave a nice pause so everyone around the world... we have listeners absolutely everywhere, so from South Africa to New Zealand to Australia to Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, across the United States and Canada, in South America, in Mexico. So let's—

Clark Strand I'll give you the mash-up version of the Latin, first part of the Ave Maria and then the Kali Mantra. It goes like this:

Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum
Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum
Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum
Kali Ma

Kali Ma
Om Sri Kali Kaya
Om Sri Kali Kaya

Janet Conner So *Om Sri* and *Kali* I get. What's the last part? *Kaliya*?

Clark Strand *Kali Kaya. Kali Kaya.*

Janet Conner And so is *Kaya* another word, or is it just the sound of her name?

Clark Strand It intensifies it, the Great Kali.

Janet Conner So it's like a megaphone going out.

Clark Strand That's right. That's right.

Janet Conner All right, then, she's here [laughter]. So this was so hard. I really want you to read every single poem in this book to us [laughter]. It would be, what, eight-hour call.

Clark Strand It would be long. Yeah.

Janet Conner It would be too long, and everybody just has to go get their own copy. But I want you to hear Clark speak some of these prayers and poems and words. So I'm crazy about how the book opens and the introduction, "One morning in the early winter of 2011..." Would you read us those first two paragraphs?

Clark Strand I'd be happy to. This is the beginning of the book. Most books of poetry don't necessarily have an introduction or an afterword like this one does, but then again, most books of poetry aren't composed under such unusual circumstances.

"One morning in the early winter of 2011, I woke before dawn with a poem fully formed on my tongue. I took a notebook from the bedside table and wrote out the words, without pausing to consider their content. I wanted to get them down as quickly as I could.

"When I read the finished poem, I realized that I had never written anything like it before. The normal buffer between the inspiration for a poem and the poem itself was entirely absent. I wasn't sure how it had happened, and I wasn't sure I could do it again. Two days later, having failed to find the answer to this mystery within myself, I said aloud, "How am I to do this?" A voice replied, "To those who give hearts, words are given in return."

Janet Conner So the reason I wanted you to read this is very selfish. You're the only person I have ever read, heard, met that writes exactly the way I write. I'm awakened in the middle of the night, and I don't have to reach over to the nightstand. I sleep with a yellow pad of paper [laughter] because you got to be ready, right, and, you know, a cheap ballpoint on it. I'm ready at all times, and I receive these prayers fully formed. My only job is to type them up. So I have a feeling... I wanted to ask you

like, "Mm. I want to hear more about that." But I think you answered it, or she answered it. This is very profound. "To those who give hearts, words are given in return."

Clark Strand Yes, that's right. And I wrote in the book that that was the sole poetic principles that I followed in writing the poems. I gave my heart to her, and she gave me the poems in response to that. And it really was kind of a hard offering. I just surrendered to the process of writing them and opened myself to receiving them. That's all there was to it.

Janet Conner But I'm willing to bet a lot of money that there is no writing teacher anywhere. There's no class. It's not quite in MFA programs. "Oh, you want to be a *Prayer Artist*? You want to be a poet? You want to be an author? You want to be a whatever? All you have to do is give your heart."

Clark Strand Yes, that's right. That's right. Just give your heart.

Janet Conner And so I guess the only way... you can't teach that. A person simply has to give their heart [laughter].

Clark Strand They could teach poetry. You can teach good writing. You can teach all of those things. But when the moment of truth comes, there's no guarantee that just because you've studied poetry or writing that what comes out will be meaningful or heartfelt or profound. The only way to get that is through an act of surrender, to surrender to that creative voice.

Janet Conner And just take dictation. And so your left brain that's going, "Excuse me. What does that mean?" "Shut up. We're not interested in your input right now." So you then answer... well, I don't know if answer's even the right word. This homage that you write right after the introduction, I couldn't read this. I get teary, so you have to read it. These—

Clark Strand Yeah. This is a short poem that serves... there's the introduction that sort of gives the necessary background about my Kali and the circumstances under which the poems were written. And then this is really... I think of it more like a dedication. Who is the book dedicated to? The mother, to Kali. So this is called "These Belong to You."

Kali, I write these songs,
But they belong to You
To do with as You please.
I am like the bead a cord
Passes through, a field
The wind blows over,
The banks of a stream.

As long as cord and wind
And water pass through me,
That's enough. Let my words
Fall deeper each day
Into the bottomless black
Well of Mother Kali's ear.

Janet Conner Now, that's a dedication. Now, that one did you write, or did she even dictate that to you?

Clark Strand Well, here's the thing. It's a little bit like hand in glove with this kind of thing. "The Gospel According to the Dark," which was the final chapter of *Waking Up to the Dark*, it's three-paged gospel where she was just dictating everything, and I was simply writing it down. With these, many of the poems are conversational, right? And so the poem comes in a slightly different way. I guess the best way to describe it is they were experiences which were then recorded, right? So I wrote the experiences down as they happened, as they were happening, and that's how they were composed. And so sometimes Kali is speaking, and sometimes I'm speaking, right? But the choreography is all hers, and the direction of that conversation is... the conversations are directed by her, and the messages are hers. So I think that's the way I would describe it.

Janet Conner Well, I see a dance. It's glorious.

Clark Strand It's a dance. Right. Yeah. And kind of a creative collaboration. I mean, I studied poetry a long time. I began writing poetry when I was about 13 years old, so she wasn't stepping into a conversation with somebody who hadn't read a lot of poetry, didn't love poetry, didn't take pleasure in poetic language. But she basically took all of that and said, "Well, let me show you a completely different kind of poem. Let me show you what it looks like when you give your heart to me and let me direct the poetic course of events." And that's really what happened, yeah.

Janet Conner And that's exactly how I feel when I look at and finally type up the words that I receive. And they fall without Janet contributing to, "Oh, how long is a stanza?" It's just right there—three, five, three, five, whatever, and then there'll be this little shift. This is why it took me a while to figure out that they were lyrics because I'm not a musician. I don't write... I've never even considered, "Gee, I wonder what lyrics in a song look like?" So I typed them up, and then I would say them out loud. Okay, I'm sitting here, and I would say one out loud. And I would find my body starting to move. There's a rhythm. There's a rhythm. There's a rhythm.

And then one day—I mean, I didn't get this right away—I just did the V8 commercial to the forehead and went, "Oh, oh! They're lyrics!" Well, now I can almost hear... I can't sing, but I think some musicians are going to fall out of the sky and start singing these things. Now I can see, "Oh, this is kind of what a

musician calls the pre-chorus, and this... whatever, whatever." I don't even know the language. But I can now see on the page and hear as I'm saying it out loud that, okay... and there's no way Janet knows anything, I mean, nothing about music and lyrics, but I don't know if she chose me, Clark. At least when she chose you [laughter], she chose somebody that knew something about poetry.

Clark Strand Yeah. These are not like any poems I've ever written before or even poems that I would have considered myself capable of writing. I'm mostly a haiku poet. I've been writing haiku for, oh, at least 45 years and teaching haiku actively for about 30 years. And so I mostly work within a fairly strict little 17-syllable frame. And my prose is sometimes poetic, but I don't typically write longer poems, certainly not poems like this. So yes, a completely new experience for me.

Janet Conner And fun, right?

Clark Strand Oh, yeah. I mean, I think as you can tell from a lot of the poems, I mean, she was very playful throughout this entire process. Even when the themes turned dark, she was playful, so.

Janet Conner Well, let's go there—dark. Now, most people listening have some image or at least have heard of Mother Kali. I have a confession to make. The yoga that I attend is called Kali Natha yoga, and it's goddess yoga. And when we do the asanas, we're really embodying a story. The instructor will tell a little story at the beginning, and then we're moving... even though it's the warrior pose and the this and the that, it's tied together as a dance, and you are opening and awakening those qualities. And the ones connected with Kali are kind of like, "Well, okay. Those are strong." But I'm so ashamed to admit this. I never asked myself, "Well, who's Kali?"

And then one day several years ago on the previous show, I got Sally Kempton's book, *Awaken Shakti*, and it's got all the goddesses with pictures. So I turn the page to Kali [laughter], and I just about lost it. "This is the yoga I'm doing? I have never seen anything so terrifying." I slammed the book shut, and then I contacted my yoga teacher and said, "Excuse me. What are we doing?" So Clark, who's Kali?

Clark Strand Well, I think I should probably make it clear that I experienced an apparition of Our Lady of Woodstock on June 16 of 2011. And the figure I saw was not Kali, as such. It was a young girl, 16, 17 years old with pale skin, freckles around her nose, hazel eyes, and auburn hair cut short. She had an X of black electrical tape over her mouth, which I removed, and it wasn't clear to me at all who she was. She felt incredibly powerful, more powerful than any person I'd ever met, any person I'd ever even imagined. And it was a power that was just almost explosive, but it was contained in this body of a young, fairly small girl.

And so by the end of that summer, August 22, in fact—the ninth anniversary is coming up just in a few days—she woke me in the middle of the night and said, "If you rise to say the Rosary tonight, a column of saints will support your prayer." And the joke has always been, "Well, I wasn't Catholic, but I wasn't stupid either." The only person that I'd ever heard of, right, who invited you to pray the Rosary and made promises based on whether you accepted that invitation or not was the Virgin Mary.

Here was the problem: there was no way that the girl I was seeing could fit into the narrow mold of the modern Virgin Mary. She was simply too powerful. Now, at this point, I hadn't read any of the medieval legends about the Virgin Mary where she basically functions as a goddess. She walks, talks, acts like a goddess. She does everything that God does, and in those stories, there's rarely any mention even of Jesus or God, right? Mary is the principal actor, but that Mary hasn't been seen in church in a long, long time. So I really was having a hard time accepting the idea that the girl I was seeing, who was speaking to me and speaking to me in such a powerful, authoritative way, was the Virgin Mary.

And it was about that time that I began to write the Kali poems. The Kali poems were an answer to a prayer. The answer to that prayer was, "Show me your full power. Show me who you really are. Help me to understand who 'the Virgin Mary' really is because what the church has told me about her is obviously not true," right? That's obviously only the smallest part of the story. This is a much older, much more powerful figure who is closer to Isis. If you go back and read the old scriptures having to do with Isis... if you look at Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, right, and you look at chapter 11, there's an amazing portrait of the goddess Isis, who basically appears and says, "I'm the queen of the dead. I am the queen of the heavens. I am the commander of the seas and the storms and the planets and the stars and the planets in their orbits." She's speaking as a cosmic force. So the Kali poems were really a way of breaking open my preconceptions about the western Divine Feminine and really marrying them with this Asian goddess.

Now, Kali is a Bengali folk goddess. I think that's the best way to describe her. She appears in the ancient scriptures, and so she has a scriptural basis, not like she's only a folk goddess. But the devotion to her is mostly folk devotion. These are simple, ordinary people who have tremendous devotion to this dark mother. And here is her story. Her story is that a cosmic battle, a pitched war, was being fought among the gods and specifically fought with a demon named Raktabija. And Raktabija was a terrifying demon who you couldn't really defeat because every time you wounded him and he bled, each drop of blood would become an identical Raktabija demon. I like to think of it as sort of destructive male energy—patriarchy run amok, right? This is what happens, right? You try to battle patriarchy, and you only end up making it stronger, right? There's no way to defeat it.

So the goddess Durga, who is a manifestation of Shakti, the great mother goddess of India, Durga understands that even though she rides on a lion and has eight arms and is very powerful and a great warrior in her own right, she realizes that she can't defeat this demon by playing by the ordinary rules. The only answer to this is something truly apocalyptic. And so she calls forth from the depths of her being the ultimately destructive female force, and that is Kali. Kali springs out of her as a fully formed... sometimes she looks a little like a hag. Sometimes she looks like a very young girl, but she's solid black. She's naked, okay, except for she wears a skirt of severed arms around her waist and a necklace of skulls. Her hair is long and often woven in dreadlocks, so long it trails on the ground. And her tongue is very long and bloody, and the reason it's bloody is she defeats Raktabija by swallowing up every single drop of blood. That's how she defeats him, okay? She lays waste to the forces of Raktabija, right? It would be like a force arrived and suddenly devoured every last atom of petrochemicals and pollution on the face of the planet, right? Just said, "I'm going to swallow it all. Want this problem to be solved? It's gone." Or send a pandemic, send everybody into their home so they stop consuming and stop driving, right? These are the kinds of forces that are unleashed by Kali.

Well, the gods look at this situation, and they go, "Holy shit. The whole universe is going to be destroyed. There's no way to stop her. She's swallowing the demons, but shouldn't swallow everything." And once she's set in motion, right... Kali stands for the end of an age, right? For a period of destruction and decay, the Kali Yuga is called, right, that the world has to pass through before it can be reborn. So the gods say someone has to stop this, so Shiva goes onto the field of battle. And Shiva, of course, he's the husband of Shakti in all of her manifestations, right, the husband of Durga, the husband of Kali. So he goes and he throws himself beneath Kali's feet. And as she stands atop him, she sees him below her, and she returns to her senses and she stops. She stops the war. She stops the battle. And from that moment forward the world begins to regain its previous peaceful condition, only now, of course, it's renewed. It's been purified of this aberrant force, right? So that's basically the story.

Kali can look very terrifying, but the interesting thing is that to the people of India, especially of Bengal, right, this area where the devotion to her is always traditionally been the most intense, they regard her also as the ever loving mother. And so a lot of the hymns to her are the hymns that you would sing to the most sweetest, most attentive, most loving and gentlest mother, and it really is a matter of where you stand. If you're on her side, she's your mother, and if you're trying to fight her and defeat her, then she is your destroyer. But that's who Kali is, basically. She's typically shown iconographically with black skin, bare breasts, the necklace of skulls, the skirt of severed arms, hair so long it trails the ground, and in her four arms she holds, respectively, a skull cup filled with blood, a severed head, a sword, and usually some sort of a trident or a spear, right? And so

she's very, very powerful. You can see this... Will Lytle has worked with this imagery on the cover of the book.

Janet Conner Yeah, and because there's nothing quite like the picture, the cover by Will Lytle will be on the Show Notes page and in the transcripts, but most importantly, it's going to be in your house when you get your own copy of *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*. So this is her story and the way Will sees her. What did she say about herself? Does she describe herself in any of these poems?

Clark Strand Well, she refers to herself in the poems a great deal. She speaks in her own voice, and she says things about herself and her relationship. There is one poem that was the very first poem that I wrote that I think is really meant to describe her. It does describe iconographically her statue in an indirect sort of way. Let me see if I can find it. It's called "The Ride of the Cosmos." This was the poem that I woke up with, the first poem I woke up with and wrote down.

My Mother, Daughter
Sister, Lover, Bride is One
With all qualities. It's
Pointless trying to find
A thing
That She is not.

I pour myself out
Each day, turn
Inward each night, turn
Flips and somersaults
At Her feet
Like Shiva.

I am barely conscious
During this. I'm along
For the ride of the Cosmos.
She stands with one
Foot planted firmly
On my chest,

The other holds my
Thigh, the weight of Her
Like so many
Stars pulled inside out,
Made fine and perfect
By their fall.

I become mass only,
So light I become

Dark, so dark I become
Light again.
The broken heart of a galaxy
Is a universe complete.

So let me put these
Questions before you
They must be answered:
Who can survive Her?
Who can be without Her?
Tell me if you can.

And that poem is very much in the tradition of Kali hymns—talk about lyrics—like those composed by Ramprasad or Sri Ramakrishna. So in the Bengali tradition, there is a type of poem, Shakti poetry, that is composed and directed to Kali and where she is addressed and where she herself sometimes speaks, and these poems, especially that one and a number of others in the collection, really evoke that style of verse.

I wrote that poem by the way without ever having read Ramprasad or any of those, so it was sort of my initiation into that kind of poetry. Once I started to write the poems, I became quite curious about the Bengali mystics and the kinds of poetry that they had written, and I read some of them. But in the beginning, the first dozen or so poems, I had no exposure to them at all.

Janet Conner That's an important point to me because in everything I'm doing, the Rosary with you and Perdita, what my experience has been... I don't know that this is universal for anybody else, but this is absolutely my experience. And I think it's Feminine Divine directed to keep me out of my conscious mind, my judging mind, my so well-trained western mind. I'll have an experience. I have it whether it's coming through me in a prayer, in anointing, in deep soul writing, in a dream. The experience comes and I'll chew on it, especially in deep soul writing, without any intellectual understanding. And then I really think she has a sense of humor. She'll say, "Okay. Now, Janet, you want to know what that really is?" and bingo. Suddenly, I turn the page in a book and I'm reading. I go, "Wait. Wait a second. That's exactly... yes, yes!" And so I get the confirmation of my experience, but I have to have the experience first. And I think this is the 180-degree whacko-ness of our patriarchal education is that we think, "Just teach me, show me, and then I'll do it."

Clark Strand Right. Yeah, exactly. Yup. No [laughter].

Janet Conner If you have the experience first and then go, now it belongs to you. Now it's in your bones. Now it's, oh! And now I can teach it to somebody else. So thank you for... you have no idea how happy this makes me to think I am not crazy [laughter]. So here's a crazy, interesting, deep question. The book is called *Now Is*

the Hour of Her Return. There's a lot of time going on in that sentence, and she didn't let you publish it. She gave you these prayers nine years ago, but now she said, "Okay, Clark. Now!" So let's talk about now. What is happening now? Is now this crazy pandemic 2020, or is now a little bigger than that?

Clark Strand I wrote the poems, and I was the first reader of the poems. I always say that when a poem is done, the poet becomes the first reader of the poem, right, and I always joke and say the poet is the first line of defense against bad poetry in the world [laughter] because the poet can just nix a poem and say, "No. That should never be seen," right? But this was a different kind of thing because I would finish writing it down, and then I would read it. I would have no idea often times what was even in the poem until it was on the page. And so I would read these, and the prophetic content of many of them was shocking to say the least.

And I did share them with some friends and, obviously, with Perdita, and I shared a few of them on Facebook a year or so later, and the response was pretty good. But I have to say I myself was hesitant to release them. It did not seem like the cultural moment was really right. But then we had done a crowdsourcing campaign to fund the design and the art for the book and its publication and so forth, and so the pressure to sort of produce the book was enough that we finally organized the poems and commissioned the art and did the interior design and all those things. We were ready to go to press, but something would come up each time. Eventually, we began to think, "Wow. This is like Our Lady's got a hand in this." Finally, we decided, okay, 2016, fall of 2016, October. We thought, "Now is the time of *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*. Now is the time to publish it. It makes sense. Things are heating up. The culture is taking a dark turn. It seems like now is about the right time." Our Lady herself had begun to speak publicly in 2015 with her messages and a lot of her messages indicated that dark times were coming, and so we thought, "Now's it."

So we had Will Lytle over for dinner, our illustrator, and we were talking about it, about the release of the book, and we said, "Well, we're ready to go to press. Let's do it." And that night Our Lady said, "No, not so fast." She says, "I have a difficult decision to make which has a bearing on the release of the book." And we asked what that decision was, and she said, "I have to decide whether to come down on my right foot or my left." And this was an odd thing because I think some part of my brain thought that maybe in one of the books—because by then, years later, we had dozens of books on Kali in our home, right—somewhere, I thought, that sounds vaguely familiar. Somewhere there is a reference to right-foot Kali and left-foot Kali.

So we went back and we looked, and we finally found it. And it turns out that in Hindu iconography, especially in Bengali folk art and statuary, if Kali is standing with her right foot on Shiva's chest, it indicates her disposition as loving protector and mother, and if she stands with her left foot on Shiva's chest, it indicates Kali

the Destroyer, this destroyer of worlds. And so she said, "Yeah, so I have to make that decision," and it was not clear to us what the decision was.

But, of course, two weeks later Donald Trump was elected, and then the world began to... the world was already spinning out of control, and for many people living in various places around the world both climate change and apocalypse and end times had already come. People were starving; people were living in war-torn states; people were subject to terrible economic inequity and violence and just the worst. But it gradually became clearer and clearer that we were entering into this period of now-ness that she refers to, and then this year, she said, "The now of *Now Is the Hour of Her Return* has arrived, so you should publish the book."

And if you read the poems, you'll find now there's a lot of them were prophetic poems, make perfect sense now. Even lines from the poem go... yeah, it says, "Ma Kali arrived last night from Canada," right? "It was the only place she could get in. The borders had been closed," right? So that didn't make sense to me at all when I first read that poem. How could the border with Canada... how could any of the borders be closed? Why would people be closing borders, right? This was eight years ago, eight or nine years ago, that these words were given, but it makes sense now. And that poem makes a great deal more sense.

Janet Conner So I've got time on the brain in a really, really big way thanks to the Goddess Rising ceremony and quilt that Our Lady gave me a year ago and is now in physical form as a labyrinth quilt from my sister-in-law. And when I look at it, I'm seeing cosmic time, so the words she has to say in this book about time are like jumping off the page. This one—it's "For She Is Seeking You" on page 16 and 17—ends with "words Mother spoke were 'time is an illusion; the soul must break through prayer.'" Now, imagine how I feel reading this. The only thing in this world I care about is prayer, only deep prayer, and I'm really asking myself a lot of things about time. The title of your book is about time. So she says, "Now pray and seek Her for She is also seeking you." I really would love to hear your experience of "time is an illusion; the soul must break," but how? Through prayer.

Clark Strand Yeah, yeah. Well, I think that our only... I mean, there're various ways we can experience kind of the timelessness or big time or deep time. One is simply to go off, to go out at night, find a dark place, and look up at the stars. One of my haiku anthologized in a book by Random House, I was pleased not just for myself but for the little, modest, little haiku form to find my poem listed between Robert Frost and Muriel Rukeyser [laughter]. I loved it. And I thought, "Well, haiku is actually finally getting a foothold at this appearing next to serious poets." Anyway that poem was:

It's not that the stars
are indifferent: their troubles
have already passed

It's not that the stars—it's five syllables—are indifferent: their troubles—seven syllables—have already passed—five syllables, so it's a haiku. And that was about deep time and about being in the midst of this just absolutely... that was for an anthology called *How Lovely the Ruins*, and it was about poems written during catastrophic times, poems for collapse, basically. It was an anthology that Random House put out the year after Trump was elected.

And so stars—to go out and look at the stars is one way. Another way is to visit an archaeological site, like a real one, like to go someplace like the Dordogne or to go to one of the painted caves, right, to go inside. You realize the depth of time, right? But to experience the illusion of time, right, the illusion of time that I think really requires prayer. The only thing I can think of that can possibly break that illusion is prayer because in prayer states, we could begin getting conversation with the ancestors. We're getting in contact with our deep, deep past, our deep, deep history. We begin to sense that we might also have a deep future as well. And so, yeah, prayer, I think, is the only way. Now, that poem in particular was written about... that's a love poem. There are many love poems in the book. A lot of the love poems are to Kali. This one actually was about Perdita, my wife, as a soulmate. [silence] [laughter]. Did you realize that?

Janet Conner No! So "For She Is Also Seeking You" is about Perdita?

Clark Strand That's Perdita. Yeah. That's Perdita. I'll read the poem, and then I think you'll see. If you know—

Janet Conner I think you better.

Clark Strand If you know that, then you know. And then I'll give you a detail at the end that sort of puts it all in the right perspective. It's called "For She Is Also Seeking You."

Ma Kali, I sometimes feel
That there is no one living
At the center of the world.

It's not that I'm empty
Or lacking passion, but that
Life itself drains out

The bottom of each
Moment and I don't know
Where it has gone.

Mother gathered me up
At those words, for I was
Still small then, being no

More than a child who'd
Fallen asleep over bedtime
Prayers and let his soul

Speak of the unbearable,
Pointless loneliness that
Passed for American life.

She carried me to a place
I'd never seen while waking,
Although my dreaming

Child's feet knew the
Floorboards right away.
There was a girl there

No more than four
Her face as still as moonlight
On a pillow

Cradled in the crook of her arm
Tonight, this girl's soul
Uttered prayers

That answer your own.
The soul makes things
So simple sometime

That even I am astounded. (that's Kali speaking)
But I was already swaying
On my feet and waking

Seven states away.
The last words Mother spoke
Were, "Time is an illusion,
The soul must break

Through prayer. Now pray
And seek her for
She is also seeking you."

And if you look on a map, I was living in Alabama at the time, and Perdita was living in Massachusetts. She would have been about 4, and I at that point would have been close to 10. And the poem is Ma Kali, basically, the Mother just reached down into my sort of cellular memory and said, "I gave you a glimpse of your beloved once and told you to seek her because she was seeking you," right?

- Janet Conner So this is such a gorgeous love poem now, and anybody listening, this prayer "For She Is Also Seeking You" will be in the transcripts. Anybody who is wondering where their sweetheart is, this is... I mean, right? The Divine Feminine is saying, "Honey. Pay attention. I've got it all set up." We just need to [crosstalk]—
- Clark Strand Our Lady once said that matchmaking was her favorite part of her job description. She said that it was not as hard as people made it out to be. She said humans were easier than fireflies. She said fireflies were not easy, that finding the right mate for fireflies was not easy. Humans were easier, still not perfectly easy, challenging, but doable. But sometimes fireflies, that could be hard, she said.
- Janet Conner Well, we just have to cross seven states to find one [crosstalk].
- Clark Strand Seven states. I mean, that's a pun also because, of course, most people reading the poem will think seven states of consciousness, seven chakras, but it was actually seven physical locations, seven states.
- Janet Conner Well, I'm getting out a United States map and checking because it's been very clear to me for a year or something now that I absolutely positively non-negotiable-y have to leave Florida, where I've been for 36 years, and move to your neck of the woods, somewhere in the Hudson River Valley.
- Clark Strand Just climb right up the East Coast chakras [laughter].
- Janet Conner Following the hurricane path. That seems to be the way hurricanes like to go.
- Clark Strand Yeah, that's true.
- Janet Conner I'm counting and seeing how many states I am away from my sweetheart. Wow. All right, so mind is blown by that one. Now, listeners, you really want your mind to just, I mean, just crumble to the ground is the prayer that is the title of the book, *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*. Okay. Here's a little take on now.
- Clark Strand Yeah. I purchased a statue of Ma Kali. I wanted to have one once I started to write these poems, and I found a very old one, probably at least 150, maybe 200 years old. And the statue lacks a sword. The sword has literally come off. When she arrived, it wasn't false advertising. I saw her on Etsy or eBay or wherever and realized she didn't have the sword, but I just love this. She was very powerful, dangerous looking even, but also young, very young Kali, a very young image of Kali. So, anyway, the poem alludes to the fact that she came from a vendor in Canada and that she arrived without her sword.
- "Now Is the Hour of Her Return," and that is, by the way... all of the poems in the book, the titles are taken from a line in the poem except for this one. This is the only poem the title for which does not come from within the poem. This actually is an allusion to "The Gospel According to the Dark," where Our Lady says at the end of the first paragraph, "Now is the hour of her return."

Kali Ma arrived last night from Canada
Without Her sword. It was the only place
She could get in. The borders had been closed.

“Mother, you’re defenseless now,” I cried.
“The people here won’t respect a naked
Village girl with empty hands and pockets

And hair so long it trails the ground—
We must hide You on an altar somewhere.”
But Kali said, “That’s not what I intend.

For when they seize My hand to take Me
And bind Me to their oblivion, that’s just
When I begin to dance. You’re too young

To remember a time that happened
At the close of an age, when men forgot
Their Maker. I always come like this,

My defenseless body an invitation
They will never be able to resist.
I am the knife too sharp for any sheath.

Do they suppose I have forgotten
How their bones were put together?
Every good cook maid knows her meat.”

So if you look at the cover image of the book, you'll see that Kali is standing atop what is clearly the body of America. I mean, Shiva in this case looks like he might be from Brooklyn. He's got a beard. He looks like a bit of a hipster. He's draped with an American flag, and there are arrows landing all around him. He's injured and bleeding and peering up at her through his fingers, which are covering his face. There's a serpent at the bottom as well.

So this is clearly one of the more apocalyptic poems, of which there're quite a few in the book. But this was one of the most clearly prophetic ones, the idea being that she arrives just as who she is. She doesn't even need weapons. Her body itself is the knife too sharp for any sheath and the effort to subdue her and to conquer her... it's like the patriarchy; it's like picking up razor blades. They have no idea what they're doing. The moment they engage with her is the moment that their bones begin to separate from their sockets and their parts begin to fly apart. So there's no question who's going to win the battle we're now engaged in, okay? I always say that the Rosary is a prayer for the earth to win, and I really do deeply

believe that. But Kali will win. There is no doubt in my mind about that. The only question is where we side: with her or against her.

Janet Conner Well, this is very, very comforting that Kali wins, Ma wins, because looking at the news [laughter], it's real easy to just say, "Oh, Goddess. It's hopeless." And this is actually how I take... now, listeners might at this point go, "Okay. I've had it with you, lady. I'm not listening to you anymore." But this last line: "Did they suppose I have forgotten how their bones were put together?" Actually that kind of alludes... isn't there something in the Torah about God, "I knit you together in the world," right?

Clark Strand Yeah. I knit you together. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janet Conner So this is obviously a feeling we have about life that was knit together. So, okay, she is saying, "Do you really think that I have forgotten how your bones were put together?" Okay, that's like, "Oh, you know me." But then the last line: "As a cook, every good cook maid knows her meat." Okay. Now, the first time I read that, Clark, I kind of went, "[laughter]. Okay. Hmm. Maybe I should read another one."

However, just this morning, a couple of hours ago, reading Sharon Blackie, who I absolutely adore, *If Women Rose Rooted*, she's telling these old Celtic fabulous stories about Ma Kali kind of goddesses that scare the pants off of you. And I stopped and reread the paragraph, and I underlined it. And I wrote it, and it's about the relationship of being dismembered in order to re-member. And, of course, remember is such an interesting verb that it's actually a medical term that your members are being stuck back together. It's not remembering some fact that your patriarchal education stuck in your head, and you're not going to get an A on the test if you can't remember the stupid fact, right? So remembering something, which is a word I adore, is a bone memory, not a fact memory. And [crosstalk]—

Clark Strand That's beautiful. I've never heard that before. I love that.

Janet Conner What?

Clark Strand I love that. I've never heard that before. It's wonderful.

Janet Conner What remember means?

Clark Strand No. I've never heard it interpreted that way, and I love the idea of members being brought back together in a bone memory and a knitting. Yeah, [crosstalk].

Janet Conner Janet gets no credit for that. Mark Nepo was on my earlier show years and years ago and, boy, is he an etymologist. The minute you give him a word, suddenly, he blows your mind with, "Whoa, what does this word really mean?" It was he who brought up the word remember probably because... who knows, and he said, "You know, Janet, it's a medical term." And I went, "What [laughter]?" And so that little snippet that he gave me I don't know how many years ago resurfaced

two hours ago reading Sharon Blackie—that the only way to remember, to get your members back together, is to allow them to be dismembered, to be torn apart, which is what always happens in all those scary Celtic caves and stories, right? The witch tears you apart [crosstalk].

Clark Strand Well, this is a theme. Yeah. This is a theme that runs throughout the poems of being pulled apart and pulled back together. She talks about that in one poem. There's another poem called "The River of the Dead," which records a vision of being carried across the river of the dead and shown the land of the dead and where she talks about the flesh being pulled from the bones like well-cooked meat. Yeah.

Janet Conner [laughter] So this is what we want. It's a little disconcerting to realize that's really... I mean, how did this whole thing start? You said to her, "My heart is yours." Well, when you surrender to the Feminine Divine, who is so much more powerful than any of those cranky, white, old male gods they stuck in the sky. They're pussycats compared to the Divine Feminine. But so I find this, while being terrifying, also incredibly comforting. The cook is in the kitchen.

Clark Strand Right. That's right. The cook is in the kitchen, and she doesn't just know the knife and how it works, she is the knife.

Janet Conner [laughter] and she is taking the meat from our bones. Now, people listening to that might not think that this is the world's greatest endorsement for *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*, but I'm telling you, this is the most comforting... which is the truth of all of these ancient Divine Feminine stories, that while they scare the dickens out of you, what do you think happened in the illusion mysteries, right? You were down in a cave in the ground, scared to death, but you were then put back together and you were never afraid of death again.

Okay, so I have to add there is one poem in here that, honestly, I just kind of went, "Ha [laughter]!" when I turned the page and saw that the title of a poem is "Father Louis." Now, listeners might not know who Father Louis is, but that's Thomas Merton's religious name. You've got to give up your name, right, when you go into the nunnery or the monastery, and his name as a monk and priest was Father Louis. So because I'm sort of... I have read more books by Thomas Merton than any other human being on the planet. I don't know how I feel about admitting that. I think he wrote about 70. At least half of those are in my house, and I have read them. He's so real to me that he actually has shown up a couple of times in my dreams.

So I've got to... this seems so out of context for all the other poems in the book. I just have to ask you about this. So I adore the man, even though at the same time, many, many, many times, I take one of his books and throw it across the room because he was still stuck in that patriarchal, Catholic, antibody crap. I yell at him and throw the book across the room.

Clark Strand Had that experience, yeah.

Janet Conner But [laughter] then I'll pick it back up again and continue to read because, I mean, first of all, he had his conversion in front of a Black Madonna in Cuba, okay? He is one of Her boys, so he's a baby Clark. And he writes this nature poetry that is so evocative. He sees the Divine in the trees, in the weeds, in the ducks, in everything, and when I read his nature poetry, all I have to do—but I do have to do it—is change the pronoun from He to She. And then, wow, I mean, it's just so completely alive.

And then there's this other thing about him that I adore that once again maybe some people wouldn't know. Even before Martin Luther King Jr. gave that phenomenal talk in Riverside Cathedral and got into so much trouble for saying no about the Vietnam War, the first religious American figure to say no was Thomas Merton, and I love him for that. And when you read his political stuff? I mean, he's tearing the meat off patriarchy back in the fifties. So I had Matthew Fox on my previous show. He had a book about Merton, and he was close to Merton. They were correspondents, and his book was called *A Way to God*. So we're on the air live on Unity Radio, and Matthew Fox suddenly announces that Thomas Merton was murdered by the CIA and he has proof. Okay. So I turn the page, and there you are or there she is with a prayer, with a poem, about the murder of Father Louis. I got to know about this.

Clark Strand Well, this is the second poem that was written. This was the second Kali poem, so it was written maybe two, three days after the first. And honestly, I think as a poem, it expresses certainly what was in my heart. I think I've said this on your show before, but the day before the apparition of Our Lady of Woodstock in June of 2011, I had literally only one book on the Divine Feminine in my library—*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, coincidentally enough devotee of Kali. And to give you some idea of how ignorant and how blocked I was against the whole idea of the Divine Feminine, I had no idea it was even about the Mother, that book. I'd read it. I had no idea. I hadn't even taken it in. I thought, "He means God. Mother, he's just a sentimental, sweet little Bengali mystic. He's really talking about God or whatever." I don't know what I thought.

So when I experienced my radical and sudden conversion—or Our Lady caused that conversion; she converted me, right, like in a single night—it took me a long time to really take in what had happened, to really begin to understand a fraction of what She was saying. But my first thought was... I had written a lot of books that, even though they weren't certainly explicitly patriarchal... I mean, I've been trained in a deeply patriarchal tradition. I mean, Zen is so much more patriarchal than Catholicism. I can't even tell you. It is like just about the most patriarchal religion in the world. I mean, they speak unapologetically of the patriarchs. They never speak of the matriarchs, going all the way back to the Buddha. It is a boys' club absolutely to the nth degree, and that was my specialty.

So I experienced something almost like a panic as soon as I had this conversion. I thought, "Oh my god, I'm going to die, and people are going to think that my whole life was about the patriarchy. It's like nothing I've written up until now..." I wrote a book on the Bible—how to believe in God, whether you believe in religion or not—and the Virgin Mary is just sort of almost like an accessory in one of the chapters. It's really more about Joseph than it is about her.

And a friend of mine—Gioia Timpanelli is a National Book Award winner, wonderful storyteller—she read the book, and she said, "You know, I have to tell you as a Catholic woman, there's not enough of Our Lady in this book." And I remember thinking by that time it was ready to go to press, and I just sort of shook it off, like, "Well, okay. If you say so. Whatever." I just didn't take that critique seriously at all.

So this poem expresses my horror at the thought that I wouldn't live long enough to articulate a new vision of the spiritual life, one based on the Divine Feminine. And so the poem is really about that. It's called "Brother Louis."

I wouldn't want the fate
That befell Merton to fall
To me, so I am writing
This tonight. I'm not talking
About electrocution.
Who cares about that?
Not me. Not Merton even. Not
Even then. The thought that must
Have passed in a flicker as
Every circuit burned bright
Was this: They will use me for
The Father, and cut the Mother
Out. Damn! Who expects to be
Electrocuted on
The way to meet his lover? Hard luck,
But a lesson to me. Thanks,
Brother Louis, Father Tom!
I'll watch your back the next
Time we all come around.

And, of course, Merton, famously, was on his way... he was on his Eastern trip when he died. He had just gotten out of the bath and gone back to his room. He was found some time later electrocuted by an electric fan that weirdly had fallen over onto his back, right? He had fallen, then it had fallen onto his back. Nothing about the whole thing seemed even remotely credible, and there were speculations even then, I think, about whether or not he had died. I was and am friends with his

translator for that trip, who was a member of... I don't think he was... not sure that he was a Cistercian, but he was at that point... he became a Tibetan translator. But he was floating in Tibetan, and he was translating for Merton's conversations with the Dalai Lama on that trip and several other Tibetan teachers. And it was his belief that Merton had probably been murdered, and he was there.

And it's interesting. I found a beautiful, beautiful little tidbit. I'll send this to you, Janet, because you'll enjoy this. It was the list by the Bangkok Police Department of Merton's personal effects at the time of his death, and it included a Timex watch, the value of which I think was valued at like \$2 or something like that. And then it lists all these other things: a breviary, and beside it, it says nil, meaning worth nothing; portrait of Our Lady, nil, worth nothing; broken Rosary, nil, worth nothing, right? So his worldly possessions were \$2 and a bunch of stuff that the world as it is... the things that were most precious to Merton were the things the world regarded as being of no value. But Merton had a late life affair with his nurse when he was convalescing, and there's every indication that he was experiencing something akin to what I experienced and was quite possibly going to go public about it at the end of this trip.

There was even worry... he had been forbidden from traveling by the church for some time, and I guess it was lifted for this trip for whatever reason. He was sort of the Catholic Ambassador to this World Congress of Religions, this conference. But there was some thought that he might become a Buddhist. They were afraid that he was going to denounce the papacy. He was by that time the most popular Catholic writer in the world many times over, more popular than the pope, and so he was a very influential figure.

Someday I'll tell you a story. I know a lot of stories that most people don't know about Merton because a friend of mine years ago was D.T. Suzuki's personal secretary. And Merton and Suzuki had secret correspondence, and they had secret meetings that were not recorded because he was forbidden from having contact by the church with such people. But he broke out of the monastery and went to New York and met with Suzuki [laughter].

Janet Conner Oh, and there's a wonderful... he wrote a spectacular article about that. So you and I are going to have a show about Thomas Merton, and any listeners that want to know something about this outrageous affair—I mean, it's just the most glorious thing—the book is called *Learning to Love*. Now, I bought it because, hey, Merton wrote it, right? I had no idea. I thought it was going to be about learning to love God. No, it's about learning to love Margie. I mean, and this is when he started coming in my dreams. I mean, I was crying for him. And that one [crosstalk] Joan Baez is visiting, and he wanted her to sneak him away in the car go see Margie.

So it feels like... I cannot thank you enough because now I am hearing the "Brother Louis" poem in its fullness. But you can't bring up my boyfriend without my bringing his final words into the conversation. So I met Matthew Fox, and he kind of said, "Forget all that shit Thomas Merton wrote. If you want to understand him, you only need to read one book and that's his Asian Journal."

Clark Strand Yeah. That's a good one.

Janet Conner So I immediately got it, and the very last thing he ever said to anybody before he got electrocuted was... okay, he gave his little talk, and then he said, "Now, I'm going to disappear." And he did, which is kind of interesting, right, that we know on some level. However, the last prayer he gave, a special closing prayer offered in Calcutta, so right before he went to Bangkok for the... I won't read you the whole thing, but they said to him, "Help us close in prayer." And he kind of went, "What? What? What, what, what?"

And so he says to everybody, "Okay. In a minute, I'm going to ask you to hold hands," and then he's just channeling, to use sort of a modern term. And he is talking about what is deep is the Real, capital R real. But here's how it ends, and I can't read this without completely falling apart. So he is saying to the Beloved, "We adore you. We love you with our whole being because our being is your being. Our spirit is rooted in your spirit. Fill us then with love, and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, united in this one spirit, which makes you present in the world and which makes you witness to the ultimate reality that is love." These are his closing words: "Love has overcome; love is victorious. Amen."

Clark Strand Beautiful.

Janet Conner And that's how I like to end a lot of my prayer intensives. Love has overcome; love is victorious. And I feel like I can hear Mother Kali saying that as she dismembers [laughter] our bones and takes out the meat.

Clark Strand Well, the people who think they can put her in a sheath are the people who get sliced and diced the quickest. I remember I wrote the poem "Now Is the Hour for Her Return," I guess, yeah, quite a long time before the election cycle, some years. And I remember when the revelations came out about Trump and he was recorded having that conversation on the bus and everything about how "I just grab them in the pussy," and I remember thinking about this poem and saying, "Well, good luck with that." Yeah, good luck with that. Yeah, yeah. Because that's exactly what she's counting on. It's exactly what she's counting on that that's what you're going to try. And the poem is about that impulse. "I always come like this, my defenseless body an invitation they will never be able to resist. I am the knife too sharp for any sheath." So it's that very impulse to dominate the Divine Feminine that she's playing right into... I mean, they're playing right into her

hands. I know it looks very grim from our point of view right now, but this is how she begins to dance.

Janet Conner And she will overcome. She will be victorious.

Clark Strand Yeah, she is. And I think the rage of the Me Too movement and a lot of the things that have happened since then are a lot like Kali coming out of Durga. I mean, Durga looks and says, "Oh my gosh," all these movements and feminism and marches and things like that. Yeah, that was great. But that's not going to defeat Raktabija. We've got to call forth something truly frightening from within us to counter this. So I think we're—

Janet Conner Well, and coronavirus means crown [laughter].

Clark Strand It sure does. That wasn't lost on me [laughter]. I remember when I first heard about it, I said to Perdita, I said, "Uh oh [laughter]."

Janet Conner She does have a great sense of humor, The Lady, Our Lady, Mother Kali. So you and I could talk for days about these prayers. Hearing you tell the story and you read them, they are a thousand times more expansive and glorious than I had realized just reading them on the page, but at some point we must let our listeners go so they can go purchase their own copy of *Now Is the Hour of Her Return*. So the last poem, the last prayer, I cried reading it, "To Lay One's Heart Upon the Ground." You want to talk about this [crosstalk]?

Clark Strand Yeah. This is the last poem in the book, and it's also the last one I wrote. It's a very bittersweet poem for me because I knew when I wrote it that it was the last poem and that it was over and that she had finished doing with me what she needed to do with these poems and that the poems were over, that there wouldn't be any more. But I think of it as kind of the summary of the book in a lot of ways, certainly the summary of the message of the book, and it is also a kind of love poem, as well. And, of course, by now your listeners know about the fact that Shiva finally throws himself underneath Kali's feet. That's what stops the battle. So this poem is called "To Lay One's Heart Upon the Ground."

Mother, tonight I have taken my heart
From its cage and laid it at Your feet.
The rapture of this was indescribable.

For one thing, I didn't die as I thought.
I discovered that hearts were for giving
And not for having. This was the first

Lesson of the night. The second came
When I understood what it felt like
To lay one's heart upon the ground.

I wept to think how many years of life
I wasted not knowing where a heart
Belonged. Those were lessons enough,

But then You rested Your foot upon me
And I saw the Universe from the bottom up
The only way it could be witnessed.

That was as much as I could bear,
And there was no lesson in it, for it was
More than anyone could learn.

In the end I've decided to leave
This heart in Your keeping. Do with it just
What You do with the Universe,

And that will be good enough for me.

Janet Conner I can't even imagine how it felt.

Clark Strand Well, it felt like the poems had been sort of laid to rest, as it were. This was whatever they were going to be, and at that point, I wasn't even clear. But they were done. I knew they were done.

Janet Conner So our guests always give the listeners a lot. I've been taking copious notes. There will be Prayer Actions in the blue box, and there will be Prayer Bags with gifts inside of them, all at janetconner.com/31. And if anybody forgets the number, just come to janetconner.com and click on the Podcast. And for heaven's sake get a transcript of the show. Clark's going to send the formatting of the poems that he wrote and the cover of the book, and if you could would you send a snap of your statue of Kali?

Clark Strand Oh, yes. I absolutely will. Yeah, I will.

Janet Conner That would be so fun in the transcripts, so these are transcripts with audio-visual aids, with illustrations. And then everyone click on that orange box at the bottom and come to the special Facebook group just for this show because Clark kindly will be there to answer any of your questions, talk to you about *Now Is the Hour* and Mother Kali and these kinds of magnificent prayers. And I'm going to ask some questions about my boy Tom [laughter]. It's going to be quite a conversation at that special *Praying at the Speed of Love* Facebook page.

So as we say goodbye, Clark, this very last page, page 81. Well, never mind. I don't want to do a formatting of it, this is what Janet thinks. Would you read this to us and talk to us about what she's saying?

Clark Strand This is Our Lady's message of October 28th 2016, is that what you're referring to?

Janet Conner It is important to remember.

Clark Strand Yeah. Yes. This was what she said right before the election. The election was still a week or so away in 2016. She says, "It is important to remember that the order you fear losing is really disorder. You must always pray for the Earth to win. This one prayer is the answer to all others. When people are able to understand this, all their dreams will come true. Until then the most they can hope for is to trade dreams with one another as a kind of currency.

"This is what you call culture, and cultures tend to revolve around money. But money has nothing whatsoever to do with the Earth. Thus it is wise not to fear the loss of order. Order must be lost. That is because the human ordering of the world is really disorder. Naturally, this will be difficult for you to accept.

"My right foot is my left foot, and my left foot is my right. My kind motherly demeanor towards human beings might be taken as left-footed by the natural world, whereas my wrathful, destructive nature towards humans from the point of view of plants and other animals might be seen as a return to the natural order.

"Thus what seems good to you may actually be bad, and what seems bad may really be good. I am a mother who carries the world through time, stepping now on one foot, now on another, but you must know that on that journey I also carry you. Nothing and no one will ever be left behind."

Janet Conner Nothing and no one will ever be left behind. What more could we possibly want to hear? Mm. I ordinarily read one of my prayers as we say goodbye, but I want the Mother to have the last word. Nothing and no one will ever be left behind.

T. Frantzich This conversation in the mystic with *Prayer Artist* Janet Conner has been rated L.

[music] *You are not moving, you are being moved.
You are not singing, you are being sung.
You are not praying, you are being prayed
Prayed at the speed of love.*