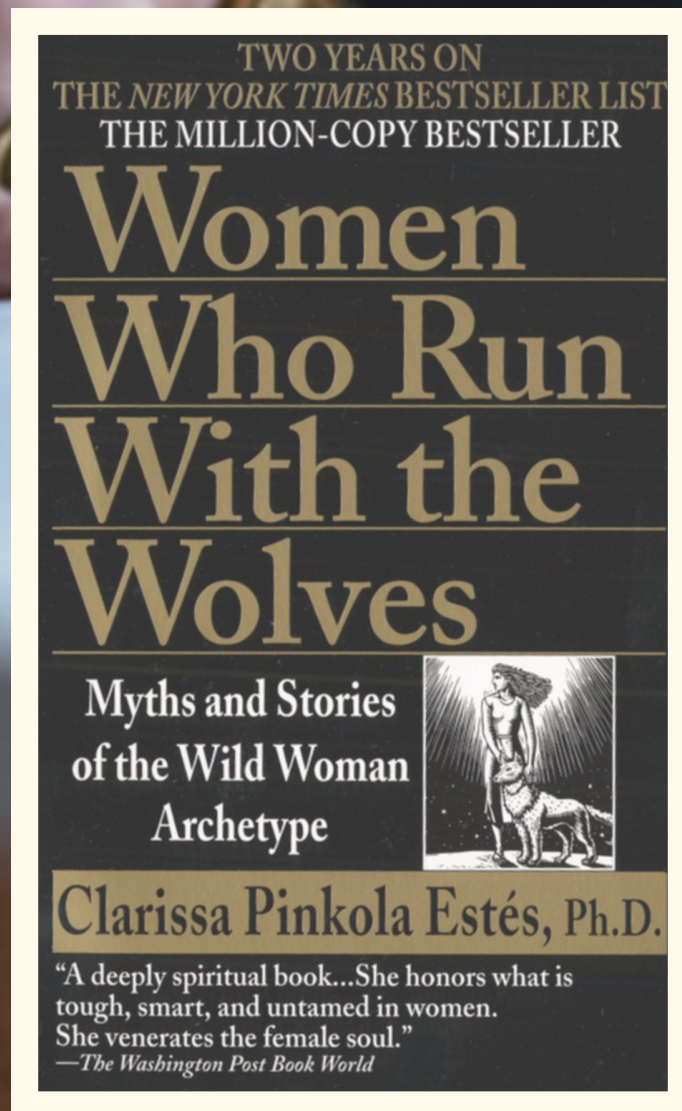




STEPH
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A Reader's Guide

A collection of meditations and prompts to gently edge you into deeper connection with the book and yourself.



OUR TOP 10 FOR READING BETWEEN THE LINES

one MARINATION

Before we get our highlighters movin' across the pages, and as we prepare to explore our inner Wild Woman, let's take a moment to check in:

What emotions are here as you start this book? What physical sensations are here as we stand at the threshold of this pilgrimage?

How do you want to show up for yourself? Take a moment to sink into that now.

Let this be an opportunity to set the tone for yourself, with honesty and transparency.

two EXERCISE

PAGE 30 (THE HOWL: RESURRECTION OF THE WILD WOMAN - La Loba)

"Each woman has potential access to Río Abajo Río, this river beneath the river. She arrives there through deep meditation, dance, writing, painting, prayermaking, singing, drumming, active imagination, or any activity which requires an intense altered consciousness. A woman arrives in this world-between-worlds through yearning and by seeking something she can see just out of the corner of her eye. She arrives there by deeply creative acts, through intentional solitude, and by practice of any of the arts. And even with these well-crafted practices, much of what occurs in this ineffable world remains forever mysterious to us, for it breaks physical laws and rational laws as we know them."

Knowing what you know of yourself, what are a few ways that you might access the river beneath the river, this world-between-worlds? Do any of the examples Estés offers speak to you: "deep meditation, dance, writing, painting, prayermaking, singing, drumming, active imagination"?

Your challenge for the week (if you choose to accept it) is to carve out time (could be five minutes, could be five hours) to engage in two activities which require altered consciousness. Do so without expectation or judgement—simply go forth and see. Try it out and be open to the experience.

Well, did ya try?

If so, what were the activities like? What were YOU like as you engaged in them?

If not, what held you back? Get curious (with compassion) about why this is.

three

EXERCISE

PAGE 5 (INTRODUCTION)

Estés starts us off by sharing why she uses the words “wild woman”:

“No matter by which culture a woman is influenced, she understands the words wild and woman, intuitively. When women hear those words, an old, old memory is stirred and brought back to life. The memory is of our absolute, undeniable, and irremovable kinship with the wild feminine, a relationship which may have become ghostly from neglect, buried by over-domestication, outlawed by the surrounding culture, or no longer understood anymore. We may have forgotten her names, we may not answer when she calls ours, but in our bones we know her, we yearn toward her; we know she belongs to us and we to her.”

We’re curious, what does “wild woman” bring up for you?

To get creative . . . let’s explore this with either (or both!) of two paths (choose your own adventure style): Artistic Expression or Embodiment.

Artistic Expression:

Paint, draw, write, or sculpt whatever calls to be created for the topic “wild woman.”
No need for this to be “perfect” or “well thought out.” Let it be light, and let it flow.

As you wrap on that piece, reflect: What did it feel like as you created this? In your body? In your soul?

Embodiment:

Grab your phone and set the timer for 30 seconds.
Go ahead and press start.
Now, for the next 30 seconds do whatever your body calls to do with the topic of “wild woman.” In what way does your body want to move? Are you feeling moved to sway, jump, crawl, stretch? Let your movement come from the core of you.
What sounds does your body want to make? Are there growls, hisses, howls, moans and groans? Is there a scream? Let the sounds release. Go with them.
Give your whole body the wheel and let ‘er rip.

Take note after the timer goes off: How do you FEEL? No thinking required. Just tune into the feeling.

four

EXERCISE

PAGE 92 (NOSING OUT THE FACTS: THE RETRIEVAL OF INTUITION OF AS INITIATION - The Third Task - Navigating in the Dark)

“There is no greater blessing a mother can give her daughter than a reliable sense of the veracity of her own intuition. Intuition is handed from parent to child in the simplest ways: ‘You have good judgement. What do you think lies hidden behind all this?’”

For the mamas in the group: How might you instill connection with intuition in your children?

For all of us: Whether your mama (or parents) instilled veracity in your intuition or not, might you be able to give this blessing to yourself now?

How, you ask? Let’s explore!

Close your eyes and take a few deeps breaths.

Invite in your mind’s eye the essence of a wise, calm, nurturing figure.

This could be anything - your mother or father, your grandmother or grandfather, you, your womb, a tree, a bird, a color - there are no rules, no “good” or “bad.”

Let this come and be whatever it is.

Take a few deep breaths and be in the presence of this wise and nurturing essence.

Now feel that this essence has a message for you about your inner wild woman, your intuition.

Lean in and listen.

Breathe deep.

What do they share?

What do you feel in your heart? What happens in your body?

Take a deep breath, relax your shoulders, and savor this feeling.

Slowly open your eyes when you’re ready.

(Note: Know that this isn’t a one-and-done exercise, revisit as often as you’d like.)



MARINATION

PAGE 152 (HUNTING: WHEN THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER - The First Phases of Love)

five

“Some make the mistake of thinking they are running away from a relationship with the lover. They are not. They are not running away from love, or the pressures of the relationship. They are trying to outrun the mysterious Life/Death/Life force. Psychology diagnoses this as ‘fear of intimacy, fear of commitment.’ But those are only symptoms. The deeper issue is one of misbelief and distrust. Those who run away forever fear to truly live according to the cycles of the wild and integral nature.”

We don't know about you, but the Skeleton Woman myth and the cycles of death and life within relationships perked up our ears and got things stirring about.

It's so much easier to run at times, isn't it? Especially when what we are facing is dissolution — the death of one version of self/relationship — in exchange for a new version of self/relationship. We get it...and this is evolution. This is why we are here. To evolve. To continually die, shed the layers and be reborn.

When we trust our truth and begin to share it, we invite this natural cycle of Life/Death/Life into our relationships. The antidote to mistrust is the relinquishment of control and trust in your truth as the catalyst for evolution. What would happen if you trusted that it was all going to be okay? Actually...what would happen if you trusted that it would be better than okay if you trusted the deeper knowing and lived from this place of authenticity?

What emotions are here as you acknowledge that death is part of relationships? Does that feel scary? Liberating? Exciting? A combination of sorts?

What's an example of a death you've experienced within a relationship (any type of relationship)?

What's an example of a birth?

And to Estés' point about those who run away... why might one be fearful to truly live according to the cycles of the wild and integral nature? More specifically, why might you?

EXERCISE

PAGE 357 (CLEAR WATER: NOURISHING THE CREATIVE LIFE – The Three Gold Hairs)

Six

“Night is when we are closer to ourselves, closer to essential ideas and feelings that do not register so much during the daylight hours.”

Let's sink into ourselves as we sink into the night with a mindfulness sleep prep practice.

Put your phone on airplane mode, or better yet, leave it in another room.

Turn off all the lights.

Sit or lie down.

Take three slow breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, counting to four on each inhale and to four on each exhale.

Move through each of your senses, thanking them for their work throughout the day and giving them permission to rest.

Thank you sight...

Thank you hearing....

Thank you touch...

Thank you smell...

Thank you taste...

Thank you intuition...

seven

eight

MARINATION

PAGE 404 (BATTLE SCARS: MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCAR CLAN)

"Tears are a river that take you somewhere. Weeping creates a river around the boat that carries your soul-life. Tears lift your boat off the rocks, off dry ground, carrying it downriver to someplace new, someplace better.

There are oceans of tears women have never cried, for they have been trained to carry mother's and father's secrets, men's secrets, society's secrets, and their own secrets, to the grave. A woman's crying has been considered quite dangerous, for it loosens the locks and bolts on the secrets she bears. But in truth, for the sake of a woman's wild soul, it is better to cry."

We've found ourselves referencing this quote several times over the last week.
This. Is. Powerful.

What is your relationship like with tears?
Do you let them flow as they wish?
Or are they confined to alone time, or the "right" time?
Perhaps they're told they're not welcome at all; that it's best for everyone if they stay put in lockdown?
Are you aware if the tears are yours, or if they've been handed to you to carry, perhaps by your mother, or father, or someone else?

Be present in your body this week and notice when tears are requesting an appearance. Notice when they're raising their hand and saying: "I'm here!"

This can be experienced in a number of ways.
For some, the tears may flow with ease.
Other times, the tears may be preceded by a number of sensations such as: tightness, burning, or clenching of the throat, stinging eyes, and nausea, to name a few.

Nothing to do here, but to feel and notice. What sensations are present when there is emotion to be moved through with tears?

And because we couldn't help ourselves, here's this gem from (skipping ahead here) PAGE 437 (BATTLE SCARS: MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCAR CLAN – The Second Stage - Dismemberment):

"Some women marvel at all the water their bodies can produce when they weep. This will not last forever, only till the soul is done with its wise expression."

QUOTE

PAGE 407 (BATTLE SCARS: MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCAR CLAN - Secrets as Slayers)

"Everyone makes poor choices in words or deeds before they know any better and before they realize what the consequences will be. There is nothing on this planet or in this universe that is outside the bounds of forgiveness. Nothing."

Nothing.

Let that wash over you.

nine

EXERCISE

PAGE 472 (LA SELVA SUBTERRÁNEA: INITIATION IN THE UNDERGROUND FOREST – The Fifth Stage – The Harrowing of the Soul)

Estés describes the impact of the cultural messaging around menstruation ... “thus turning a woman’s time of heightened sensation, emotionally and sexually, into a time of shame and punishment.”

Let’s flip the script. Rather than shame and punish, let’s honor and celebrate our wombs and our cycles (Note: We’re talkin’ literal AND spiritual wombs here – no uterus required).

We invite you to have a ceremony of sorts to do just that.

For those who are menstruating, perhaps this ceremony takes place when you next bleed.

For those who are not menstruating, we’ll suggest the next full moon.

As for the details of the ceremony, we’ll leave that up to you and what’s calling to you.

A few examples might include:

A dance under the moonlight, or perhaps you plant a seed (literally, in the dirt) while acknowledging your womb and the miracle of your body.

Maybe you write a letter of gratitude to your womb and you burn it when the times feels right.

Perhaps you set aside a few moments of alone time where you light a candle and sit with your hands resting on your low belly, whispering words of gratitude.

There’s no right or wrong. Be present. Be there with intention.

ten

MARINATION

You did it! You made it to the final pages of Women Who Run With the Wolves.

Let’s check in:

What’s different for you now?

What do you want to acknowledge and celebrate within yourself?

What’s shifted within you? What’s softened? What’s come alive?

What’s different about how you are showing up in the world today?

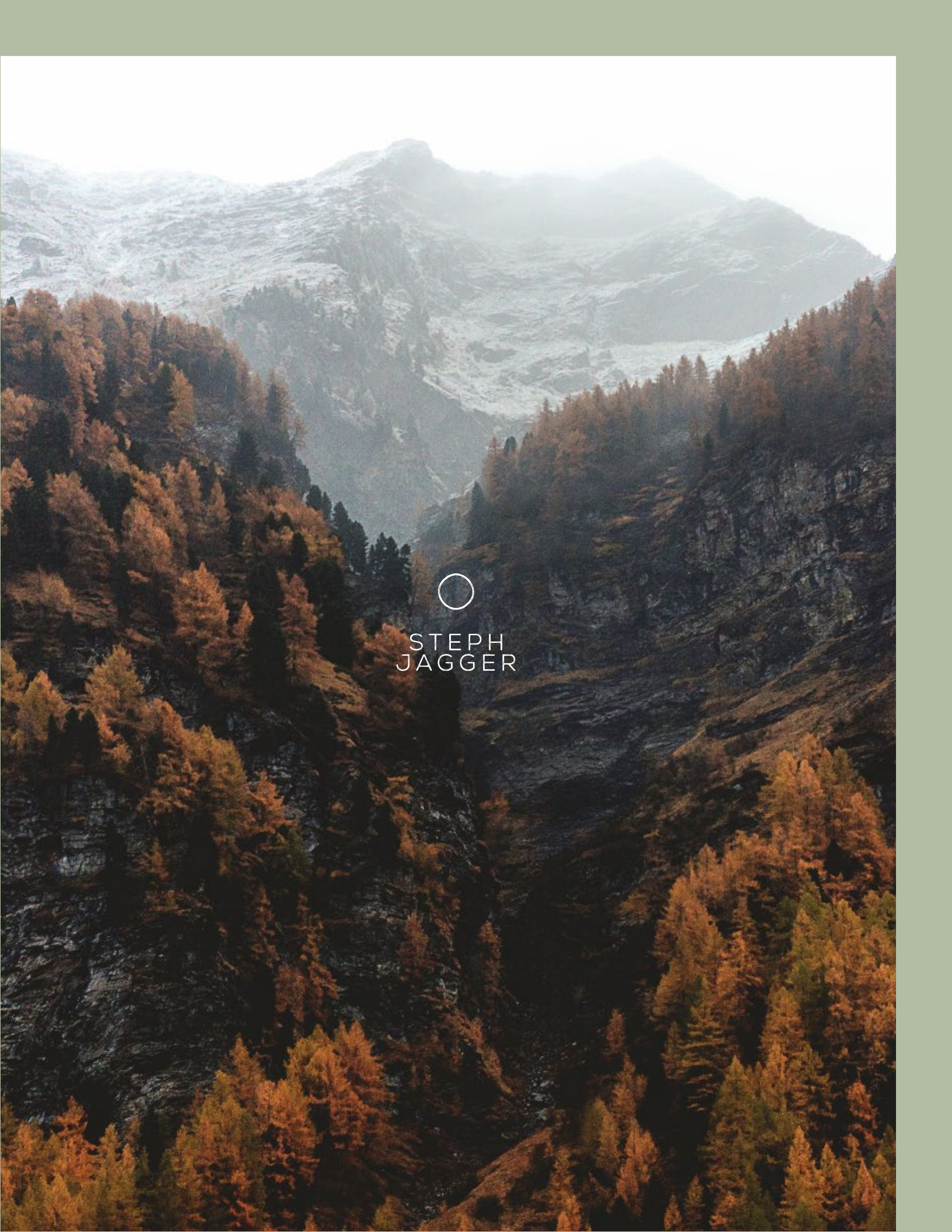
We’ll place this here from PAGE 497 (SHADOWING: CANTO HONDO, THE DEEP SONG):

“Let us keep in mind that the best cannot and must not hide. Meditation, education, all the dream analysis, all the knowledge of God’s green acre is of no value if one keeps it all to oneself or one’s chosen few. So come out, come out wherever you are.”

Come out. Stay out.

We see you. And we’re in awe.

NOTES



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