

The more we fear, the more we feel unloved, unlovable – indeed, loathsome and abominable. This is how we create abominations. Love is our transcendence.

Perfect love casts out fear.

1 JOHN 4:18

Perfect love is present in the awareness of the Truth. Love is the Truth and our purpose is to realise this. In Truth love is never absent. Only our perception can make it seem so.

*“Perfect love casts out fear,” I say, almost as though thinking aloud to myself. And in a way I am. Reminding myself of this truth in the face of such jaundiced vision. Her face has the look of a cabbage patch doll. Once pretty features, swollen with too much alcohol for too long; now the skin is mottled shades of pasty and puce. My words act like a slap to this face. She retaliates, jerking forward and hissing, “How can I love him. He’s a brute and a bully. He’s always putting me down and he’s so arrogant. I hate him!”*

*I look at her, let her settle a little, and quietly ask, “What is the opposite of love?” Without a pause, she snaps defiantly, “Hate”.*

*“No”, I reply. “It’s not. The opposite of love is fear.”*

*I see, as I have seen so many times, how these words register instantly as true. All of us seem to know this in our deepest wisdom. I continue. “In all of human emotion, there are really only two emotions: love and fear.” With my hands I shape two imaginary containers. “I like to describe it as the love basket and the fear basket.” Holding up my hands as the images of baskets, I ask, “Which does hate come out of – the love basket or the fear basket? Mutely she points to my hand that is the fear basket.*

*“Hate is an aspect of fear”, I confirm with a nod. “Which does brutality come out of?” I ask pointedly. Without hesitation she replies, “The fear basket”.*

*“And bullying behaviour?”*

*“The fear basket.”*

*“When he puts you down, or is so arrogant?”*

*“The fear basket”, she says softly and wonderingly, sitting back as she registers the enormity of what she has just discovered.*

*Just as softly I ask, “What is he so frightened of?” With a look, a look that has been absent from this woman’s face for a long time, she shows me an expression that must have existed on the faces of women forever. It is the expression of fierce protection that a woman gets when her man is frightened. Just as quickly, it is gone, and her face creases in anguish. The unwept tears, hidden in bitterness, finally fall. “He is frightened of my drinking. He is frightened I will leave him,” she sobs. “That he’ll find me dead and not just in a drunken stupor. His anger is just fear.” Her voice rises with her own astonishing conclusion.*

*This realisation, flooding through her mind and body, halts the tears. Her newfound awareness gives me the opportunity to complete the circle.*

*“And what about you? Your hate, even your drinking. What is that coming out of – the love basket or the fear basket?”*

*She looks up, stupefied at how simple it is. All the layers of bitterness, reproach, justification seen through to what is really going on beneath the stories and postures we adopt, vainly trying to keep ourselves safe and sound. “What are you so frightened of?” I ask gently. With all her defenses down, she looks and even sounds like a frightened little girl, as she says on a tiny sob in a tiny voice, “The same.”*

*She is quiet for a long while and then, her voice a little bigger, she says, “I’m so frightened he will leave me. I must have been such a terrible disappointment to him all these years. For God’s sake, I’ve been such a disappointment to myself, so how could I not have been?”*

*“It seems to me what both of you have been doing all these years is living in fear and not in love. And what you both truly long for, as indeed we all do, is to make love and not fear.”*

True awareness transforms our resistance into acceptance and our fear into love. This is love’s alchemy and we are the alchemists.