

# *Musings*

*from a Small Island*

***Everything Under  
the Sun***

An Illustrated Memoir

*Sol Luckman*

# Musings from a Small Island

*Everything under the Sun*

An Illustrated Memoir

*SOL LUCKMAN*

ALSO BY SOL LUCKMAN

FICTION

Beginner's Luke  
Cali the Destroyer  
Snooze: A Story of Awakening

NONFICTION

Potentiate Your DNA  
Conscious Healing

HUMOR

The Angel's Dictionary





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## DISCLAIMER (aka FULL DISCLOSURE)

Allow me to come clean by emphasizing that, as far as the writing that follows goes, this is a work of *creative* nonfiction. This means that I've been, well, *creative* with some of my facts—transposing, conflating, altering and omitting various elements for storytelling purposes; using artistic license in some of my descriptions; employing pseudonyms liberally to protect the innocent as well as the guilty; and being more than willing on more than one occasion to reinterpret reality to fit my narrative. This is merely what all writers do, whether they're willing to admit it or not. But rest assured that what follows is a more or less accurate memoir from a memorable period of my life spent in a place I love, even though I've since moved along to a new small island.



# MUSINGS

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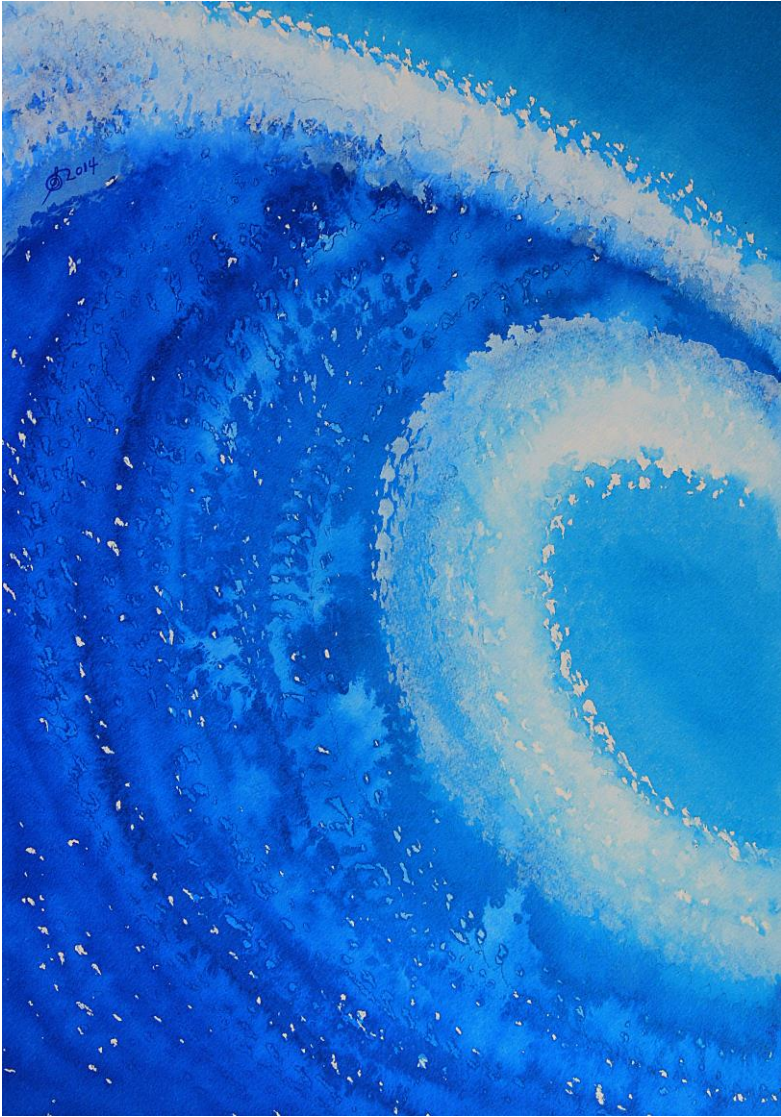


*To my muse. You know who you are.*



*Surf too low and there's nowhere to go but down. Surf too high and you risk being thrown to the sky. The true path is straight and narrow down the eye of the barrel. —Yours Truly*





*Barreled*





## PREAMBLE: ART ADDICTION

I'm a relatively small man living with my small family in a small condo in a small corner of a small island. But I often think big thoughts. I even have a fancy word for them: *Musings*. These are my Musings, both written and painted. May they amuse.

My name is Sol Luckman and I'm an artist. If this sounds like an introduction to a twelve-step program for recovering cultural creatives, maybe it should.

Kicking an art addiction is a heck of a lot harder than going sober. Art—by which I mean anything that's both uncannily beautiful and practically of no use—usually takes hold much earlier than substance abuse by hijacking one's porous child's psyche.

From here, as the sci-fi saying goes, resistance is futile. You can rehab all you want, but for true creative junkies art only relinquishes control of your life with death—and sometimes not even then considering that ultimate “artification” of life known as posthumous fame.



*The Artist*

—●—  
*Kicking an art addiction is a heck of a lot harder than  
going sober.*  
—●—

In my case art set up shop in my heart when I was barely out of diapers. I don't recall consciously inviting it to do so and I've spent the rest of my life dealing with the fallout: poverty, restlessness, dissatisfaction, alienation, obsession.

I was sleeping over at my grandparents' house when I was literally woken up by the sound of art calling. That's how I interpret the event in



*Bad Moon Rising*

retrospect because of the deep and indelible impression it made on me. Actually, I woke up to the noise of what I initially thought was a baby whimpering.

I assumed it was my newborn sister crying to be fed—until, sleepily coming to my senses, I realized she was at home with our parents. Besides, the noise—an insistent *hoo, hoo, hoo* that kept repeating at intervals—was coming from *outside* the slightly open window, I realized as I became aware that I was alone in the bed I usually shared with Grandad.

I found him in his saggy briefs at the sliding door in the living room with Grandma in her silk nightgown. For some reason that had to be momentous, the two had convened there from separate bedrooms in the middle of the night.

The sliding door was open with its semisheer curtains gently shifting. It was early spring in Appalachia and the nighttime air still had a late-winter nip.

*Hoo, hoo, hoo.* The mysterious call came again as I approached shivering despite my pajamas. Grandad must have heard my teeth chattering because, turning, he scooped me up in his arms and held me so I could see out into the backyard illuminated by a lopsided moon above the pines.

I had no idea what time it was. It could have been midnight or just before dawn. Another minute passed and then the sound came again: *hoo, hoo, hoo.*

Then I saw it: no less alabaster than the moon, sitting on a post of the clothesline beside a little strawberry patch next to which Grandad had been teaching me to throw a knuckleball was a perfectly still, indescribably beautiful great horned owl. An albino.





*Wise Owl*

It seemed to coalesce into focus through a fisheye lens like a super-slow-motion scene in an experimental movie. The time it took me to make visual sense out of what I was witnessing was perhaps a minute. I was—no doubt about it—perceiving the world with an altered state of consciousness.

Beneath its white “horns,” which I later learned were just tufts of groovy feathers, the owl’s dark pupils encircled by bright yellow corneas seemed to stare into me like those of someone who knew me from birth.

Cocking its head searchingly, the owl gave another call. The creature struck my hyper-aware self more as a person than an animal, someone with an important message for me.



*Strawberry Nocturne*

The moment was both intensely captivating and extremely odd. I only began to understand this weird dynamic that equally applies to the art I like decades after the fact when I discovered the writings of the Russian modernist philosopher Viktor Shklovsky, who proposed that what characterizes genuine art is “estrangement.”


“The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known,” he wrote in terms most obviously relative to visual art but that apply to any genre. “The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.”

Seeing that huge albino owl under the moon was my first experience of estrangement ... and, I suppose, of genuine art. When my perception finally put the pieces of what I was seeing together, so overwhelmed was I by the otherworldly loveliness of the tableau I uttered a cry.


That cry was like a rock shattering a reflection in a pristine mountain lake. It instantly spooked the owl, which flapped its wide wings and rose up eerily, a feathered ghost sailing across the moon and over the hillside.

The memory of the owl has always stuck with me and, with a little interpretive help from Shklovsky, guided my own efforts at creating artistic works—both literary and painterly—that might be called “strange attractors.”

“When the going gets weird,” wrote Hunter S. Thompson in the supreme prose monument to estrangement, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, “the weird turn pro.” Well, the going’s definitely weird and I turned pro years ago.



*These days, living within the sandy shores of the small island that inspired this work, if I’m recovering from anything, I’m recovering from trying to recover from anything.*



If you’re not at least a little weird yourself, there’s a good chance you won’t be attracted to my work. I recommend that you stick to realism and stay lobotomized in your normative existence by inundating yourself with lots of evening news and crime dramas.



*Hunter S. Thompson*

But if you're among the chosen few, meaning you're a bit strange yourself, we're at least distantly related. Maybe you'll experience some meaningful estrangement yourself while reading this text and viewing the accompanying images.

Having been "woken up" to my artistic calling by an owl calling me, I soon began writing and doodling obsessively. By the time I graduated from college, art had become a full-blown addiction. Three decades later, I'm still hooked.

These days, living within the sandy shores of the small island that inspired this work, if I'm recovering from anything, I'm recovering from trying to recover from anything. Having tried my hand at denial, I've given myself over to art, writing and painting as much as my real-world responsibilities permit.

I'm a lost cause, I know, but you can help. Do support my art habit by recommending and reviewing this book so that other weirdos who might enjoy it can find it—and please consider investing in one of my paintings. You never know—my work could be worth something someday.

An updated portfolio of my paintings, in addition to a wealth of free and reasonably priced literary content, is accessible via my website: **[www.CrowRising.com](http://www.CrowRising.com)**.





# 1


## HOME SWEAT HOME

My family's condo occupies the top two floors of one of four three-story buildings forming a small complex only a few hundred yards from the beach. There are multistory condos on either side as well as a single-level one below our home. All three neighboring units are owned by part-timers from out of town, which means for long stretches we've been lucky enough to have the whole building to ourselves.


Sadly, those days may be coming to an end, as one of the adjacent units just went on the market. This means we could end up with full-time neighbors with a bevy of barking beagles or, worse, a steady stream of obnoxious vacation renters with no intention of acting neighborly whatsoever.

One major problem I have with living surrounded by other residences is that I'm highly—as in, *extremely*—sensitive to noise. I've suffered from this inconvenient malady ever since I can remember. I blame it on my artistic temperament.

Innumerable other creative types have dealt with the same issue. Recently, in fact, scientists at Northwestern University found that hypersensitivity to audio stimuli is a sign of creativity—and maybe even genius.



*For the sonically challenged, the world would be much better indeed if architects and builders cared about noise pollution as much as profit margins.*



Marcel Proust wrote while wearing earplugs in a Parisian bedroom lined with cork. Across the English Channel, Thomas Carlyle soundproofed his writing room with double walls. Franz Kafka and Anton Chekhov were also famously discombobulated by ambient noise.

So I guess I'm in pretty good company when our downstairs neighbor is in town blasting NPR all day up through the wafer-thin floor under my workspace and—in a desperate attempt to maintain my train of thought—I engage in various defensive behaviors: turning on the hall fountain, jamming earplugs in my ears, clamping on headphones without actually playing music for extra soundproofing. (I

do go through phases when I enjoy working to music, but at the moment, sadly, I'm not in one.)

For the sonically challenged, the world would be much better indeed if architects and builders cared about noise pollution as much as profit margins. Here on my small island, they would build condos with cellophane if such methods were up to hurricane code. Instead, whoever constructed the stack-a-shack my family and I inhabit used wax paper for the floors and walls.



*Frequency Increase*

Pacing in his room upstairs, my teenage son—*He Who Refuses to Be Named*—sounds like a spastic elephant stomping. I've often thought, marveling at the deafening reverb of his footfalls through the ceiling, that even if this place could withstand a hurricane, a mild earthquake would flatten it. I bet you could hear a rodent tiptoeing around up there.

To make matters worse, noise isn't the only thing that upsets me; light also can be a major lifestyle disruption. I'm referring specifically to a neighbor's porch light shining through one's curtains when one is attempting to sleep.

The master bedroom is stupidly positioned so that an outside bulb left on by a neighbor at night will reflect off the adjacent building and illuminate the entire space like headlights. Despite the absence of full-timers in our building, porch lights spookily get turned on with bizarre

regularity—to the point that I save myself the hassle of being blinded awake by wearing a sleep mask.

Oh, the price we pay to live at the beach. Speaking of price, the rent ain't cheap.

If you can manage to find a decent long-term rental, which I'm given to believe requires divine intervention, price gouging is a way of life in the island rental market. And even with rents through the roof, so to speak, getting your landlord to perform anything but emergency maintenance is like extracting your own wisdom teeth.

Though it has its charms, such as a “tree house” feel with lovely views of oaks draped with Spanish moss, by rights our condo ought to be gutted and remodeled from scratch. This was clear when we moved in—telling ourselves we were merely extending a terribly overdue beach vacation a little longer—nearly four years ago.

The throwback laminate flooring in the kitchen and bathrooms, pocked with dings and weird stains, was an assault on the eyes. The carpet looked original, meaning from circa 1980. Ditto for the sticky appliances.



*You have to take things with a grain of salt on a small island.*



The kitchen cabinets were yellow with age. The ceiling plaster was falling down. The walls had so many holes they might have served as dartboards during bouts of heavy drinking. You couldn't even open the cloudy windows—or rather, you could open them, but good luck getting them closed again.

That said, the apartment was tantalizingly close to the island's best beaches and bike paths. And there was a sunlit nook at a bay window where I could write and paint. And compared to everything else we'd looked at, it was a pretty good deal.

“We'll take it,” we told the owner, barely hesitating.

Since then the place's condition, despite our best efforts at upkeep, has only deteriorated. The grout between the kitchen tiles has steadily chipped away. The washer has stopped washing worth a damn. The dryer has started tearing tiny holes in our clothes. The toilets, growing sluggish in their old age, have begun to require multiple flushes to get the job done.

Meanwhile, our landlord actually had the audacity to *raise our rent*. The thought of finding another rental or even purchasing our own condo ever occupies our minds, but—amazingly—we’ve never found a place we like better as close to the beach or anywhere near the same price point. So the search continues.

After being model renters for three years, we finally managed to convince our landlord to paint some of the walls and patch the most egregious regions of the ceiling. For these jobs a Gullah gentleman named Bo was hired. Bo is also the handyman called in for emergency repairs. He’s ancient, can barely see, missed a number of spots, and

splattered paint and plaster all over the floors.

To be fair, his efforts did brighten up the place—for a few months anyway, after we cleaned up his mess, until new parts of the ceiling started falling down and heavy rains leaked in and stained the dining room wall a dubious brown.

I should say “doodious” because, with two bathrooms upstairs, you just never know. We went through a period earlier this year when the



*Another Day at the Office*

commode in the guest bath mysteriously kept overflowing, which on several occasions caused toilet water to rain down through the kitchen light fixtures. And yes, this left suspect brown stains Bo was kind enough to plaster over ... along with our stovetop.

The funny thing is—more often than not, we’ve *enjoyed* being here. Putting up with such an array of domestic imperfections has taught us an important lesson:

*You have to take things with a grain of salt on a small island.*

Better to simply give whatever's currently breaking down a single-finger salute while sipping a craft cocktail than waste time and energy fretting over it.

Strangely, when this kind of devil-may-care attitude is adopted, things have a nearly supernatural way of working themselves out. This truth was brought home not too long ago on a Saturday night during the hottest September we'd ever experienced here when, without warning, our AC abruptly crashed.

Our thermostat just died. As in: went completely blank. While the AC had given us trouble numerous times before, nothing like this had ever happened. We tried contacting our discount central air guy, the only AC man our cheapo landlord would let near the place, who was usually on call but whose voice message indicated he was *out of the country indefinitely*.

"We're screwed," I told Leigh as I hung up the phone. "What would you like to drink?"

A Cosmopolitan and a half later, the temperature indoors cresting 85° and beads of sweat collecting on our foreheads, I mused from where I sat sticking to the pleather couch, "I've concluded that I'm better at being chilly than being hot."

"Me, too," replied Leigh, fanning her beautiful flushed cheeks so vigorously the dark hair of her full eyebrows quivered. "You can



*Disappearing Tree*



always put on clothes, but there are only so many clothes you can take off.”

“Are you coming on to me in this heat?”

“Are you kidding? Not on your life.”

We drained our martini glasses and reloaded.

“The next time I start thinking things are finally flowing smoothly,” I said, sitting back down for round three, “would somebody please slap the shit out of me?”

“With pleasure. Speaking of, what exactly *is* the purpose of shit?”

“Literally or metaphorically?”

“Literally.”

“I don’t know. I think it gives the flies something to do.”

“Maybe. You know, there are so many serious design flaws in nature. Consider all the trees you have to chop down just to wipe your ass.”

We were pretty drunk—in case you couldn’t tell. But at least we no longer cared about the AC.

We’d finished drinking (at least temporarily) and were urging our son to stir from the stuffy recesses of his room and join us for a nocturnal cool-off dip in the pool—when my hypersensitive ears heard the rattle of a familiar-sounding vehicle pull up below the dining room window.

“That’s got to be Ivan!” I exclaimed, cracking open the blinds and peering down dripping sweat at the parking lot.

Sure enough, our neighbor was climbing out of his rusty, topless Wrangler of the vintage variety. Ivan was a full-timer in one of the other buildings in our complex. We’d gone out drinking a couple times and were on friendly terms.

A laid-back Renaissance man as thin and tan as a stalk of dune grass, Ivan was an excellent amateur chef, competitive kitesurfer, and gifted poet whose poems had been published in several high-profile literary rags.

He also owned a small construction outfit and, I recalled in a flash of lucidity, had once repaired his unit’s HVAC.

I could tell he’d been imbibing—and thus was likely to be in a jovial mood—because he wobbled as he stepped up on the curb.

I was out the door onto the front porch in a hot minute. “Hi there, Ivan! How are you?”

“Can’t complain,” he drawled with his charming Lowcountry accent as he slicked back his thinning bronze hair. “Your own bad self?”

“Dying in this heat wave. Our AC’s on the fritz. Feel like trading your expertise for a cocktail?”

“What the hell. Be right up.”

Having determined that the problem was a clogged drain line as opposed to the AC unit proper, Ivan retrieved a drain gun with a CO<sub>2</sub> cartridge from his condo and drunkenly climbed the pull-down ladder up into our attic. Five minutes later, our AC was back on blowing deliciously cool air into our sweltering home.

“Ivan, you’re a saint,” I said. “What can I get you to drink?”

“Anything so long as it’s not dark. I get mean whenever I drink dark liquor.”



*Serge Gainsbourg*

“How about a G&T?”

“Sounds perfect. Very cooling.”

I made G&Ts for the three of us. We drank them while hanging out listening to tunes from Serge Gainsbourg’s rebellious reggae phase. The evening’s final twist came after Ivan finished his cocktail and was stumbling back out the door.

“The next time your AC goes out, this should help you relax,” he said, pulling a small bag of weed out of his pocket and handing it to me.

“Ivan, I appreciate everything—”

“No need to thank me. There’s plenty more where this came from ... if you get my drift.”

Left alone again, Leigh and I eyeballed each other with mild astonishment. Neither of us had ever so much as suspected we had a dealer for a neighbor.

“What are we going to do with this?” I asked, pointing at the bag of green goodness with a pungent bouquet in my palm.

“Save it for a shitty day, I guess,” said Leigh.





## 2

### FLORA & FAUNA

The word “biodiversity” comes to mind when contemplating the tremendous variety of life on this subtropical island. And I don’t mean human life—though with roughly 3 million visitors descending on these shores annually, there’s always a glut of humanity available to both amuse and astonish. No, I’m talking about the island’s natural ecosystem.

Despite being absurdly overbuilt, endlessly landscaped and maniacally spritzed with carcinogenic herbicides and pesticides to hell and back, the environment here somehow thrives with an abundance of plant and animal life.



*Summertide*

For this I imagine we have our fine climate—which attracts far more than just snowbirds—to thank. The island is warmed by the Gulf Stream, producing average daytime and ocean temperatures that both



*Flower Spirit*

hover around a balmy 70°. Summers are long and delicious; winters are so short and mild it's hard to call them winters without cracking a smile.

In terms of flora, while there's no shortage of everything from yellow cannas and jacks-in-the-pulpit to water lilies and marsh rushes, the poster plant here is Spanish moss—which, oddly enough, isn't a moss or even a lichen but a flowering plant. Found in tropical and subtropical climates, Spanish moss is most often associated with the coastal regions of the Southeastern United States.

—●—  
*Despite being absurdly overbuilt, endlessly landscaped and maniacally spritzed with carcinogenic herbicides and pesticides to hell and back, the environment here somehow thrives with an abundance of plant and animal life.*  
—●—

The other non-tree native to these parts with worldwide recognizability is beachgrass. Tall and balletic in the ocean breezes, it grows on the dunes overlooking the Atlantic and has appeared in the foreground of a million kitschy sunrise photos. But as popular as it is, beachgrass is nowhere near as famous as Spanish moss.

Around here Spanish moss typically hangs from the limbs of southern live oaks. Iconic in the Old South, these gnarled trees manage to look antediluvian even when they're scarcely more than saplings. To my



*Ghost in the Trees*





*Beachgrass*

eye live oaks possess a cartoon gothicism that makes them resemble—particularly when draped with low-hanging moss—scary fake trees out of a Tim Burton horror flick.

While the area may be famous for its oaks, it's synonymous with its



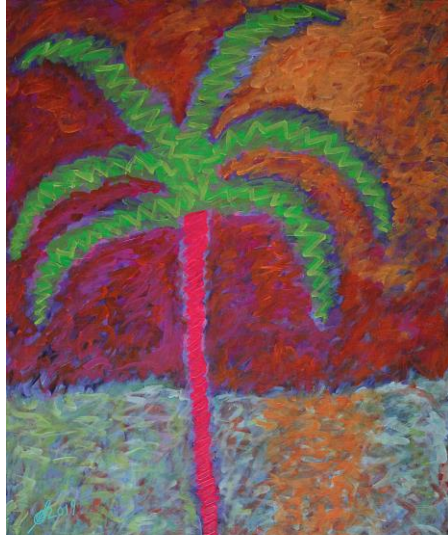
*Overexposed*

palmettos. The state is actually nicknamed the Palmetto State. Palmetto trees are everywhere. They line streets, dot courtyards, sway over beaches, appear on bumper stickers, even—barf—decorate doormats, bath towels, throw pillows, and valances.

Faced with the borderline religious reverence for the *Sabal palmetto* in these parts, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that palmettos are basically just fat little palm trees. While real palms can reach 80 feet, palmettos rarely grow higher than a two-story house. Whereas date palms produce one of

nature's tastiest treats, palmettos don't produce jack.

But even though they're ugly and mostly useless compared to their cousins, I still adore palmettos. I paint them sometimes and find myself jealous of the squirrel family that lives in a perfectly straight palmetto beside our condo's pool. As if looking down their noses at us silly humans who buy boxed food from big boxes and live in little boxes, they gather acorns in the courtyard and return bearing them in their mouths to their airy penthouse.



*Neon Palm*


Squirrels may be ubiquitous, but they're hardly the island's mascots. Alligators would probably fit the bill. The most famous statue around here is of a wealthy gentleman from circa 1960 casually strolling along beside a huge gator as if it were his well-behaved pet.

There must be a thousand bilingual signs posted along our waterways that read:




Gators usually avoid humans—for good reason, since gator tail finds itself on many an overpriced Lowcountry menu. But when these powerful reptiles are spoiled, they can, much like teenagers, become presumptuous and even downright mean.

Less representative of the island to the outside world but very well known to the local population are feral cats. While homelessness is a human problem in most of America, here it's mostly a feline issue. Try sipping a coffee at an outdoor café or dining en plein air without seeing feral cats loitering in the shade hoping for a handout—it practically can't be done.



*I have nothing against cats, feral or otherwise, but I do tend to distrust people who care more about animals than people.*



The situation has caused a number of “cat fights” between business owners and animals rights activists. The former would be willing to pay to get rid of what they see as nuisances that frighten off customers; the latter would be willing to pay to get rid of annoying business owners while spending millions of taxpayer dollars to protect their furry friends.

I have nothing against cats, feral or otherwise, but I do tend to distrust people who care more about animals than people. The island's Feral Cat Lady comes to mind.

Almost without fail whenever I bike to Pilates, I see her late-model Mercedes parked beside the road with its trunk open. That's where she keeps an apparently infinite stash of cat food that, day after day, she stands under the trees feeding a rowdy crowd of feral felines.

She's a regular bejeweled Saint Francis under the oaks doling out food to the furball masses. I can't help thinking if she put a fraction of that much capital and energy into assisting her starving human brothers and sisters, the world would truly be a happier place. After all, cats have nine lives in which to hope things get better, but we humans only have one.

White-tailed deer are also numerous on the island—so numerous, in fact, they're regularly culled to reduce the number of life-threatening collisions with vehicles. On this point I stand with the animal rights

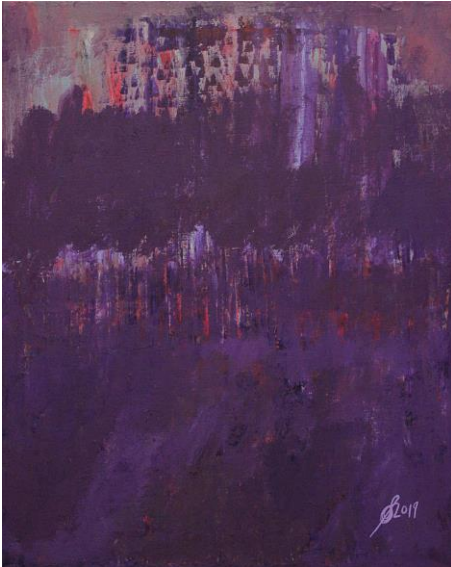
activists in insisting that tourists, not deer, should be culled to decrease accidents.

One of my fondest wildlife memories here stars a white-tailed buck. My family stayed in a temporary rental on a golf course during the fall after we arrived. I'd recently torn up my MCL bodysurfing. In order not to go batshit crazy from being cooped up inside like the gimp I was, I took to spending my afternoons sunbathing on the porch with a view of the eleventh hole.

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*Pinewoods at Dusk*

On a bright Saturday afternoon in November, lo and behold, a magnificent eight-point buck trotted out from behind the pines and stood absolutely still staring sideways at the flag as if readying himself for a birdie. Not another human soul was in sight. This *Wild Kingdom* moment was all mine.

Motionless as a stump, the buck must have stood there thirty seconds. He was so perfectly beautiful, and so beautifully perfect, I forgot to breathe. At length, his keen ears hearing a golf cart approaching before mine did,

he sprung forward like an arrow and disappeared in two leaps into the pinewoods on the far side of the course.



Other noteworthy examples of native faunae include huge multicolored dragonflies filling the island's airways with buzzing traffic from August through October; green anoles, slender lizards with a bright red throat that puffs out like a balloon; spring peepers, tiny chorus frogs intent on providing a relaxing soundtrack to the island life; a selection of snakes both harmless and venomous; tiny mosquitoes that show no mercy and take no prisoners; and last but not least, lovebugs, black March flies that remain attached to one another for several days after mating—even in flight. Talk about a flying fuck!

The beach, as you might expect, is particularly rich in terms of wildlife. Jumping and spinning playfully, bottlenose dolphins are a regular spectacle just offshore. Sharks and stingrays are also common sights. Sand dollars are abundant, especially at low tide, as are striped starfish. Knobbed whelks can sometimes be found buried just under the sand in the shallow surf.

Loggerhead sea turtles, an endangered species whose nests (cordoned off for protection) dot the sand near the dunes from May through October, are an island favorite. Less popular but equally fascinating are cannonball jellyfish—so named because of their spheroid shape—which tend to wash ashore in great blooms.

Fortunately, given the internal positioning of their stingers, cannonballs rarely sting. But they do use their mouths to expectorate sperm subsequently taken in orally by another cannonball in order to reproduce.



*Heron's Journey*



I appreciate many of the island's animals, but my personal favorites are the birds. Hardly a week goes by that we don't hear a barred owl calling from high in one of the live oaks in the courtyard at night, *Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you?*

Red-tailed hawks, one of the largest and loveliest birds of their genus, are also a common sight. Occasionally, they perch on the railing of a vacant third-story balcony in our community scanning the grounds for a tasty meal of rodent.

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*I particularly enjoy the great synchronized skeins of pelicans that fly above the waves in summer. How, being animals, they know how to write the letter V just so in the sky is anyone's guess.*

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Ospreys, aka sea hawks, are another common bird of prey. While bodysurfing I've watched them snatch wiggling fish out of the ocean with their talons. There's a huge osprey nest wedged atop a highway sign on the toll road that links to the mainland. On a good day you can catch a glimpse of feathers as you pass underneath.

If you're a birdwatcher, when you die this is definitely where you want to spend eternity. The marshes are veritable bird sanctuaries, literally fluttering with multiple varieties of owls, hawks, eagles, herons, woodpeckers, sandpipers, rails, terns, pelicans, ibises, gulls—you name it.

Many of the same birds also grace the coastline. I particularly enjoy the great synchronized skeins of pelicans that fly above the waves in summer. How, being animals, they know how to write the letter V just so in the sky is anyone's guess.



*First Flight*

There's one type of bird that isn't native to the island but that nevertheless lives here: a single condor. You can see him sometimes



*Crow Medicine*

waist-deep in the ocean dancing with outspread wings. I know him well because, well, he's *me*.

I used to be a crow. Crow was my power animal, an indwelling spirit utilized for numerous purposes by a plethora of indigenous cultures as well as those of us "civilized" folk willing to humble ourselves enough to learn from them.

If you're one of those fortunate enough to have been energized by power animals, you know just how potent they can be: for healing, protection, and inspiration. In retrospect it

seems a no-brainer that the great horned owl that called me to art was a physical manifestation of my first power animal.

Power animals come and go. When they leave, it's not a personal judgment against you. After all, they're just animals. They get bored easily. Their moving on simply means it's time for a new one. It's possible—maybe even common—to experience many power animals in a single lifetime.



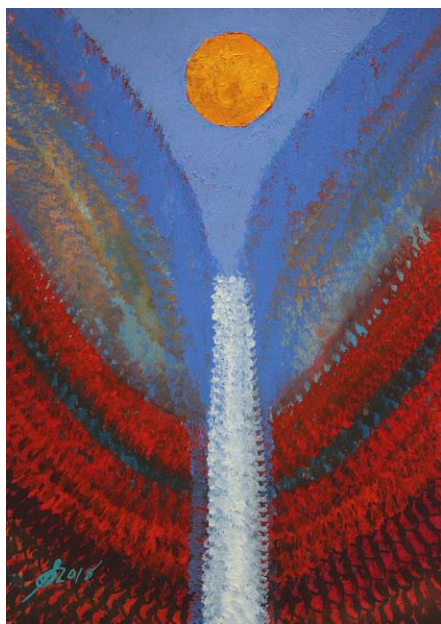
*Bluebird Shaman*

Crow came to me in my twenties when I was suffering from a mysterious illness similar in certain respects to fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. The spirit of crow taught me how to make myself well again, as I describe in my way-outside-the-box nonfiction books on “ener-genetic” healing. I also credit crow “medicine” with shepherding me through a number of dangerous situations and turbocharging much of my creativity over the past couple decades.

Anthropologist Michael Harner writes extensively and eloquently about power animals—how to get them and how to work with them. Dr. Harner taught at Berkeley, Columbia and Yale, discovered Carlos Castaneda, and started a worldwide shamanic renaissance basically all by himself.



*Korubo Tribesman*



*Skyfall*

One of his most fascinating stories (told in *Cave and Cosmos*) is of a perilous river crossing in the company of a group of Shuar men when he was conducting field research in the Upper Amazon rainforest of Ecuador.

Harner relates how he became exasperated—to the point of accusing his guides of cowardice—when the group, who had become lost, spent days stubbornly refusing to cross a raging stream in order to find their way home.

Finally, on Harner’s insistence the group constructed three log rafts and crossed the

river—but not before Harner’s raft was overturned in the rapids and he and two of his companions almost drowned before reaching the far shore.

“That was a pretty close call,” he quotes himself as saying. “I guess we are lucky to be alive.”


When his companions exchanged glances but made no reply, Harner, a typically know-it-all Westerner at this stage, accused them not only of being cowards but of falsely “playing it cool,” as if they’d never been scared in the first place, now that the crossing was a done deal.

“Well, you see,” explained one of the men, “we were not really afraid to cross the river because we cannot die. But we did not know about you!”

Translated: we had power animals to keep us from harm, but since some people don’t, we weren’t sure if you did.


“At that moment,” writes Harner, “the perilous Amazon river crossing opened a door to important spiritual knowledge. After that I gradually learned from the Shuar that they were protected by spirit power ... I also learned that such power can leave one. Thus unprotected, people do indeed die.”

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*Just before his final depression (which was made worse, go figure, by antidepressants), Byron experienced a wacky manic phase in which he heard the posthumous voice of Steve Jobs telling him to stop being a PC guy and buy a MacBook Pro instead.*

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Nearly a year to the day after we moved here, a gut-wrenching tragedy was visited on my family when Leigh’s older brother, Byron, killed himself via carbon monoxide inhalation. For nearly as long as we’d been on the island, Byron, who lived two hours away in Columbia, had suffered from schizoaffective disorder.

Just before his final depression (which was made worse, go figure, by antidepressants), Byron experienced a wacky manic phase in which he heard the posthumous voice of Steve Jobs telling him to stop being a PC guy and buy a MacBook Pro instead.

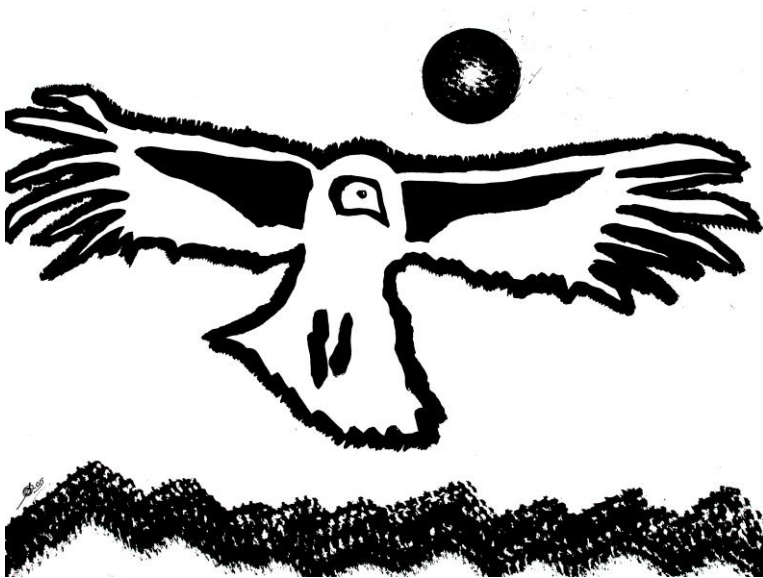
After he complied, he heard Jerry Garcia instructing him from beyond the grave to pay Carl Sagan’s widow a visit in Upstate New

York in order to improve global relations—at which point he temporarily disappeared and reappeared in the mental ward of a New Jersey hospital.

Byron's death knocked the wind out of my family's collective sails. Leigh was doubly devastated by losing her brother and having to watch her parents come to terms with the death of their eldest and only son.

Our son practically went into shock. He was never quite able to wrap his mind around how his beloved uncle could be so mentally ill he couldn't stand living anymore.

For my part, though I was never extremely close to Byron, I was also traumatized by his passing—particularly by the way it impacted my family. Before long, feeling empty and uninspired, I began to experience anxiety that only got worse as the months went by.



*Old Boy Riding High*

One day when I was feeling especially anxious and vulnerable, it occurred to me I'd lost more than my "brother-in-law"; I'd lost my power animal! Apparently, trauma—not just boredom—can prompt power animals to abandon their hosts.

When I booked an appointment with a shaman who had trained under Harner, sure enough, she confirmed that crow was no longer with me. The unfunny irony was that Byron was an ubermaterialist who pooh-poohed anything remotely woo-woo ... yet here he was



responsible for endangering my wellbeing by spooking my indwelling spirit!

The shaman performed a ceremony to attract a new power animal to me. Typically, we don't pick and choose our power animals; they select us. Crow will always have a special place in my heart, but this time around condor chose me.

I felt condor's energy enter me like a menopausal heat wave during the ceremony. I soon started sweating and became extremely lightheaded. Afterwards, I was instructed to go "dance" my new power animal and continue doing so twice weekly so that condor would stay with me.

I've danced condor hundreds of times since, usually in the ocean while waiting to catch a wave. I'm sure I look crazier than

Byron to people who manage to glance up from their devices long enough to watch me. Maybe I am, but at least I'm alive and inclined to stay that way, with a tremendous creative energy lighting me up from the inside again.

Condor medicine has to do with a number of things but especially with death—or rather, with life that emerges from death. Condors feed on carrion and in so doing help the earth "recycle" the dead so that new life can come into being.

While dancing, spiraling on imaginary thermal currents with arms outstretched like giant wings, I chant snippets from a song that came to me after condor did. I call it "Condor Song." I'm aware that condors technically have no voice box and mostly communicate through body language. Make of that what you will.

Here are the lyrics:

*Condor's ridin' high  
Black against the sky*



*Going for a Swim*

*Oh black against the sky  
Black against the sky*

*Condor's ridin' high  
Black against the sky  
Oh black against the sky  
Black against the sky*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Old boy's ridin' high  
Black against the sky  
Oh black against the sky  
Black against the sky*

*Old boy's ridin' high  
Black against the sky  
Oh black against the sky  
Black against the sky*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Old boy's ridin' high  
Black against the sky  
Oh black against the sky  
Black against the sky*

*Old boy's ridin' high  
Black against the sky  
Teaches us to live  
Teaches us to die*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

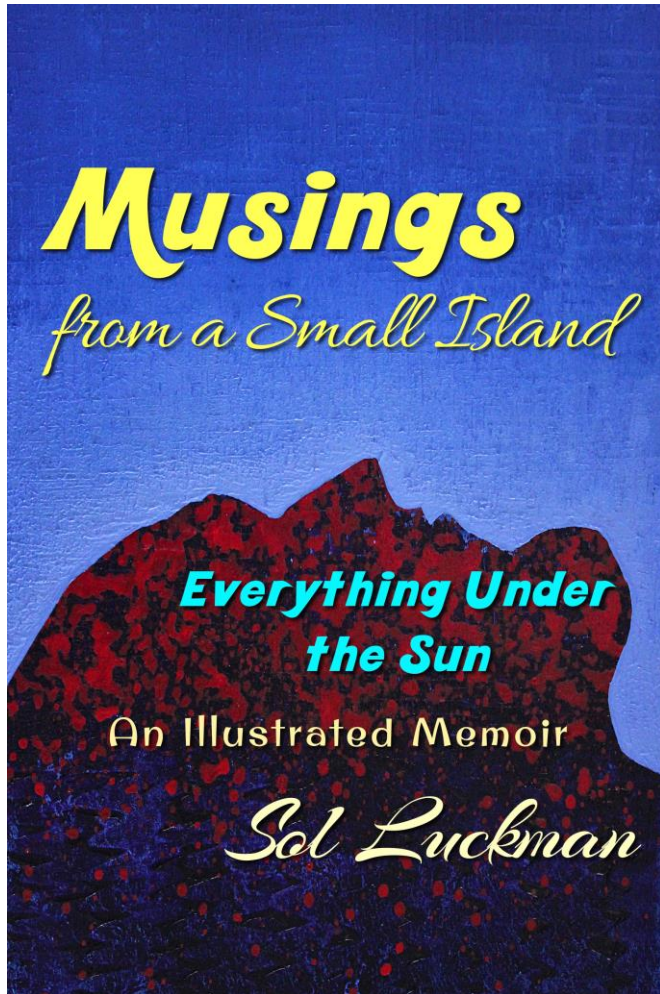
*Oh we live and die  
To be free*

*Freestyle  
Freefall  
Freebird*









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MUSINGS FROM A SMALL ISLAND in  
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## ABOUT SOL LUCKMAN

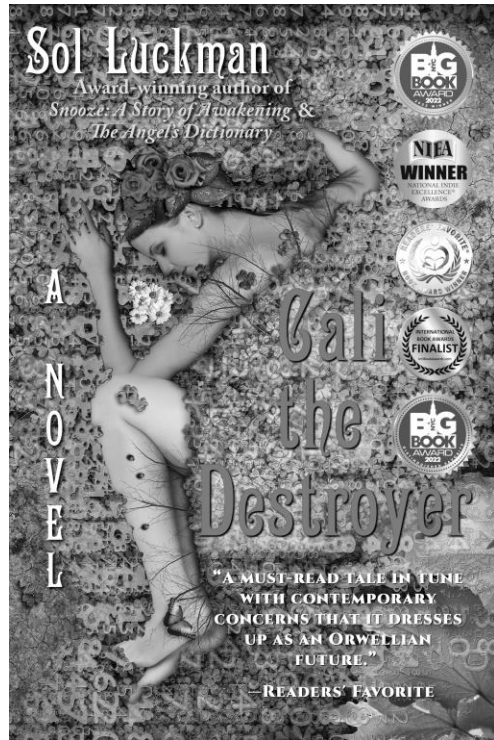
A confessed beachaholic and obsessive cultural creative, Sol Luckman has thumbed his nose at mainstream values and society ever since he can remember. Preferring hard play over a so-called honest day's work, these days in the New Abnormal he spends his time on a new small island mostly bodysurfing, painting, and writing—not necessarily in that order and usually not all at once. How while on permanent vacation he became a multi-award-winning and international bestselling author and prolific professional artist is anyone's guess. Possessed of a wonderful family, he eschews dogs and admits to his own rejection issues where certain other domestic animals are concerned. Visit his website, follow his blog, etc., at [www.CrowRising.com](http://www.CrowRising.com).

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*"A thought-provoking and absorbing dystopian tale with a New Age touch [that] balances the exploration of human relationships with environmental, social, and political issues ... Cali the Destroyer is an illuminating and deep read, and the result is a must-read tale in tune with contemporary concerns that it dresses up as an Orwellian future." —Readers' Favorite*

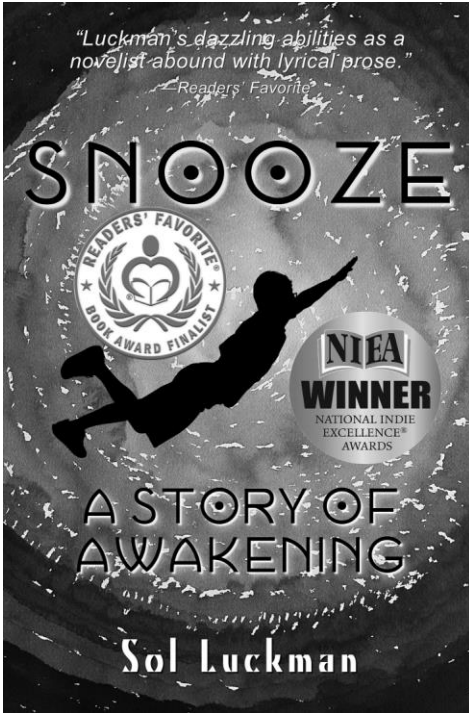
*"While [Cali the Destroyer] has plenty of laugh-out-loud scenes, it is also a cautionary tale. The Orwellian future Cali and Juice are familiar with may also be what ours looks like in several years. Cali the Destroyer shows readers what can happen when evil is allowed to thrive." —Entrada Publishing*

*"Like some raconteur alchemist, Luckman comingles ancient mysticism, engaging characters, and social issues to sublimate the alchemical gold that is unique but timeless storytelling. As a dystopia, the work feels like it's happening right now. As a work of fiction, it feels like the perennial trope of man versus God—except it's hard to tell who the villain or hero is. A simultaneously disturbing and amazing read, you'll probably end up finding your own Philosopher's Stone." —Miguel Conner, Author, Voices of Gnosticism & Host, Aeon Byte Gnostic Radio*

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Could it be there's no such thing as the paranormal ... only infinite varieties of normal we've yet to understand?

From acclaimed author Sol Luckman comes *Snooze*, the riveting tale of one extraordinary boy's awakening to the world-changing reality of his dreams, winner of the 2015 National Indie Excellence Award for New Age Fiction and 2016 Readers' Favorite International Book Award Finalist in the Young Adult-Coming of Age category.



Join Max Diver, aka “Snooze,” along the razor’s edge of a quest to rescue his astronaut father from a fate stranger than death in the exotic, perilous Otherworld of sleep.

An insightful look at a plethora of paranormal subjects, from Sasquatch and lucid dreaming to time travel via the Bermuda Triangle, *Snooze* also shines as a work of literature featuring iconic characters, intense drama and breathless pacing to stir you wide awake!

*“Luckman’s dazzling abilities as a novelist abound with lyrical prose ... If you enjoy colorful characters, a fast-*

*paced plot and stories that tug at your heart, this novel in eighty-four chapters is anything but a yawn.”—Readers’ Favorite*

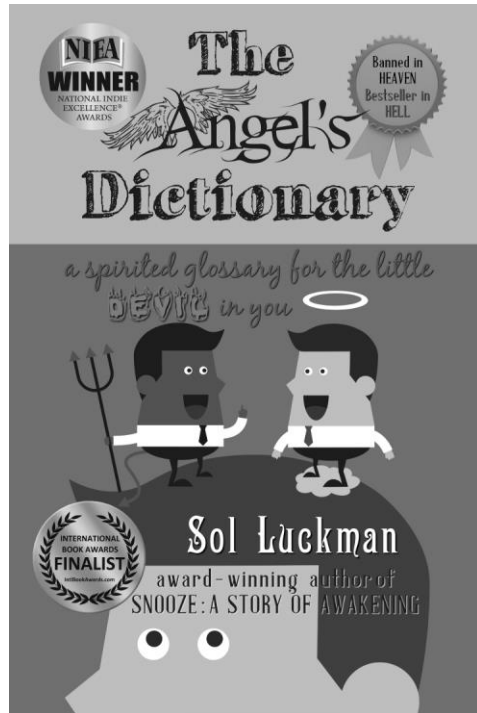
*Snooze is “a multi-dimensional, many-faceted gem of a read. From mysteries to metaphysics, entering the dream world, Bigfoot, high magic and daring feats of courage, this book has it all.”*  
—Lance White, author of *Tales of a Zany Mystic*

*“Snooze is a book for readers ready to awaken from our mass cultural illusion before we self-destruct. Snooze calls out for readers open to the challenging adventure of opening their minds.”*  
—Merry Hall, Co-Host of *Envision This*

Learn more at [www.CrowRising.com](http://www.CrowRising.com).

*The Angel's Dictionary* is like a good joint: slim but potent. This uproariously irreverent “tour de farce” has received three major recognitions: Winner of the 2017 National Indie Excellence Award for Humor, Finalist in the Humor category of the 2018 International Book Awards, and Finalist for Humor in the 2018 Best Book Awards.

In this knee-slapping dictionary for coming to terms with modern culture (or lack thereof), politics (so-called) and life (such as it is), bestselling author Sol Luckman reinvigorates satire to prove that—though we might not be able to change the world—we can at least have a good laugh at it.



Then again, maybe laughter can transform the world!

**entanglement:** (n.) quantum physics term for when the sheets wrap around two bodies in space.

Taking a page from Ambrose Bierce’s scathing satirical masterpiece, *The Devil’s Dictionary*, *The Angel’s Dictionary* updates the genre to include blistering contemporary references and no small sampling of risqué humor to make adults giggle like mischievous teens.

**genetically modified organism (GMO):** (n.) member of the public who has regularly consumed the biotech industry’s food products.

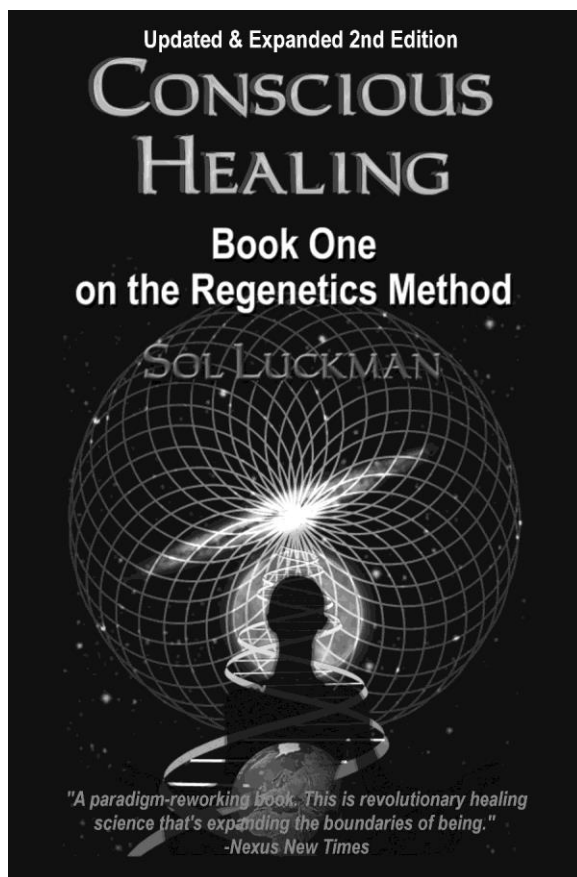
**treason:** (n.) crime against one’s country and its people punishable by reelection.

**shadow side:** (n.) self you encounter when you do not look in the mirror.

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The classic, definitive book on DNA activation, *Conscious Healing*, now updated and expanded with a wealth of empowering new information, is far more than the inspiring story of the development of a “revolutionary healing science” (*Nexus*).



An unparalleled synthesis of modern and ancient healing wisdom, this leading-edge text is essential reading for anyone interested in alternative medicine, energy healing, consciousness research, quantum biology, human evolution, or personal enlightenment.

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The first DNA activation in the “revolutionary healing science” (*Nexus*) of the Regenetics Method, Potentiation employs special linguistic codes—produced vocally and mentally—to stimulate a self-healing and transformational ability in DNA.

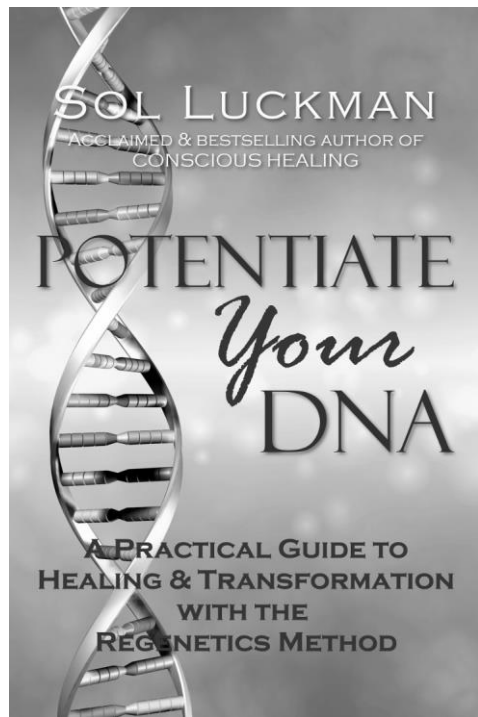
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Besides teaching you a leading-edge technique you can perform for your family, friends and even pets, *Potentiate Your DNA* also:

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“Potentiate Your DNA is brilliant and cutting-edge. Luckman has succinctly and elegantly provided a comprehensible intellectual framework for understanding the profound role of DNA in healing and transformation.”  
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PRE ORDER  
NOW

A stylized graphic consisting of three overlapping shapes. The top shape is a blue rounded rectangle containing the text "PRE ORDER" in white, bold, outlined letters. The middle shape is an orange trapezoidal shape containing the text "NOW" in white, bold, outlined letters. The bottom shape is a red triangle pointing downwards, containing a white star. The graphic is decorated with small circles: a red circle on the left side of the orange shape, an orange circle on the right side of the blue shape, and a green 'x' mark above the blue shape. A faint watermark "© 2018" is visible in the background.

Art/Travel/Memoir

\$39.99

From professional artist and multi-award-winning and international bestselling author Sol Luckman comes this dazzlingly self-illustrated memoir that will have you alternately bursting with laughter and bursting at the seams with new perspectives on life, death and the curiouser and curiouser cosmos we call home.

Luckman—whose latest novel, *Cali the Destroyer*, won a whopping eight book awards—showcases his literary and painterly talents in this one-of-a-kind story of an uncommon life on the fair shores of Hilton Head Island, a world-famous vacation destination nestled in the Deep South.

Combining fascinating autobiography, hilarious comedy and inspirational philosophy (to say nothing of a handful of excellent craft cocktail recipes), *Musings from a Small Island* is also a stunningly visual coffee table book any Lowcountry lover or contemporary art aficionado would be proud to display.

You've never read a book like this because, until now, there hasn't been one. Seen from Luckman's charmingly eccentric perspective, Hilton Head comes alive in ways few places do in literature or art.



Visit Sol Luckman's website  
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