



Raven and the Hummingbird: A Healing Path to Recovery from Multiple Personality Disorder

Renate F. Caldwell

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Raven and the Hummingbird is a therapist's hopeful memoir about helping a woman to heal from abuse.

Therapist Renate F. Caldwell's emotive memoir *Raven and the Hummingbird* is about treating a patient with multiple personality disorder.

The book's five sections chronicle one year each of a patient's treatment, with focus on the patient's therapy sessions with Caldwell. Caldwell met the focal patient, Joan, by chance; Joan had just been dismissed by her previous therapist, who'd treated her for eleven years. Her illness had first manifested when she was thirty-two, and she was still struggling to deal with it. Though Caldwell had no experience with treating multiple personality disorder herself, she dove into five years of intense therapy with Joan. In the process of this work, she encountered fifty-two different "parts" of Joan; twenty-plus such alters disclosed chilling details about childhood sexual abuse. Together, these alters represented an intricate support system created by Joan's mind to protect her.

This narrative case study meditates on abuse and its consequences but also on the healing power of telling the truth. There are brutal accounts of rape and molestation and recurrent expressions of pain, fear, and helplessness. And in tandem with these disturbing stories, Caldwell shares tales from her life as a World War II survivor, adding another solemn layer to this story of two women working together with determination to heal.

Joan's alters are rendered in distinctive terms, even when their appearances are brief. They include Beth, a cheerful girl who expresses love and joy; Rose, a teenager who articulates physical pain following years of abuse; and Shadowman, a young adult who assumes a persecutor role. Some make regular appearances before they integrate with Joan in bittersweet scenes. Helpful figures—including Raven, a spiritual protector; Elizabeth, a guardian of Joan's child alters; Many Voices, a scribe and recorder; and The Blessing Lady—form the group's center, expressing wisdom and providing stability. To help outsiders track this extensive cast, the book is supplemented by a list of Joan's alters.

The book also takes pains to establish the particulars of Joan's "Inner Realm" (a list at the end of the book enumerates its sites). The language regarding this place is eerie and often beautiful. It couples with outward expressions of Joan's inner world, shown via years of paintings and poems—credited, in part, to her alters. Added together, these pieces from Joan's once fragmented life result in an intriguing picture of the difficulties she conquered—and support the book's final triumphant notes, postintegration.

Recording instances of both devastation and hope, *Raven and the Hummingbird* is a therapist's memoir about helping a woman to heal from abuse.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (July 19, 2023)

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