

Minerva and The Whir

by Jo D'arc

I

She has slept for many thousands of years. In trance she glides and slithers, creeps and jolts, dancing with light between her fingers like golden grains of sand. In her agile slumber a faint scent begins to emerge. She is slowly filled with the treacle-thick smell of earth and flowers. Smell is always the first sense to go at the end of a journey and equally, is the first to come back on arrival at a new destination. It is like a springboard for the rest. A cue to draw.

She tries to stay floating on ether, but it becomes harder and harder to maintain. She is pulled and pulped. She feels energy moving and massaging her from head to toe and, as it forcefully kneads her knots, it extracts her further. Before she knows it, she is crashing through caverns and down rabbit holes. She tries to make sense of it all but everything is moving so fast now and she can't grab a single thought. Yet, she knows that she must.

Up from the earth's core she is squeezed through stalagmites and mounds of hanging rock. She passes by worms and grubs as they weave their homes from the land. The process of unraveling is dense and pressurised. All she has ever been flashes through her. Good, bad, neutral, and every tiny nuance that differentiates or connects this three-sided coin. She feels them all. She weeps and coils and embraces herself, impossible to know how long she has been in this state of flux and endurance.

A rumbling pressure is slowly building, pushing her down, reducing her mass, making her small. If she had not experienced this a million times before she would swear that one of the bold boys of the heavens, maybe Jupiter or Juno, was pacing around in her metaphorical bedroom, minimising her to maximise themselves. They don't realise that to boost one is to boost all. No matter how bright a candle burns it can't extinguish another. Her understanding of this is the reason she is the ultimate.

She knows that this reducing motion is all of her own conduction. Something in her wants to be compressed. To be solid. As she condenses, she is aware of her returning strength. Power-harnesses and hones as matter engrains. Lucidity swells her attention, reaching from the pulse of her core. The eternal beat of everything. The beat we all dance to. Including Jupiter and Juno. The beat of the beat.

The act of taking human form is not for the faint-hearted. It's an incredibly long process that ultimately serves to enforce the simplicity of the human essence on an untameable, unfathomable entity. Various manoeuvres of consciousness tear and pummel till uncertainty and confusion forms a low-level hum that allows her to engage on this earthly plain. Alongside this hum sits a perfect fifth of eternal striving. The harmonics of this sound aren't full to the human ear, but the wider universe can hear the discord. A cycle of perpetual effort, forever searching for the answer. The meaning. The heart of the matter.

This very often leads humans to ultimately missing the point. For them, on top of these notes ring layer upon layer of incoherent noise, adding to their confusion. Frequencies of beauty and beast combine and warp into one energy dense pounding whirl. Constant worry about who they are and what this means. Constant questions of 'does that sounds like something I would say?', 'is this something I would do?' and the eternal fashion quandary, 'is this outfit really 'me'?'. For lifetimes, humans wish away what they have, focusing on what they want next instead of where they are now.

To be human is to sink into a beautiful velvet drenched bed while focusing on the unreachable clouds above. As mortals do, they alter their consciousness and become sewn together in attachment in furious pursuit of the answer. Or more frequently, in fearful concern that there is no answer. Ever preoccupied by pushing and doing and living, they do none of these effectively at all.

In brief moments, people do relax and forget. Letting time unravel them. Watching that cloud slowly float by while indulging in a velvet glow instead of striving to catch what they don't need to reach. In these moments there is a glimmer of understanding. Human minds spark with the energy of 1000 worlds and breath in beat with the time of the trees. An understanding arises that whether or not they have sight, or even eyes, it is possible for human-kind to still see with a clarity that defines dreams. Despite this, they are always swept back into the cycle that has spun since birth was birthed. Striving, impatient and filled with exacerbated excess effort as they chant 'come on, come on, come on'.

III

As the intensity of her transformation dissipates, Minerva slowly become aware of her human body. She circles a wrist and shakes out her long hair, finding her feet directly below her knees as they should be. Suddenly in a bubble of sound, she begins to listen. A rising sense of curiosity bursts through her veins and despite being fully aware that curiosity is a great downfall of the human species, she indulges. 'What has happened here?' she asks.

Her growing concept of time and space tells her things have changed. She feels a buzz, a vibration that she is altogether unfamiliar with. The whirl. It seems the whirl is something of a different beast than when she last danced with it. Born of a mass assimilation of energy and connections spanning the entire world it grows daily. The volume and intensity is now quite something.

New technologies have increased the ferocity far more than she had ever considered possible. Progressive thoughts and joyous momentum can now be shared as readily as war cries and humdrum. The world is connected in an instant. Forever building and layering. Connection without need for touch or even presence. And mere humans did this. Minerva is astounded. Her interest is peaked. How delightful.

Basking in the new frequency. Diving and dallying. Running fingers through sticky strands of engagement. She indulges so ferociously that her heart begins to shake and bubble. These bubbles hint that she should step back for a moment but she can't. Enamoured by the all-consuming magnitude of what has been created, she is in awe of her people. She feels love expand from deep within. Forgetting her human format, she lets it soar.

All of a sudden, an explosion. Dramatic flumes of gold burst from her body rupturing into a luminous mushroom cloud. The sound is a rumble that momentarily slices through the fizzing connections of the whirl. The aftershock jolts with such aggressive intent that it causes the earth to tilt and spin on a new axis and with this, creates waves of magnitude from sky to sky. Minerva is instantly full of remorse for her disruptive intrusion on the beautiful beam of hopeful illusion she had basked in just moments earlier. She scolds herself lightly, chiding that she is now in a body and must act accordingly.

As she absentmindedly molds a new beating heart she wonders if the whirl can sense her? Can it sense itself? Does it feel the depths of her? Did it see her morphing as she flailed in the fizz of limbo between 'being' and 'living'? Had it felt her heart explode? She must know. 'Tell Me' she projects to the stars in a ruminating mantra.

IV

In great sweeps Minerva moves. She stirs ponds and lochs letting them know she is home again. She blows gentle questions into the wind, revelling in its movement. Gleefully, she rides the soft waves her effort creates and as she flows in the breeze the air infuses her body in a gentle swooshing swoop.

Gaining momentum, Minerva's light deep dives from a window on the side of the moon. Hurling to the ground it changes shade to match its peers. Greys, blues, greens, browns then oranges and reds give way to a tar black at the centre of this universe that then catapults her back up through the molten core of the earth's soul. Scorched and exhilarated, her light rebounds through her forehead. Like the eternally exhausted turtle, tired from the everlasting effort and perseverance it takes to hold up the entire world, the light strains with the weight of the world's woes. Simmering and forlorn it twists its way into Minerva's psyche. And as the turtle burrows, the wind tells tales.

Tales are tattled of the fantastic and ferocious energetic whirl. As a swirling throng of heightened human reverb, it reflects all. The world is connected like never before. Knowledge is disseminated as freely as it ever has and at an unprecedented pace. There is no filter yet there are many. It is chaos in all its splendour and savagery. Humans can know all or nothing within the haze of a lazy Sunday afternoon. In days gone by this could only ever have been imagined by Goddesses and Gods yet now, everyone could indulge. Even a person drenched in life can access a little of the goddess's glow, so powerful this reverberation is.

A tender touch can be projected through time and space without strain. Communities have formed that foster growth and tend to higher callings. Yet, with this exquisite expanse also comes manual manoeuvres and marks. A punch can be felt boldly on the other side of the world and its impact bounces and lands to a different beat. Offbeat kilter's lead to torture and the echo of the dismissed and diminished goes unheard. The whirl is magnificent yet terrifying in its anarchic lurches and lulls.

Minerva hears all and despite the growing gnaw of dismay beginning to bubble low in her gut, she is still drawn to the vibration; she wants to play. Maybe her presence will bring change for the better she contemplates as she is drawn back to surf the waves of this human hum. She wriggles and swoops while stomping out moves. She bangs her drum and unites her beat with the whirl.

The wind sweeps forth in frustration knocking Minerva off balance. It sees why she dances. It sees the joy in this miracle of creation. It sees the vision that carries Minerva and takes her away. Fooling her into thinking she can connect. A youthful powerhouse of intrigue formed from nothing and by nobody. It has the eyes of a beauty coming of age, awash with innocent altruism yet layered with ulterior intent. Minerva is drawn

down, giggling as she plunges. With a tug of something like jealousy, the wind whispers under breath, 'the whir may bring joy now but soon you will see her true rhythm'.

The whir does not hold the knowledge of a millennia as the wind does. It is juvenile and cannot even begin to be the answer Minerva needs. The whir can only see itself and images of itself. It reflects out what it thinks is truth and manufactures a dance that imitates this. The dance fuels a beat and as you move a hip or a leaf a symphony of drums erupts. But this is not real. It's all backwards. The world turned up-side down. You may feel fucking fantastic when in its grip but it can't be sustained. It is hollow.

Despite all this, the whir has many facets and can create a lustrous façade of pretty pigmented plastic whenever needed. It resembles good and can be truly serene. But it can also be serpent-like.

Warning Minerva the wind whispers, 'if you lose your guard, you lose your mind.' Minerva scoffs at the drama of the air, breathing beyond its station. There is an ancient strength in the breeze. It knows Minerva's frivolous side and insists it is heard. It must communicate that the whir can blow the mind clean out of a body, even that of a goddess, if its owner becomes too lost in its contradictions.

From nowhere, flutes and clarinets muster sound that breaks the lusty hold of the whir in one pitch perfect soar of music. The sound glides around the entire universe ringing as a reminder to Minerva of her recent loss of heart. It coaxes her to understand that even the great goddess can be tarnished by the superfluously sculpted scripts of the whir. In frustration, the wind blows even harder till no other in existence can air a tone or tune. And this time, Minerva hears.

Finally taking heed, Minerva leaves the whirl. She still feels the hum but she deflects its delight, summoning her own vibration to drown it out with the pulse of a she-drum. The goddess takes to her feet and walks the world with no shoes on till she has seen it all. Letting the soil fill her with the story of her absence. Absorbing the atmosphere, centring her spine, she lingers, leers, luxuriates and laments.

The birds and lions and sea nymphs and fairies tell her stories of blood-battled crusades and captured slaves. Her feet meet the soil and with every step she lives a lifetime. Sharp bolts of emotion and lived experience crack her soul violently. She is the pain of the disengaged. She is the toil of the poor. She is the fury of the dismissed. She feels herself slowly fill with a gory sense of incivility. This is not the point. This is not your point.

She lets out a cry that sends a ripple of air out in all directions. As she does this the wind circles uncontrollably in a spiral that sucks the life from every patch of earth it touches. In response the sun is charged and fires up with concern, illuminating case after case where humans got it right. Minerva stops in her tracks. Tilting her head to the sun she lets its rays massage her face with hope. Just as she was about to reach the point where she could take no more of the brutal revelations of the clay, she was given reprieve.

The sun shines with the joy of giving and helping. The spirits of those propelled to good despite having no gain in doing so are illuminated and held high. The gravelly determination of those who stand up and challenge when others are unable to is shone upon. Sol reminds her of the blissful moments she spent playing with the new bold whirl of energy. Sol reflects to her that she was close to enveloping the joy of the whirl. Sol shines on the love Minerva felt at the discovery of her prodigy's buzz. The manifestation of all earthly actions. There is so much good.

Yet the mud and rock draw her back, lambasting her energy with grim and selfish deeds repeated and repeated and repeated. Selfish men and irreverent leaders. So much skill and wisdom carved up in terror and used for wrong. She holds onto her new heart as it pounds and aches. Eventually, escaping the chime of all who need to communicate to her, she runs for an eternity till she is lost.

As Minerva wanders in the world, with no want to find her way, she stumbles through towns and marketplaces. Broken pathways lead to obscured doorways. Beautifully sculpted gardens expand to unveil mansions with brightly painted gates. Taverns split at the seams with pints of fun and fear. Advertisements line the streets. Women's faces looking blown and contorted sit beside men with lumps of flesh moulded in a way nature would never sign off on. This is beauty? A billboard stretches the length of an entire street advertising the 'best entertainment system in the world'. It displays bold images of humans shooting and maiming each other in brutal detail. With each murky step the blood drains from her face.

She falters in disbelief as a large man walks past with human flesh suits on a rack. The sight makes her stomach flip even more violently than it did when she had unwittingly walked into a cow carcass hung in the street for people to peel limbs off one by one. She follows the man, wondering what on earth he could be planning to do with his collection. They round a corner and he stops outside a shop. It quickly becomes apparent he is selling.

'PRICE NEGOTIABLE', a large sign reads. 'Spend a night in the perfectly preserved skin of a beautiful young woman or strong young man of your choice'. 'Don't dream, just do'. It goes on, 'All skin is expertly treated and engineered so you can truly experience life as the most beautiful and intoxicating version of you'. Despite an instinctive internal recoiling, Minerva approaches the man and asks where he got his skins.

He switches into sales mode and guides her to a rack which he tells her is just what she needs. He begins his pitch. 'This is from a lovely stock of ladies from the far north. Hand-reared and fed only the very best organic food. Selectively bred for three generations now...' His words phase in and out as she strokes the soft skin of a particularly beautiful suit. With every touch she feels the life of its owner. The despair and dread she lived with, the torture of captivity and knowing how her fate would be met. Minerva bites her lip to stifle a tear.

Admiring the blaze of deep red hair which she twirls between her fingers, Minerva has a fleeting thought. She wonders how this suit may transform her own raven locks. How it may help her be a better version of 'her'. Would she feel more powerful? Would she have more fun? Would it make life that bit easier if she became an auburn beauty? She instantly shakes off this protruding rumination with disgust and curses the whir for sucking her into its dark chasm-like grasp yet again.

She knows this man is a hustler and will manipulate her into believing she needs this suit at all costs. She knows this skin has been ripped mercilessly from the back of someone too poor to be able to keep the beauty she was born with. It seems in this world it is only those who have money and possessions who may have this level of aesthetic perfection. Minerva muses gravely that this must be to hide the rotting, stinking core of it all.

VII

It is here that Minerva first uses her powers to intervene in the world. She interrupts the man's sales pitch and curses him. 'May you forever be trampled by those whom you have trampled for your own ends'. She clicks her fingers and unlocks the past momentarily. In the fleeting instants that all of time melds, Minerva reunites the women from the far north with their suits and they roar in giddy delight as they feel comfortable back in their own skin. With another click of her fingers every other skin suit is reunited with its rightful owner. In a blaze of human-like joy, Minerva glints.

The man is also mutated but his fate is to be a grim one. His skin is stolen from his body in the same cruel manor he had used to torture many before. With an iron grip, his skin is stretched out as far and wide as the edges of the universe. He could feel every winch as it pulled his skin tighter and tighter. With a third click of her fingers, Minerva instantly cuts the man's skin into hundreds of pairs of shoes for those mistreated by him. Forever they would trample him. As they walked and danced and leaped the man would feel the pain of being stamped down, undermined and left in the dirt.

(At this point, Minerva does reflect that an eye for an eye is not how an enlightened being should behave and such an act lays question to her intent, morality and even her enlightenment. Questions always need to be posed, especially to those with as much power as the Goddess. If no questions are asked, then great tragedies occur. Minerva found many more examples of this, relayed to her by the earth and air in great chunks and gusts.)

Having been without their skin for so long, every man and woman has a lingering appreciation for things just as they are. They dance and sing and fall in love, revelling in the wonder of being. Some of the suits were damaged from maltreatment or mistakes. Yet, those who ended up with kinks or wonks in their skin are just so happy to have skin at all that they rejoice regardless and embrace imperfection whole heartedly.

Some people accidentally ended up in another's skin on initial transition. The joy of acceptance meant that with some investigation and soul seeking, they could easily find the skin that was meant for them so they could feel at home and comfortable. The ecstasy of being in their own skin and being proud of however that swept them to be was so powerful that other humans started to apply this to their interpretation of their image and elation spread through the whirl.

Purring as Minerva indulges it, the whirl pulls her close enough to touch. Her energy splinters into millions of pieces which are distributed to humans worldwide through the

churn of the whirl. As Minerva relaxes into this, she feels a tugging. She is being pulled in all directions. At first gently and respectfully and then ferociously. The whirl is sucking her in.

As she adjusts her stance, attempting to gather herself she hears the clang of a million coins. They rain on her from all around, spinning in circles until they fall brittlely at her feet. As she gains focus, she realises there has been some kind of awakening caused by the cascading of her shattered energy. The whirl is buzzing with a collective acknowledgement of the Goddesses presence. Dismayed by her loss of anonymity, she reasons that this may be what is needed for human consciousness to evolve. Maybe they will use her energy to heal.

The rich and powerful are besieging her with offerings of jewels and gold, throwing coins at her feet. What do they ask for? Minerva wonders with intrigue. Intrigue turns to irritation as it become clear that although they pretend otherwise, the act of giving is not out of respect or even adoration. It is not a call for her to help the misfortunate. They throw money to beg that she give them more. To provide yet more abundance for those who can already mine all the precious stones they could ever desire. Yet, they ask for nothing for those who currently have not even a single jewel.

Surely, they can't be serious? Untangling herself she disconnects again. Enraged by this lack of understanding she cuts the whirl off with a roar. 'Don't you try to buy me. What I am cannot be bought with all the gold in the world'.

VIII

Saddened and worn down by her most recent interaction with humans, Minerva questions her motives for getting involved. It's still not become clear to her why she has manifest in this form again. She has also begun to notice that the whirl is evoking an increasing uneasy feeling in her core. This incessant gnawing being fuelled further still by the renewed chatter of the elements who found her soon after she started playing about with time and reality. It seems this is not the best move when trying to stay lost.

To sooth this edgy feeling Minerva knew what to do. She must dance. It may not be an instant fix, but it will start the process of conjuring inspiration. As soon as she decides this, she hears the swell of drums. Moving through streets and pathways she finds herself drawn to nature. She swings her hips, limbering up to move all of her as she finds her music in a glen filled with pine trees and honeybees. She stomps and jives, creating circles and losing control of limbs as they lasso through the air. Wildness takes over her thought-broken mind, processing nothing but the beat. Her beat.

Hours pass as she dances with fever, letting go and connecting all at once. When she finally opens her eyes, a boy stands across from her. He is playing a drum, pounding out his beat while dancing as boldly as Minerva. Her eyes flicker with interest. One of the poignancies of being in a body is enjoying the full expression of this in all its creative sway and wild throes of passion. She runs a hand down her chest, lingering around her navel then moves down further yet. She pins the boys eyes with hers and starts to dance towards him. He reciprocates with an animalistic grunt and they are in each other's arms. Minerva is strong and agile and the boy is a fair match. As they move together Minerva loses her beat and in a frenzy of love she twists and turns to the boys drum feeling every sound. They tussle and play loving each other in the most intense way. Afterwards they lay in each other's arms telling secrets and sharing laughs.

Suddenly the boy stands, preparing to leave. Minerva follows and asks when they will meet again. The boy evasively shrugs this off saying he will be in touch. Minerva flushes with a mix of hurt and shame. Maybe he will? His tone said otherwise and, being a supreme being affords Minerva a certain psychic ability. Although this has not been fully honed in her current human form, it still works. This is unfortunate as her sixth sense tells her the boy had not felt what she did. In fact, it seems the boy may have tricked her. She stamps a foot as she realises her reason for dancing had been lost when she melded with him. As beautiful as the moment was, she now finds herself alone, frustrated and no further forward.

XI

Feeling shunned and suddenly lacking in confidence in her own intuition, Minerva takes to the road again. She feels a rumbling of intent inside but doesn't have the conviction to act on it. In fact, she is so deflated that she can't even bring herself to acknowledge that she has some greater purpose here. But with each step her heart bounces back a little further into her chest until she is eventually able to feel once again.

As dusk sets, she stops to set up camp for the night in a clearing beside a slow-flowing river. As she builds a vibrant bed of orange and yellow out of autumn leaves, she touches her chest and feels the beat of her heart. This is my heart and I will not give it so easily again. And certainly not to a drummer with bold hips who is hanging around making music in a field all summer. She knows that the trauma of living and re-living the mistakes and blunders of hapless humanity have weakened her and sent her down a spiral of poor decisions. This is her time to reset.

Minerva moves toward the river to wash her face. She looks at the water, gazes at its movement with appreciation and hears its babbles. Then she sees her face. A perfect reflection of her dark wild hair and wide eyes. As she stares at herself, her face pulsing through the water, it becomes crystal clear what she must do. She suddenly understands her path. Her purpose this time is set in her veins, bubbling with intent as it had all the other times she materialised. This knowledge never rises from an external source, it is always from the beat of her own drum. She always knew what she needed to know, she just needed to remember she knew it.

As her awareness gained momentum, she saw her beat rise from the pulse in the water and she began to move again. It started from her heart and pounded progressively out banging on bones and muscle till it found a steady streaming rhythm. She did not need someone to create this beat for her or even to drum along with her. She makes her own beat and it fuels her energy, creating nuances in note and limitless assertions that she is and she knows.

Minerva knows one of the joys of creating connections is in joining her beat with another but magic happens when our beats can go solo and feel whole doing so. These rhythms will always seek each other out and will always strengthen and infuse each other. Lovers, friends and family all bang their own drum as well in beautiful synchronicity, yet your rhythm will always connect you to you. It will change you, break you, move you forward to adventures and highs. Listening to her own drum, Minerva arrives.

X

Still kneeling by the edge of the water, the babbling becomes more pronounced till stories are formed in the flow of the river. She stands and follows the water bank, crashing through mighty waterfalls and softly tip-toeing over ice. Though in some incarnations water can be unforgiving, there is a fluidity in its nature that means it will forever see all sides and be able to come and go with varying opinions. This is what ultimately builds such strength.

In response to Minerva's dismay at the humans ways, the water nymphs and creatures again emphasize the good to be seen in humans. 'I have bathed with many a human who was almost entirely selfless' exclaimed one nymph. Another chimes in to protest that 'many only reap what they need while giving away much more than they have sown'. The bubbles of the burn rise up support this, intent that humans are not a lost cause. In fact, with some work they could be the most exquisitely thoughtful and beautiful beings in the full universe.

Yet, the doorway to the soul is through the sole and despite waters majesty it is clay that has the final say. The earth connects all elements, touching each enough to have as close to the whole picture as is possible. And the gravel is not convinced. Silt-rallied energy binds in tight knots and ignites through Minerva's being. As this happens the last piece of the puzzle falls into place and Minerva now knows. She is serene in her knowing. Her heartbeat is steady. She feels her breath move in and out through her nose. The calm before she storms.

Minerva takes one last look around, sweeping the entire universe with one quick glance and then she begins to peel back the layers of human bone and gristle. Cracking and fractured, her teeth clench as the intensity of her power unleashes. The hum of the whirl is overwhelmed in seconds. The notion that Minerva even entertained this as an entity seeming utterly ridiculous now. Sounds and visuals merge to create a sweeping mass of destruction. Noise envelopes all that is as light crescendos in spikes of metal on metal.

The last human feature to implode is Minerva's spine which stretches out to all corners of the world till it encases the atmosphere. Everything goes still for a very brief second and then a swift tug on the spinal cord shatters the illusion and the fabric of the world and the wider universe comes tumbling down. Sound begins to subside and light floats in beams of nothingness. This gently simmers as time unfolds completely, leaving no concept or meaning. No thoughts. No effort. No winners. No anger. No talent. No nothing.

XI

Back to inception. Minerva is. We all are. Pulled back into the only hum that is eternal. The only vibration. We are all part of a beautiful, unbeatable, perfect soul. We have no concept of time or space and this brings happiness. Not only to those of us who have an inability to adapt to a time-based existence and are perpetually late for everything but, for everyone. Because we are one.

Nobody is rushing to go somewhere because we are already here. Nobody is striving to beat anyone because we all win. Nobody is trying to hurt anyone because we all hurt. To reach or strive is to scream into the void. And that is pointless. Minerva just holds us till everything is still again. We are complete. We are whole. We are.

Maybe these occasional screams into the abyss are actually glitches that sometimes create bubbles and these bubbles sometimes become universes and these universes sometimes create life similar to that of the humans in this tale.

Or maybe that's just a suitably odd way to end this weird wee story.