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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

*When Things Happen to People:
The Field Beyond Good and Bad*

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www.ArtBetweenUs.org/when.html

It takes a community...One woman's encounter with breast cancer.

From S. Elise Peeples, author of the novel *Strands* and non-fiction work, *The Emperor Has a Body*, comes a memoir of the events surrounding her breast cancer and mastectomy. This is an account of her openness to guidance from the seen and the unseen and of the active support she received from her community.



"I began this book because of a series of e-mails I sent and that were sent in reply to me before and after I had a mastectomy on September 4, 2009. My original intent was simply to publish e-mails that had meant so much to me; however, the story required a recounting of the context as well, and the book enlarged itself."
—S. Elise Peeples

"You have been impeccably real and naked to the bone with yourself and with us...You have shown us how, when given the chance, a community can be essential to healing and transformation...how a community is transformed by the journey of any one of its own."

—Elenna Rubin Goodman, ceremonialist and convener of the Bay Area Daré, a sacred gathering for healing and peace building and the restoration of our world.

"When a ladder fell broadside onto the freeway in front of me, time stopped, giving me a chance to swerve around it, unharmed. This incident began a journey of teachings and synchronicities, from the appearance of The Stranger (tumor in my breast), through decisions, preparations for a mastectomy, surgery, the healing frontier and becoming a healing presence."

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By S. Elise Peeples

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S. Elise Peeples, a philosopher, authored a novel called *Strands*; a book of philosophy called *The Emperor Has a Body: Body Politics in the Between* (Javelina Books: Tucson, AZ, 1998) and co-authored *The Spiral: A Workbook* (Minding the Body, Inc. Berkeley, CA, 2000).

She is the founder of Sound Rivers (www.SoundRivers.net) where she plays and teaches didgeridoo for healing purposes (especially teaching didgeridoo to people with sleep apnea and/or asthma)



Elise is Executive Director of Art Between Us (www.ArtBetweenUs.org) whose mission is to teach and produce collaborative art in order to stimulate the creativity in all people and to dissolve isolation in our human family. Art Between Us believes that through collaborative art, people can access both individual and collective creativity and find keys to community building, conflict resolution and the creation of sustainable futures.

HOW THIS BOOK CAME INTO BEING

by S. Elise Peeples, author of
When Things Happen to People:
The Field Beyond Good and Bad

I began this book because of a series of e-mails I sent and that were sent in reply to me before and after I had a mastectomy on September 4, 2009. My original intent was simply to publish e-mails that had meant so much to me. However, when I started putting them together, I realized that the story I wanted to tell required a recounting of the context as well, and the story enlarged itself.

I begin the book with an incident that happened on my way to Santa Cruz on Highway 17. A ladder fell broadside onto the freeway in front of me, and time stopped to give me a chance to swerve around it, unharmed. This incident seemed to be the beginning of a journey full of teachings and synchronicities from the appearance of The Stranger (tumor in the breast), through decisions, preparations for a mastectomy, surgery, the healing frontier and becoming a healing presence. With the help of community, I attempted to change the focus of my attention from “me” and “mine” to a wider awareness of peace-making and healing, not just in my life, but in my communities and beyond.

I compare this change of focus to a film I once saw called *Cosmic Voyage* where the lens of the camera looked at reality from different distances. First, it zoomed in to the microscopic level and then it zoomed out in stages, all the way to outer space. At the microscopic level, atoms looked chaotic until the camera zoomed out a little, and the pattern became clear. Then it zoomed a little further out and everything looked chaotic for a while until it zoomed far enough out to allow one to once again recognize patterns.

To me, a miracle occurs when we can let go of judgment, cause and effect, reward and punishment—in fact, all dualisms—and keep the focus spacious, allowing for a glimpse into a different level of reality where miracles happen. With this different focus, events and what seem like isolated incidents and individuals show themselves to be deeply connected, forming a new sort of pattern.

Things happened on this journey that are unexplainable in this day-to-day reality but which made intuitive sense when I zoomed out. These glimpses came in the form of synchronicities, dreams, messages from ancestors or animals, lessons from unlikely sources, and intuitions that I could not attribute to any likely source.

This account is not meant to be a “how-to” for people going through a similar surgery; that would be impossible to extrapolate from my limited experience. The two steps I would recommend are 1.) Stay open to guidance and 2.) seek out a community that can be a part of it with you.

This book documents my journey in which I held, in whatever ways possible, an attitude of receptivity and openness to guidance from the seen and the unseen.