

## 'SealSkin- SoulSkin'

Recently I had a conversation with a friend that left me highly confused and wondering what the heck happened. It became skewed because we were talking “at” each other instead of “with” each other. Generally speaking, I am able to articulate myself clearly, this day was very difficult. I didn’t understand why until a few days later. There were multiple layers to our miscommunication and one that stood out for me was how easy it was for my “buttons” to be pushed and for me to fall into old relational patterns. I realized just how far removed I was from my meditative practices, as well as those things that fill my Soul with joy.

The gift of this incident was the awareness I received about the necessity of picking up my practice again. This coupled with a reference about Seals reminded me of the story of “Sealskin, Soulskin” in Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D.’s book *Women who run with Wolves*. This brought to mind an assignment I [completed](#) where I adapted and filtered the story through a Jungian psychological lens. I searched for and found the paper on my computer. I had to laugh because so many elements in it were playing out in my life at present.

“Sealskin, Soulskin” also known as Seal Woman from the Inuit Nation

In the harsh lands to the North lived an old man who trapped, fished, and slept well but he was lonely. Sometimes when he was in his kayak out fishing in the shallows a seal would come near which reminded him of the old stories about how seals were once human. Occasionally when he looked in their wise, wild, and loving eyes, he would feel such a pang of loneliness that tears coursed down the well-worn crevices in his face.

One night he fished past dark but was unable to catch anything so he headed toward home. The moon was rising when he spotted a group of naked women dancing on a large rock. Because he was a lonely man, he stayed and watched. He drifted closer and closer. He was so dazzled by their beauty he didn’t notice when his kayak bumped into the rock.

He spotted something lying near his kayak; it was sealskin. Perhaps due to his loneliness he stole it and hid it in his parka. Soon the women began putting on their sealskin’s, except for one. She searched high and low for it but could not find it. The man stepped from behind the rock and appealed to her to become his wife. The woman denied his request because she was not from his world. However, he insisted stating that he would [return](#) her sealskin to her in seven summers. She could then decide to remain or go. She reluctantly said yes.

In time, they had a son. The mother shared stories of the creatures of her world with her son: walrus, seal, whale, and salmon. As time passed, her flesh began to dry out. At first it flaked, then cracked, then her eyelids began to peel. [Next](#), her hair began to fall out and she developed a limp. As each day passed, her eyes became more and more dull until she could barely see at all.

Eight winters passed when seal woman confronted the old man, their argument awakened their son. Seal Woman wanted what she was made of returned to her, she wanted her sealskin. She had fulfilled her promise. The old man refused stating she would abandon them both. He then left the hut in anger. Their son was filled with sorrow over their arguing and cried himself back to sleep.

Later that night the voice of the wind awakened the boy, calling out to him. He followed the sound to a cliff where he saw a large, old seal on a rock near shore. The grandfather seal was calling the boy. The boy scrambled down the cliff; at the base, he tripped over a bundle. As he unrolled it he held it to his nose, it smelled of his mother. He found her sealskin. As he hugged her sealskin, the love of his mother filled him with pain and joy as her soul passed through his. The boy climbed the cliff back to his house where he gave it to her and she quickly pulled it on.

She scooped him up and ran to the sea. She swam with her son, who could breathe underwater, down to the underwater coves of the seals. Seven days and seven nights passed, during which, time the luster came back to Seal Woman’s hair and eyes. Her body was soon restored and she no longer had a limp. At the end of the seventh day she had to return her son to the topside world-where he belonged. She instructed him to touch those things she touched when he felt lonely and missed her. He would feel her presence and her love.

The moral of this story is the need to build a relationship between the anima and animus, to trust your intuition, to be vigilant of the negative ego. It is important to listen to the call of your soul, to swim in your inner depths to rejuvenate yourself. In addition, it is possible to create balance between the ego and the Soul.

In the beginning of the story, Seal Woman shed her soul-skin, perhaps to embody her Wild-Woman nature more completely, allowing the joy to course through her culminating in ecstatic dancing. However, in her desire to feel free she was not paying attention to her sealskin, which represents her anima. This lack of connection allowed the old man to steal it.

The old man represents the animus and the negative ego. The seven years represents initiation and individuation. Because Seal Woman had not yet built a relationship between her animus and anima she believed the old man when he said he would return the sealskin to her. This is how Seal Woman was initiated into the negative aspects of the animus, how she learns to trust her anima, and builds a relationship with her soul. Her Soul-building began when she shared stories of her world with her son, when she learned to nurture, love, care for, teach, and give to her son. Her son represents the bridge between both the active, domineering animus, and the maternal, nurturing anima- the child is her Soul.

This fable reminds me of the dangers of allowing the animus to remain in charge and assume the role of leader. It caused Seal Woman's body to physically decline. When the animus, in the form of negative ego, is in charge it wants things done faster, tells us we need to do more, give more without taking time to fulfil our own needs or nurture our soul. After a prolonged period the soul will atrophy, the body may develop illness, and begin to decay like the flesh of Seal Woman.

This story is also a reminder in learning to trust your intuition. The old man desired a relationship with the soul but was unaware of how to develop one; therefore, he resorted to stealing it. In order to have a balanced psyche there must be a way to incorporate both the soul, and the negative and positive aspects of the ego, which in the story is accomplished as Seal Woman nurtures and teaches her son.

This story, once again brings to my awareness that my own sealskin is beginning to dry out. It is a reminder that it is time for a return to my Soul-place to rest, rejuvenate and incubate; to drink the nectar of my Soul that is always available once I become quiet and access the stillness within. It is a reminder that I got caught up in the illusion of doing, having, and accomplishing instead of being. It is a reminder that I had become disoriented and couldn't find the bridge to my anima, therefore believed what I was hearing, instead of what my intuition was attempting to bring to awareness.

My friend, what areas within your own Soul are drying out? Where are you on the spiral cycle of doing and being; of resting, hibernating and incubating or creating and birthing? When the stillness of the evening descends what are the unfulfilled longings your Soul opens to your awareness? Is it time to envelope yourself in your own sealskin once again?