

# The Calling

By Mirabai Starr

“There is a secret place. A radiant sanctuary. As real as your own kitchen. More real than that. Constructed of the purest elements. Overflowing with the ten thousand beautiful things. Worlds within worlds. Forests, rivers. Velvet coverlets thrown over featherbeds, fountains bubbling beneath a canopy of stars. Bountiful forests, universal libraries. A wine cellar offering an intoxication so sweet you will never be sober again. A clarity so complete you will never again forget.

This magnificent refuge is inside you. Enter. Shatter the darkness that shrouds the doorway. Step around the poisonous vipers that slither at your feet, attempting to throw you off your course. Be bold. Be humble. Put away the incense and forget the incantations they taught you. Ask no permission from the authorities. Slip away. Close your eyes and follow your breath to the still place that leads to the invisible path that leads you home.

Listen. Softly, the One you love is calling. Listen. At first, you will only hear traces of his voice. Love letters he drops for you in hiding places. In the sound of your baby laughing, in your boyfriend telling you a dream, in a book about lovingkindness, in the sun dipping down below the horizon and a peacock’s tail of purple and orange clouds unfolding behind it, in the nameless sorrow that fills your heart when you wake in the night and remember that the world has gone to war and you are powerless to break up the fight. Let the idle chatter between friends drop down to what matters. Listen. Later his voice will come closer. A whisper you’re almost sure is meant for you fading in and out of the cacophony of thoughts, clearer in the silent space between them. Listen. His call is flute music, far away. Coming closer.



Be brave and walk through the country of your own wild heart. Be gentle and know that you know nothing. Be mindful and remember that every moment can be a prayer. Melting butter, scrambling eggs, lifting fork to mouth, praising God. Typing your daughter's first short story, praising God. Losing your temper and your dignity with someone you love, praising God. Balancing ecstasy with clear thinking, self-control with self-abandon. Be still. Listen. Keep walking.

What a spectacular kingdom you have entered! Befriending the guards and taming the lions at the gates. Sliding through a crack in the doorway on your prayer rug. Crossing the moat between this world and that, walking on water if you have to because this is your rightful place. That is your Beloved reclining in the innermost chamber, waiting for you, offering wine from a bottle with your crest on the label. Explore. Rest if you have to, but don't go to sleep. Head straight for his arms.

And when you have dismissed the serpents of vanity and greed, conquered the lizards of self-importance, and lulled the monkey mind to sleep, your steps will be lighter. When you have given up everything to make a friend a cup of tea and tend her broken heart, stood up against the violation of innocent children and their fathers and mothers, made conscious choices to live simply and honor the earth, your steps will be lighter. When you have grown still on purpose while everything around you is asking for your chaos, you will find the doors between every room of this interior castle thrown open, the path home to your true love unobstructed after all.

No one else controls access to this perfect place. Give yourself your own unconditional permission to go there. Absolve yourself of missing the mark again and again. Believe the incredible truth that the Beloved has chosen for his dwelling place the core of your own being because that is the single most beautiful place in all of creation. Waste no time. Enter the center of your soul.

— Mirabai Starr, pp.1-3 in the Introduction to *The Interior Castle*, by St. Teresa of Avila