

Slow Down and Breathe
#13-Genre: Contemplative Spirituality, 981 Words
By: Jeana Martin

Jeana Martin has loved words since she was first able to speak. She grew up in Texas and has lived in the Rio Grande Valley for four years while serving as a local church pastor. She is also a therapist, spiritual director, leads retreats in Texas and pilgrimages in Spain. Jeana has been writing for years and writes poetry, plays and nonfiction contemplative pieces besides her weekly sermons for worship. She loves travel and walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain last year and is gathering a group of pilgrims to walk the last 110 km of the Camino in the summer of 2021. In July of 2020, she will begin a new adventure at New Life Institute in Austin and at Pilgrims on a Journey, as she counsels, offers spiritual direction and continues to lead retreats and pilgrimages. She is currently writing a book about her experiences on pilgrimage in Chartres, France.

Mary's heart began to race as they got farther from the theater and she found it difficult to catch her breath. She recognized the sign and knew she had to calm herself. Passing Forest, she walked to the end of the block, rounded the corner and saw where she once spent a lot of time in a small café nearby.

"Mary, slow down!" Forest implored. Even though he was taller, he struggled to keep up. "Where are we going? We have to go back to your time!"

She finally stopped and yelled at him, "No! Not yet!" and walked on. When she faced him once more, she still struggled to catch her breath.

"I just found out one of my best friends is trying to unleash a deadly virus on the world and I need to think. I can't breathe and I need a moment!" She turned on her heels and walked away.

Forest knew she was right. He hadn't told her they had 24 hours to make it back safely. He mumbled under his breath "Okay, Mary. Where to?" and ran to catch up.

Arriving at Gizmo's, a small, family-owned café Mary had visited often, she waved to the owners and wordlessly moved to the small yoga studio at the back of the restaurant. Mary, struggling to breathe, sat down in the center of the studio. Forest followed and gingerly approached Mary.

"Mary, I think . . ." he began, but Mary raised her hand signaling she did not want to be disturbed. Forest quietly closed the door and sat down. She would not budge until she was ready.

Mary, unable to catch her breath, began to say the words of her favorite mystic Julian of Norwich. "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well." She used these words as a mantra to help slow her breathing. As Forest observed, he noticed his own breathing settled too.

For years, the words of Julian, who lived during the middle ages and survived the Black Plague, had brought comfort to Mary. They helped her think and quiet her body and mind when she became anxious. It was while meditating on these words she first encountered Henry and Aronia.

As Mary repeated the words, she recognized this shift in her thinking as a sign that she was no longer panicked. She continued to breathe and repeat the mantra. Something about Julian's words and Henry and Aronia was trying to connect within her. She took a long inhale and then remembered what they had said.

"All is well." She exhaled and said the words aloud so Forest could hear. "Forest, all is well."

Forest had become so relaxed while waiting for Mary, he had fallen asleep. "Huh? What is what?"

"All is well!" she repeated.

Forest, finally roused from sleep, asked, "All is well? I have no idea what you mean."

"Henry and Aronia, I'm not sure how to explain who they are, but they told me *all is well*. And that it is not Michael's answer."

Forest rose to his feet and plopped down beside Mary. In one moment he was clumsy and in another moved as graceful as a dancer. He was an enigma to her. "I'm confused by all of this! Who are these people you're talking about and what do they have to do with what we saw at the theater?"

Mary remained motionless and Forest thought she was going to meditate again. She drew in a calming breath and continued, "I'm confused too and yet, I think Henry and Aronia took the Sassafras from me to keep it safe. Maybe to keep all of us safe!"

"Why don't we ask them? Do you know where they might have been in September 2019?"

Mary opened her mouth to speak and then hesitated. She looked away and softly said, "That might be complicated."

"Complicated how?" Forest asked.

"Well, so you know how you time travel?" Mary paused, gathering herself, "But, you're human right? Even though you can travel through time, you're human?"

"Yes, of course," Forest assured.

"Henry and Aronia...they're not. And I'm not sure where they would have been in September."

"Is there another way to contact them?"

"Yes, but I'm not sure if it would work now in this place," she hesitated again. "Not in this place as in where, but in our current *when*. I'm not sure how to connect with them in the past."

"Can you try?"

Mary had never thought of this. Actually, she had never known anyone could travel through time until an hour ago, and she'd not dreamed of how to contact her spritely friends in the past. Would it be too dangerous? "I can try," she ventured.

She sat very still and began to focus on the sprites. “Henry, Aronia, if you can hear me, if it’s possible, can you show up where and when I am right now? I desperately need your help again.”

Moments passed and nothing happened. Mary was not surprised. “Maybe it only works when I’m in my home. Or we could be too far away.”

Forest reached to touch Mary’s arm, but hesitated because of the Rules of Time Travel, and instead asked gently, “Would you be willing to try once more?”

Mary nodded her head and spoke slowly, “And all shall be well.” She breathed in an “all is well” followed by an exhale. “Yes, I’ll try once more.”

She and Forest were very still, eyes closed. She called out to Henry and Aronia. Before she finished the same words a loud thud echoed from the corner of the room. She and Forest jumped up and ran to where the sound had come.

Two small figures were standing there, dusting themselves off. They looked up at Mary and bowed gently.

Aronia cried, “We were a bit delayed but we made it!”