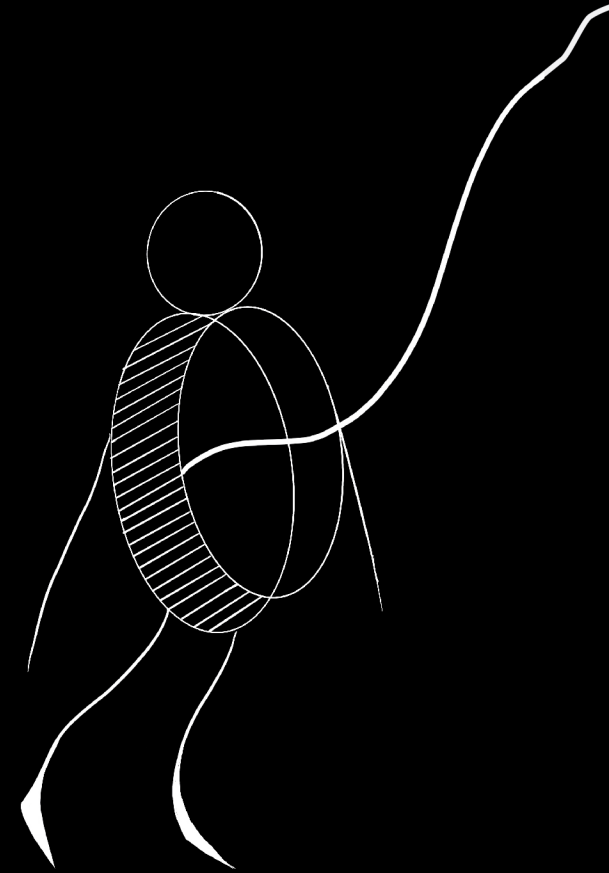


THE  
SIGHT  
LIVES  
OF A  
WEARY  
BODY

ALICE STEFFLER

## BEFORE THE LIVES...

I read somewhere recently of a theory that our bodies are recycled and reused among souls. Our bodies have lived long lives and functioned well for us through each of those lives. The cosmic stardust that makes up their structure is fine, but so incredibly strong as these vessels allowed us to move through life physically and emotionally. As a baby, someone told my mom that I have an old soul (7+ lives lived) and that I am probably living my last life. Here are some of the lives I think my body has lived throughout time.



I.

This body has filled the role of a strong warrior in light, but protective armor; a body that would hold a spear level with her body as she crouched into a fighting stance. This body allowed her to grow lean muscles that will let her be nimble and quick. She was sharp-witted, listening to every crack and pop that naturally and unnaturally occurs around her, ready to sniff out any enemy nearby. She had the keen ability to hunt humans when necessary. She was very in tune to her body - she never questioned the cues it gave her, or told herself she was being hypervigilant when her ears perked up; her mind and her body were an unconditional partnership.

II.

Still nimble, but less quick and more weighed down by heavy electronics, in her next life she emerges as a spy. Her body still had that "new body smell" to it, and she harnessed the ability to partake in strenuous physical activity, with a mind capable of learning many languages. Her body works with her insatiable appetite to learn and know - bettering and exciting the mind that lives within the body too. She is less nimble, but holds far more information and instincts than she did before.

III.

I've had a few dreams over the years of being inside of a 1920s speakeasy, and I've never felt like a patron in those settings. It feels reasonable to assume that I was a bartender at a speakeasy in another life. This body increases the strength and dexterity of it's hands, and uses the body's previous skills to move quickly from patron to patron to deliver drinks that tasted 10x better than they used to because those drinks were never supposed to find their way in to a body due to being outlawed. The thrill of an illegal rush is a new sensation, but is not a feeling that this body wished to get rid of. This body had fun and gets to live outside of survival mode in this life.

IV.

The body has a yearning to learn. Whether it's to learn a 40-drink menu or learning how to metalsmith as a welding apprentice in less modern times, the mind wants to be fulfilled as much as the body does. In a partnership, they push and pull but always come back to equilibrium. The mind gets it's day in the sun as it's able to calculate risks around controlled, but raging fires and hot metals all around. The body starts to show wear and tear in this life as the body's skin cracks and melts from accidental touches to scalding surfaces and builds calluses and resistance to further protect itself.

V.

The body uses its mind a lot more in this life as it navigated through the medicine of animals and helping them to survive any injuries they may have sustained. There's more care that comes to the forefront here than in any other life. The body wants to be careful, not out of survival, but out of kindness for the odd-shaped patients that it interacted with. The body learned to steady itself in this life, to move slower and think more, and to again further those intuition skills by listening to what others need instead of what this body needs. I have always had positive interactions with animals, some even giving me an innate trust they don't give other humans - so I must have some street cred leftover from another life.

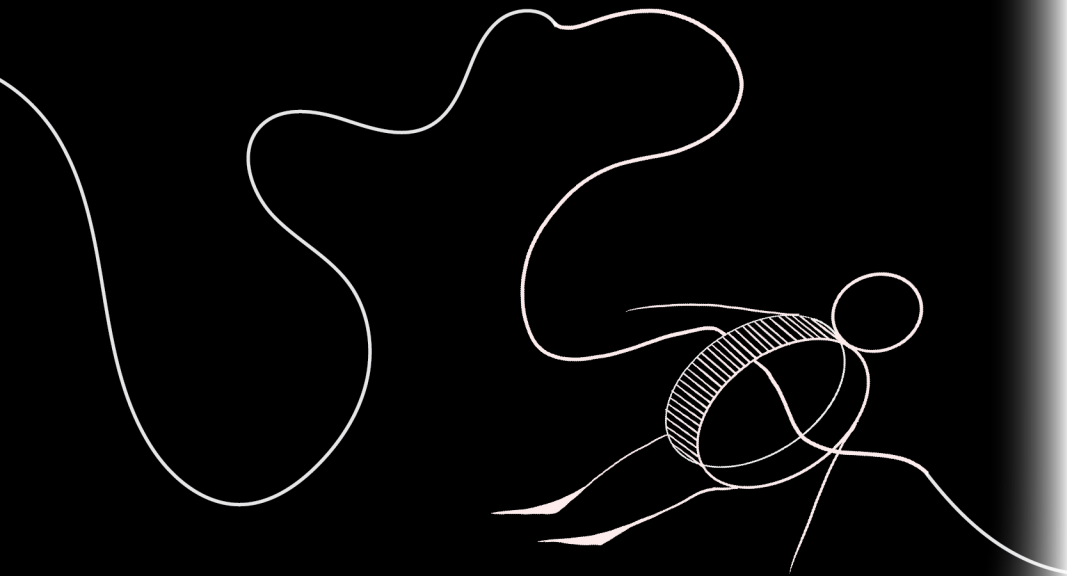
VI.

As the body grows weary of living and moving; it finally catches a break as it transforms into its sixth life as a furry animal it grew a connection with from the fifth life. The body of a medium-sized house cat is unlike any other that the mind has worked with before, but a challenge it took on willingly. The mind was able to relax with the body as it learned to enjoy lazing around in the warm sun, taking long naps, and playing with toys. A weary body got a break that it much deserved and the mind didn't protest once. That, and she got all of the head scratches she could ever ask for.



## VII.

I would like to imagine that my body's last life was more frivolous and ambitious than the others. This body had a life where it cared for plants and sold them to folks who were looking to liven up their home spaces and breathe cleaner air. The body learned to be gentle and observe the plants rather than take action and cause them to die from being overly-attentive with water or care. The body learned to listen to it's own internal cues better, too. The body learned to breathe with itself and take an approach to care where she didn't just take care of herself the way that the society around her taught her was acceptable - she took care of herself the way that her body and mind asked her to as a partnership.



My body didn't ask to be judged for what it can't do or for what I didn't train it to do, only to be appreciated for what it allows me to do. In this life I am a barista and a designer. My body's hands grow weary at the stress and ask to be taken care of rather than berated for the lack of strength that my overuse has caused. She didn't ask to be criticised for an appearance she can't control - just to be loved and appreciated for the movement that she allows my body to make and the way that she keeps my heart beating. She keeps my heart beating so that I can stay alive and live out the goals and dreams that I've spent long nights researching for this life I'm currently in.

No one is as mean to us as we are to ourselves. Thinking of my body as borrowed helps me to empathize with her situation. She didn't ask for me, and I didn't ask for her, but yet we were brought together to move and function as one being. The least I can do is to offer her the same grace and empathy that I would to a close person in my life. When we are both released into the universe, will our cosmic stardust sprinkle off in peace and understanding, or explode like a powder keg ready to rip itself away from the pain of a body and soul that never learned to effectively communicate? Our bodies give us the non-verbal cues that allow us to learn, grow, and take breaks so that the flesh and soul can work together as a partnership, not two battling forces - we just have to be willing to listen.

BE KIND  
AND  
WILLING TO  
WORK WITH  
YOURSELF  
TO BE  
BETTER  
FOR YOU.