

# 2018-11-05 A Fairy Tale

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

story, princess, burn, wise, people, fire, roles, real, feel, nurse, prince charming, happening, live, woman, mindsets, home, attachment, gown, nice, meditation

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So are we ready? Okay. So. So what I have in mind today is a little bit of a participatory Dharma talk. You're going to help me with with it. And I'm going to tell you a story. And then there's two points in the story where we need. I'll need some help. And, and I'll ask you this. It's a fairy tale. And it's a fairy tale about it's the kind of a sequel story to many of those stories where the princess beats Prince Charming what happens afterwards kind of and Well, in this story, it's the monarchs are the two kingdoms who have arranged a marriage between the Princess of one country and Prince Charming of the other. And everyone's so happy for them because he's Prince Charming after all, and so the wedding date this set, and the wedding day comes, and she puts on her beautiful wedding dress. And in the kingdom, the queendom is quite happy about what's happening, except for the Princess. Princess actually doesn't want to marry prince charming, actually doesn't find him that charming after all. And it's arranged marriage. So yeah, she doesn't want to do this, but she feels like what does she do? You know, she, that's the way it's done for generations and she's expected to follow in the footsteps of how things are done. So she decides she remembers that on the edge of town in the woods, there lives a wise woman. An elder who is known as someone who is, is filled with love. And that just to sit in her presence in her I see in her eyes, it's just like you feel so loved, so accepted that everything falls away and just seems like everything is good. And from time to time, she'll give advice. And her advice is always great. So she finds her way into the woods and it takes a while in the woods who gets lost and she finds her way and in her wedding dress and finds her way to this one room cabin where this wise woman lives. And she gets invited in and she sits down and sure enough, she immediately feels this warm within this kindness come from this woman who seems to look upon her look Got her I said she's a long lost relative and so happy to see her and, and so the princess tells her story and tells her what tells her about the wedding and how she doesn't want to get married and you know asks her What does to the wise woman what she could do. And then the wise woman pauses for a long time and maybe reflective taking in the princess holding your hand or care and her kindness and support and makes a huge difference of sit there and receive this. And then she lifts up her fan or fingers is I know what you need. She said, Take off your wedding dress. Now this is a little bit challenging for you know someone raised in royalty because it's not very dignified to stand there in your underwear. But there's something about that The wise woman that I can, you know, I guess I have to do this. So she takes off the wedding dress. But instead of standing there in her underwear she's now standing there in a nurse's outfit. And it's all the times where she felt that she was responsible for everyone that she had to take care of everyone everyone else you had to help and support and care for and be responsible for. And she was kind of surprised to see this and she and she looked up at the wise woman and the wise woman said, Take that off too.

And underneath there was leather jackets and tattoos and nose rings and rebellion of all sorts against everything that a princess could rebelled against. You She looked up at the wise woman and who said

take it off. And she took it off and she took these things off. She could feel sharp getting lighter, there was less heaviness and seemed lighter and more expansive and open and tell them kind of relax the different way that you ever felt before. And she took off the leather jacket and stuff there. Underneath the game what appeared now was a seven year old school outfit, perfectly ironed. And this was how she always wanted to be the good girl and do everything right for the parents. And be just there you know, proper and do things Be the good girl. And of course, the Wise elder said take it off and this is where you come in. When he took off that school uniform, what was the next? What you find next? Was the next thing she was wearing.

They had to come off a monk's robe says the monk you know about that. So the so the spiritual garb taste all the spiritual garb and spiritual life that she was so caught up in attached to and had so much hope and expectation. She had the most beautiful monks Roque. She was a princess. Take it off. what came next? Yes, a carpenter's outfit. Repair persons handy person. Uh huh. And what did that represent? The one who could fix everything the fix it and just fix everything and probably tried to fix you too. Great. Take it off Yes. A hospital gown Oh poor me It's so hard I'm so sick. I'm a victim all these people did this to me and, and I'll never get well and you know, this is you know, poor it's, you should feel sorry for me. So what is the wise elder say? Take it off. In one story, one version of story was she takes it off and, and it's kind of like that, I guess. But she's just wrapped full of gods and band aids. You know, medical repair. Take it off so what else a beggar is outfit and other Poor me kind of goes a tremendous sense of like she's the princess but she feels like she doesn't have enough. I had I knew someone once who was a psychologist for wealthy people who felt they didn't have enough money. Then his one of his most wealthy clients back then 20 years ago \$40 million and felt didn't have enough so a lack so yeah, so what's the uniform for lack? Almost nothing just threads. Take it off.

And what else? The clown? What does that represent? Entertain and impress everyone and get put on a show and get everyone to like you take it off Yes. Oh I could academic robe where you wouldn't like a judge's gown or some graduation gown and you know everything and stately and wise like the owl ready to tell everyone? Everything you know. Take it off. Yes.

Better keep that on until you land, at least until you land. And what does that represent? thrill seeking thrill seeking wanting to live in pretend you'll never die take it off. Yes. judge's robe. I think we all know what that is. Take it off shackles table with more please.

She lived inside her ideas of being trapped in shackles nice. Take it off. So it kept going this way for a while and it turned out she had a lot of roles, a lot of personas that she had been living in and working with over her lifetime and she didn't even know they were there. And with the help of the wise woman, she started taking them off, taking them off. At one point, she took another one off. And then instead of there being another uniform another set of clothes fire welled up. She couldn't tell if it was around her in her was everywhere, just a huge, hot, red, glowing fire. Everything was fire. And so she sat there in the fire. And as she sat there she watched and she watched that all her shame, fell into the fire and burned. All her conceit fell into the fire and burned up all her fear of rejection fell into the fire burned up. This is your cue. What What else needs to burn you would you sit and burn? What else needs to fall into the fire and really burn up. Addictions fall in they can burn attachments have anything in particular. Get a letter please do attachment to the way things have to be burned up.

But our psychological states have to go through the fire to burn up. Doubt greed and self judgment. It sizzles when it goes into fire. Fear

so as the these things started to burn up, the fire started they get less red and less hot, became yellow and cooler. That seems to be the direction it's going. So what else had to go into

anger that should have been earlier. But yes, finally the anger has made it hard to get let go of. So finally the anger burns up. burns in its own heat.

Here

Sorry, uncertainty okay fear uncertainty doubt not knowing that's gonna be that's a good can be a very strong hindrance for people to live in this this mindset of feeling uncertain. Yes. Resentment burn burn burn police

romantic obsession

happens occasionally. Romantic obsessions. I see Brian. Cold coldness like me an aloof, cold attachment. Burn. Yes.

Her aversion towards Prince Charming. Yes.

That's the burn two. Yes. Still doesn't have to get married though. No version two as all these things fell into the fire. Then it kept getting cooler and cooler until it became bluer and bluer blue cool fire and then it transformed from fire into water. I found the water flowing by her through her and the water got clear and clear. Until finally the it was just this beautiful, beautiful blue blue water, clear water and then the water started to settle and fall down onto the floor in a puddle and in the puddle in the cracks of the wood or the floor. The water fell through and disappeared and see kind of like suddenly was there without the fire and the water and she looked around and the wise woman was gone. And she looked around and she noticed that the shawl the blue shawl that the wise woman was wearing was now around her shoulders. And then she looked over at the table. And there was a little card on the table that said, Dear Princess, welcome home. And so she took up residence, and that little house. And over the years, people would say there's this wise woman who lives there on the edge of the rpp into the edge of their town in the forest. And if you go there, she has all this love and she'll love you and accept you and hold you and just be with you. She doesn't seem to want anything from you. And from time to time, she'll give you advice.

So that's one way of talking about what happens when you practice mindfulness. If you really practice it, if you're really engaged in it in a strong, deep way, and really kind of honest, and see what's really happening here for you, you will start taking off the personas, the roles, the clothes, all these things that did not you when you've been learned from society, from your world, from your family, from all kinds of things, all these things that are have actually have a time and place they might be useful in some situations. But to become it to be it is a burden. And if you really do the mindfulness practice, well you'll you'll start to shedding them, they'll fall off. You'll take off all that. And some people when they practice mindfulness strongly will actually feel quite naked and feel quite raw exposed because so much of the usual mindsets that hold us and that we clothe ourselves in. No longer is there. There's a lot of uncertainty, a lot of not knowing. Because if you don't have all that, then who are you. But then if you really are honest and really sit in the middle of yourself and be earlier and this takes being in the present moment, who really be here, really hear for yourself to really experience the mindsets really experienced the heart sets really experienced all the different movements that are happening inside and do prepare them for them intimately and clearly and honestly, they start to burn the burning. sizzling dissolving another shedding happens it all has to fall in it all has to fall away all the time

anything that resembles an attachment a holding a clinging to something in the mind and in the fire that we sit in some people sometimes the fire is quite intense for people it's quite something to you know go on a meditation retreat where it's so peaceful you know and everyone's kind and no one's talking and it's usually a beautiful place and nice and urine you know everyone else is peaceful but you're burning burn you know all this stuff before we are shows up. appear they call it a purification process. And then it gets cooler, blue bluer and eventually even though water baptizes us the water that purifies us, falls away disappears. And there's a kind of a renewed renewal of being or a new world that we live in or a new understanding of what it means to be at home, or to be settled or to be at peace. And if you're lucky enough to taste that, then the next task is to live from that, to learn how to be that and live that how to make it your kind of your home and you'll know you're doing it. If you begin loving the people, you see you're not gonna like them. But you need to have some kind of love for them. Some kind of ability kind regard Some caring regard some appreciation and valuing of people. And maybe you're not, you don't have that sparkly eyes that though wise woman had that you feel so loving and accepted, that doesn't matter because you don't care anymore. Doesn't matter what you have and don't have, it just matters that you're free. And you're here. And you really know if you'll know, you'll know if you are, if you slow it down enough to begin taking in the people of the world, the times you're in the situation you're in, really there to live it and be in it. Because the home is not in the woods. The home is everywhere and anywhere you go. But if you can stay in it, and most people don't stay home. Most people will rush off to the next thing and important thing and their preoccupation and there's so many things to do and attain and About

but find a home wherever you are. So that's a fairy tale set IMC and it'd be nice to believe it's your fairy tale. I hope you live it. So any comments, questions? Anything else you'd like to say about that or offer

can't wait for the mic please. Like is coming His

name is Mary. I enjoyed this story. And I know I reflect on it. Sorry. Um, no, I'll reflect on it in the future. Now far away, but I'm curious about Prince and kingdoms. The rest is.

Oh, I see. You know. I think that sequel hasn't been made yet. That sequel hasn't been made yet. How should it go? Do you have any idea of how that one should go?

Parents and the prince could wander by another time. Yeah, their stories there.

Oh, and again, get the benefit of all that love and care and take off some of their close to Yeah, that would be nice.

That story kind of reminded me of another one. We've talked before about an arranged marriage. And a princess who is in love with the sort of childhood that someone who grew up with

that was or the Chinese story Chinese

story. Yeah. And

yeah, no, there's not time for her story.

But But what I thought was interesting what that one was that it was sort of that the princess was split. And there was a sort of ideal version of herself, or I don't know, I don't know exactly, but but that there

was a sort of split between something that could have been and yeah, and it was kind of like neither and neither. I guess one of the ways that they seeing it was that neither of them was really Her

Yes, as she got separated, she wanted she she wanted to marry her childhood sweetheart and her parents had arranged marriage with someone else. And so we find out after a while is that they were she somehow there became to have her and one run away with a childhood sweetheart and then went off and had kids and, and the other one stayed home and was sick and was bedridden for decades. Or a long time.

I guess the question was, I felt in that one that instead of sort of taking off these layers, there was a way it just seemed like it was sort of provoking us to think about, you know, which one was the real that's Yeah, that's her and

so they're so in the story to kind of use us in Zen practice is, is some point. At some point, they they these two two versions of her they meet and when they meet They join together. And then the, then the question is, which one of them was the real one?

Yeah, so I guess the question that what I was wondering about was, you know, how is that a useful way it's also think about meditation of a kind of not not splitting off any part of yourself. But everything,

it's very useful. There's plenty of not everyone, but there's plenty of people who have split off parts of themselves. And sometimes there are two sides to it, there's two different sides of a person that war with it at war. And one side can't accept the other side. And they're really at odds and, and that becomes clear. This is one of the advantages of meditation. Sometimes if you sit quiet enough, and still enough, it isn't just a matter of becoming still, it's a matter of making quiet enough to see what's really going on. And sometimes the war and, and meditation in that sense, is bringing the war to an end, healing the healing the divides, that we exist in. Thank you. There's many, many metaphors for the different things that happen in spiritual practice. these are these are some of them tonight.

All right, okay.

I like the story very much, but for some reason my mind went to the nurse's uniform. And sometime let's say 20 years earlier she there was a nurse or behaved as a nurse

back 20 years earlier

was being a nurse beneficial. Was you wasting our time? Was he creating bad karma? No. We're all i certainly I'm creating new roles for myself right now. And yes, someday we're gonna have to get rid of them. Maybe I have to do that now. But what about the roles that seem like they're beneficial either to manage humanity or to me right now? How?

I think it's a good idea with them. Well,

before you said, before you ask the question, I was going to go somewhere else. But with that question, I'll say, don't be attached to them. They were I was going to go was that, you know, if you're going to live a human life, you'll have roles, all kinds of roles. But as we become freer, we can move in and out of the roles with ease. And we're not attached to a particular role. And we can pick them up, do them when they're useful and meaningful, and put them down when they're not. The issue is many people get attached to the rules. And there's, there's there's attachments for it, attachments against it, all kinds

of hold on to it. We don't want to put it down we carried with us when it's no longer needed. And or we refuse to pick it up when it is needed. It's complicated all this. And so with freedom we can move, pick it up and put it down as needed. So, you know, maybe someone here is a nurse. And if a member here we've had people here have medical emergencies right here. And, and then people who are medical people, we're glad for that. They weren't planning to be a nurse or a doctor this evening. But they step up into that and help the situation. And then maybe they put it down and go home. You know, when it's over. And I know last week I was uh, I don't know how much of an identity or role I was outside the tree house where I was staying at the retreat center. We have a curve in the road and there was a one car accident. No one got hurt, but it pretty dramatic accident and at night. And so I was the helper. And I stayed and helped until I was no longer needed. And then I was no longer the helper. Then I tried to be the sleeper. But I didn't succeed very well, for quite a while had to waste a lot of energy.

So anything else? Anything you'd like to bring up or ask or? Yes, please. Yeah, if you could use the mic, please.

How do you decipher what's a story and what's real?

How do you tell the difference between a story and what's real?

How do you tell the story and what's really I don't have I probably don't have a good answer for you. But I think in my mind, stories are never real. If it's a story, it's not real. It might resemble reality, what's real, it might be a pointer to what's real. It might be useful to kind of explain things well enough to get the work done. But a story is always going to be a concepts and ideas always a step removed from the direct experience. So the moment

I feel like our lives are all made up so many stories is and we see them so well over time, that they become so real to the point

where you don't know the difference. I think it's like these roles. I think our life is stories, lots of stories. We're not we're not going to you know, we can we can't not have stories. But it really helps to see it as a story. To see it being born as a story as opposed to thinking this is real, this is actually what's happening. And, and it's there's a way of participating in the story and being creative with it. And learning to be creative and wise and use them in useful ways use them away said he'll that liberate, that are compassionate. There's all kinds of ways to use the stories. And so what's important is not so much the stories, but rather, what we're connected to when we live the stories. Are we connected to compassion? Are we connected to freedom? Are we connected to wisdom to insight? Can we really see what's happening clearly, and that's what's important and then with with those is kind of like the, the perspectives for the story. Then we can step into stories, because society asks us to participate in stories. Or we can recognize the society's asking us to participate in stories which are awful. And that we shouldn't participate in them. Because we know this is just there's so many someone's else's story. And it's not real, what's what, you know how society is organized, it's not the truth. And it's true. So I think that becoming wise about the storytelling mind and story, you know, is very, very helpful. But idea that we're not going to live without any stories, is not useful. It's like saying, I'm gonna that's almost the same as saying, I'm going to live without any language. You know, stories are the way his stories are kind of how we communicate.

And then there's, there's some, some scholars of religion say that the primary thing religion is stories. That's, and that's when most people are oriented around not about the core beliefs of this religion



dependence, but they're really it's their what really grabs them and orient them as a story is that religion too. Tonight you've got a story. And it was real. That one was real metaphor. Medic, metaphorically.

Yes. You're here you wait for a night please.

instead of answering

How can you tell what's reality? And what's the story?

Yeah. And Buddhism, is there such a thing as

reality? what is reality?

Hmm. That's a good question to the I think that Buddhism is not so interested in what reality is, but it really interested in freedom and compassion. And so, the thing that Buddhism is focusing on is how to have insight understood understanding into that which is If you insist on using the word real, that which is real, in terms of causing suffering or freedom from suffering, so you and that's what you want to see. And the rest of it is hopefully what we live wisely. We live wisely with the rest of it. And what what reality is, you know, I don't know how much it matters once you're free. I mean, you better settle but you have to go find the gas station. And that's a nice story we tell ourselves you know, down the street is a gas station hole in the ground with gas. If you pay a certain amount of money, you can fill up your tank. So that's Is that real is? I don't know. yet. Yes. No. Who knows? Who cares? I just need to get gas. I know is that satisfying enough? My answer?

It's a perfect answer.

Okay.

Okay, so I hope you enjoyed We're hoping that this this fairy tale I told you was something you could relate to enough to use it as a mirror for yourself and look at yourself and to understand the tremendous value of taking off some of these clothes and allowing some things to burn in the fire of mindfulness. Thank you all