

# Remembering the way of miracles

Chip Richards

*I have always been fascinated with the idea that miracles are meant to be a normal part of our daily life and who we really are.*

*Recently, I was plunged into an experience that called for the living validation of this theory. It is in some senses a very small story (about 14cm high), with stakes not as brooding as some of our current world issues, but this encounter has left us with a potent road map and reference point to the inner pathway of miracles, which has since rippled profoundly into all areas of our life. I share it here in hopes that it will trigger your own recognition of subtle patterns and miracle experiences in life, through the stories and creations you are living right now...*

## *Missy went Missing*

“Promise me you won’t take her outside”, were Asheyna’s last words before she and our son Joshua left our home in the hills of Byron Bay for a weekend in Melbourne. As she said this, she cradled the feathery yellow bird in her hands – scratching it blissfully behind the ears – then placed her gently on my shoulder. Missy had come into our life the previous Christmas, and while I had never before considered myself as a ‘bird owner’, amidst the magic of getting to know this little being as she flew around our house and celebrated our arrival into each room, as she sprinted across my computer keyboard (adding words like “jk?~” to my sentences) in times of great stress, as she stole cornflakes from Josh’s cereal bowl and gently cleaned herself in the mist of Asheyna’s showers, we had all fallen deeply in love with her. And yet, part of me had remained conflicted about her captivity, wishing I could go outside with her, where she would be free to fly and return to us of her own will. My family’s argument, which I also understood, was that she would never survive out in the wild... so why tempt fate?

About an hour after I said goodbye to Ash and Josh, and about five minutes before I settled into a weekend of very focused writing (with a major deadline waiting on the other end), I stepped outside to grab something off our verandah, somewhat unconscious of the fact that the little bird (who was literally as light as a feather), was still perched on my shoulder. We had been onto the covered verandah together before, and this would only be for a moment, but I could not have predicted what would happen...

As I stepped outside, Missy fluttered to the top of a hanging hula-hoop. As she landed on the plastic ring, it spun into motion, flipping her off balance into flight – off the verandah, into the open air! With calls of great distress, she circled over the house in a panic before crash landing into a high tree canopy. I raced into the yard, trying to call her down, but she just paced back and forth along the limb as if she didn’t know how. Jumping onto the trampoline I tried to encourage her into flight from there... and for a moment I thought it might work. She gingerly opened her wings and stepped off the ledge, but something startled her mid-flight and she ended up flying straight over my head, into the rainforest of the National Park!!! A tiny yellow dot, panicking, screeching and vanishing in the distance.

With Ashe yana's last words echoing painfully in my gut, I sprinted after Missy, up along the old fire track deep into the forest, calling and listening with every step. But she was nowhere. I may as well have dropped a goldfish fish into the ocean and swam after it. I was furious with myself for my casual disregard of Ashe yana's deep wishes, horrified at the thought of having to tell her and Josh what had happened, and deeply disturbed knowing that our sweet little friend was flying lost in the jungle – into the territorial grounds of eagles, crows, magpies, snakes and more.

Two hours later, sweaty, scratched and already well behind my writing schedule, I vowed to myself and the Universe that I would do all in my power to bring Missy back. I did not know how, but I knew this must be done. I found myself voicing this intention clearly and repeatedly out loud – first to myself, then to the trees and the kookaburras. I went to the spring at the centre of the property and called out to the nature spirits and all who would listen. I asked for help. I stated my intention for her to return and my willingness to do whatever was needed to assist. The forest studied me in silence. I took a breath, thanked them for their help and bolted back to the house to see if Missy had arrived home yet.

I arrived instead to a call from Ashe yana, checking to see how I (and little bird) were doing. I have often noticed that when we strongly state an intention to the Universe, among the first things to arise are symbols of what may be blocking our internal flow from receiving it. This is often misperceived as a setback, but in truth it is more like a weed rising in the garden after rainfall – it simply calls for gentle release, so we can get on with the mission of growing. In this case, my energy of clear intention to bring back Missy, was being squashed by my guilt and fear of telling my family what had happened – and I knew it. As much as I had hoped to have this situation solved before I spoke with Ash, here we were on the phone, and I knew the only way forward was honesty. I told her what happened, and after swearing, crying and hating me for a few minutes, thankfully she turned, and in a voice of startling clarity, said, "Bring her back Chip. We have to bring her back."

We both fell very quiet on the phone. Then from that silence, an idea began to rise. Knowing that we are all energetically connected and that animals often communicate with pictures, we decided the best thing to do was to turn the intention of Missy's returning into a picture. Something we could revisit in our mind over and over and something that would build a genuine positive feeling in our bodies. With no sign of a yellow bird anywhere, it seemed a tough time to initiate a visualisation experiment, but we knew the energy had to start somewhere.

I asked myself what could be the very highest outcome of this experience. Initially I couldn't get past the devastating vision of having to tell Josh what had happened, but slowly I moved through other more 'realistic' scenarios until I eventually came to an image... an image that felt in this moment to be nearly impossible, but one that to me represented the highest possible outcome.

The image was of Missy flying right into my chest and me catching her. I imagined the feeling of overwhelming relief and gratitude we would feel for this to happen, and for a moment I allowed myself to feel it. Somewhere in the field of all possibilities, there must be a probable reality of Missy coming home; so we both decided to hold that vision above all

others, and to do our best not to doubt the universe's infinite capacity to line up with our intentions. This vision would be our message. We would share it with a few key friends and we would return to it over and over, letting ourselves feel the feelings of the image. From there it would be up to me to listen and follow whatever impulses may arise to help bring us closer to its realisation.

We hung up the phone and, as the sun went down on this first day, quiet inklings began to rise in me of steps I could take to build the energy of Missy's return. The first was to record my voice whistling and calling out to her (something she always responded to). So I positioned our stereo speakers at the window and much to our neighbours' curiosity, I began pumping this recording into the forest. As darkness fell, I knew she was out there shivering on a limb somewhere. Maybe she could hear me.

The next morning I rose with an increased sense of focus. If she was still alive, she would still be somewhere in the region – so I turned up the stereo volume and left it on repeat as I made up a sign to distribute and headed into town. On the way, I repeatedly stopped at the sound of whistles in the trees – often engaging in lengthy call and response exchanges before realising I was talking to the wrong bird. “Prepare to buy a puppy”, was the best vote of confidence I got from a friend I passed in town as I handed him my flyer, but I would not let this deter me. She was coming home.

Each time I hung up a flyer, I paused to look at her photo, imagining Missy flying into my chest and how incredibly grateful I would be. Shortly after hanging up the last flyer, something subtle happened that I would not normally attach significance to, but on this day it meant the world... There in the very small town of Mullumbimby, in the space of three minutes, two different people (a kid on a bike, then an old man in a car) went out of their way to approach me and ask for directions. Never before nor since has this happened. So I took it as a sign – I must be putting out the energy of navigation in some way or another.

A short drive – and many whistle stops – later, I arrived home and discovered another piece of the puzzle... As I sat in the verandah trying to get a fragment of my writing project done, I became aware of an immense amount of bird activity above the yard. In the space of an hour, I saw two wedge-tail eagles, a hawk, several crow families, kookaburras, a pack of rainbow lorikeets and a huge flock of doves – so many more than usual. They were hovering, circling and mingling in almost eerie ways around the house, as though they had been called there and wondered what for. It seemed whatever we were doing was having a magnetic effect of sorts... but perhaps it needed more clear focused. For as the sun went down on the second day, still no sign of Missy.

That evening we returned to our meditative images and I told Asheyna the next time I called her it would be with tears in my eyes from Missy's return. We both wanted to believe this and felt encouraged by the signs, but with a cool winter night on the rise and a rain forecast the following afternoon, we knew our window of time was narrowing.

Morning of day 3, I rose to a phone call from my aforementioned friend. He had good news and bad. The good news was that he remembered hearing a story of a bird returning

to its owner after flying off for several days. The bad news was that on closer inspection of my flyer, he noticed that I had written the **WRONG** contact phone number!

This was not the first opportunity I had to spiral into self-judgment, but somehow I knew this would not help. I decided instead to try embracing the wisdom of Aikido and 'accept the hit as a gift'. There must be a gift in this somewhere... I zoomed back into town, and carefully began renumbering every one of the flyers I hung up the day before. Halfway through, I felt my energy begin to rise and I realised that this activity was like a mantra to the message. It was giving me the chance to once again look at full colour images of Missy at home, and to really connect with the vision of her return.

I knew I had put out a pulse that was being received in some way by the animal world, and despite the passing hours and the growing rationale against it, I continued to 'feel the vision' of Missy's return to my chest. This focus was of course intermingled with waves of doubt and fear of the worst possible scenarios, but I noticed that whenever a fearful image would rise, I would let it move through with a breath, then I would simply and return to my vision. If she freely chose to live out her days as a wild yellow dart in the woods, then I would try to accept this, but if she wanted to return, my job was to help...

If she was having a hard time finding home, perhaps I could do more to bring home to her. So I lit a fire in the stove as a smoke signal, maxed out the stereo volume and basically folded our house inside out. I brought her cage, food and much of my wardrobe out into the yard, hanging them up in the trees. I ate cereal, played music and typed on my computer. I spent the day doing all the things she was most familiar with, but doing them outside. The yard looked hilarious but for some reason it felt like the right thing to do.

Hours passed, fires dimmed and storm clouds began to build. Just before sunset, I gathered an armful of firewood on my way into the house, and as a token gesture, let out one final whistle, as I had done hundreds of times in the past few days. Turning toward the house in surrender, I suddenly heard in the distance... a familiar response. I whistled again. This time the response came louder. I had always been mystified how birds like penguins know the unique call of their young in a colony of thousands, but in this moment I knew this was for me. I dropped the wood and bolted into the trees, whistling and listening with each step. As I came to a narrow clearing, my eyes rose to the top of an 80-foot gum tree, where a tiny yellow form paced back and forth looking down. I whistled once more, and in a moment of surreal magnificence, she took flight with wings of new confidence and dive-bombed through the clearing... right into my CHEST! Just like the image we had dared to hold. I grabbed her with both hands and scrambled up to the house. With tears of disbelief pouring down my face (man, I didn't realise how much I loved this bird!) I called Ashe yana and heard the conversation unfold that we had rehearsed and imagined. "She's back! I have her! She's OK!"

That night as I watched Missy eat her weight in seed and gratefully settle back in to her human home, I recounted the tale with Ashe yana, unravelling many incredible lessons Missy had taught us. Lessons about clearly stating our highest intention and building energy around the FEELING of that vision – even when it seems out of reach. Lessons about listening to our highest wisdom, taking simple practical steps when called to and being



willing to flow with what comes. Lessons about letting doubts and fears arise and release as we continually return to our higher focus. I realised that no matter how far-fetched our dreams and ideas may seem, if we can envision them and build energy around them in our bodies, then there is nothing we cannot create. In truth, this is perhaps one of our greatest callings – to continually stretch ourselves to see greater possibilities beyond our ‘apparent’ reality; to know that our world is an ever-evolving reflection of the visions we hold clearest and share most deeply with those around us. Whether we are calling a tiny bird back from the forest or calling healing to our body... whether we are seeking resolution to a challenging personal situation or peace in a land of conflict... whether we are calling for a new home or new vitality in the elements our living planet... the pathway is the same. It starts right here with the visions we hold and the energy we build around them. While it is often crisis and challenge that brings us into the focus of our infinite creative capacities, it doesn’t have to be that way. In truth these moments of greatest challenge may simply be helping us remember how incredibly creative and powerful we are all the time – when we open our view of what is possible and come together, for the higher good of all.

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