

## Chapter 1

### **The Key to being the Modern Feminine Goddess.**

I was one of those "unfortunate women" when it came to finding a man. I feel that I knew that very early. When I was about 6 years old, a couple of my school friends came running up to me, and as I started leaping forward in excitement towards them, thinking they were coming to say hi to me, they stopped abruptly and pointed and laughed and said: "James just said you have big feet and you will always be ugly!" And they giggled so joyfully and convincingly, that I almost laughed with them, just so I didn't have to show them that I had a broken heart.

My name is Ella and I want to tell you something about me. In my mind, I am imagining you and I sitting side by side, our arms slightly touching, both of us holding a steaming cup of tea with both hands, overlooking the Ocean together as I tell you about how I eventually met and married my late husband, Jack.

Do you have one of those rough memories like mine that you will never forget? My problem was that James was a cute boy. I might have even liked him. But ever since that day, I told no one that I liked him, because he didn't like me anyway.

I don't know if you've ever felt like this before, but I feel ashamed to admit that I never got over that incident on that day. So I never felt like boys would like me. Instead, I assumed that relationships and family and children were for 'those' women. Not me, Ella with the big feet.

From THAT day on, I didn't even feel pretty when wearing a pink silk skirt. And I used to wear it a lot. It was one of the few skirts I had, and I used to twirl around in it, feeling utterly beautiful and tremendously pretty.

Do you know one day I stopped wearing it completely? I can't figure out why. Maybe I just thought to myself, 'what's the point anyway?'

Looking back, I have to tell you, it was the worst decision I ever made. That long pink silk skirt was a skirt my mama bought me, and I tossed it aside, in my little-girl anger.

I've never told anyone about that story. But I'm telling it to you now, as I imagine you and I sitting together with our steaming cups of tea. I think I'm telling it because it

doesn't make me feel as sad as it used to and it's easier to tell you now. Maybe the time passed. But maybe it is because of Jack.

You know, it took me until I was 36 to meet Jack.

I was the tag along friend with my girlfriend - a mommy friend and her 3 kids at a school fair. The music was banging in the background...and my mommy friend, her name was Laura. She had a husband (something I didn't have). But her husband had a friend from work. He happened to turn up and walk towards me from behind the merry-go-round with his cup of coffee in one hand, shirt and tie on with a pair of gray suit pants that somehow made his masculine body look like that statue 'David'. You know that odd statue? The one where you look at and it makes you wonder what Statue David was thinking? Kind of like that, he was.

His gait was slow but deliberate, and I remember looking at him for maybe half a second and then my body just couldn't take the view anymore. Something about him made me want to dance, an energetic, hips circulating, arms running through my hair, pals on my undulating hips, devotion type dancing, just for him. And him only.

I nearly had to lock myself up in fear that I might break out in dance as I just described. It wasn't a slutty type of dance. Or maybe it was. I can't be sure, but I knew that whatever 'slutty' type of dance it was, all I wanted to do it for was him. His presence lit me up like a flower just about to bloom.

You know men like that?

I just quickly closed slowly opening mouth and hid my almost-smile that was sneaking across my face. I turned to Laura's youngest child, a 2 year old named Leila and snatched her hand gently and asked her if she wanted to skip along to get a corn on a stick with me.

You know what was lucky for me? She said yes, and I took my flaming red cheeks off to the nearest food stall with Leila. Thank God! But I didn't neglect to give a sneaky look under my hair from my left eye, to see if Jack had seen me.

He had. And as I walked off, I felt like a young girl again. But a young girl who was flying. The girl I was when I wore the pink silk skirt. In that moment, as scared as I was, I wished I had an adult version of that pink skirt to put on.

I am not sure why. I probably wouldn't have had the courage to really wear it anyway. I had worn trousers most of my time. I felt more capable in them. Less vulnerable.

If you had asked me at that time why I walked away with Leila, I don't know what I would have answered you. I think I would have answered you "I don't know." But now, I would tell you that I was excited beyond measure and terrified at the same time. I think my terror caused me to walk off.

At that time, I had resigned to never having a man. Never marrying. You don't need marriage to prove your 'love' right? I think I began giving up. I thought I was a hopeless case, you see, because I had met too many men in the past who were not faithful. And they seemed to run off the instant I had my bad moments.

So my mind didn't want to trust a man again. I was better without them, I used to say to myself. Have you ever said that to yourself, too?

Yeah, I think many of us have.

Well, the truth is that I said that to myself for so many years. But I think that my heart, however hurt from James's insult that I will always be 'ugly', still wanted love. I really didn't want to believe that I **couldn't** believe in love, if you know what I mean?

Some people say they don't believe in love. I've had some friends like that. More than one. And I used to say I agreed with them. How funny of me, because I was actually lying.

Something inside my heart always burst as I was agreeing with them, with this little voice dying to be heard.

That voice would whisper to me like a 10 year old girl, blue in the face, and sweating so much just from jumping up and down screaming: "but Love IS real!" "But LOVE is REAL!" - but in my own world, she was in a black, shadowy corner of the room, where no one could hear her. She could be seen, I COULD see her, you know? But there was a mute button on her voice.

Do you have one of those voices inside of you?

You know what I think? I think that 10 year old girl was me. Even if she was 10. I'm 60 now. But she was me, and I think that she IS me.

She became me when I met Jack.

I had come back from my trip with Leila to the shop. I didn't know what to do, so my head was darting everywhere, from right to left, and my eyes to the ground and then up to the sky to pretend to look at something in the sky when there was nothing. Although I wished there was a stray balloon or something in the sky for me to remark upon.

It was an interesting side of me I think, that taken-by a man side. The frozen in attraction side.

You know why? Because over the years I had felt real tough, being able to ignore men's attractiveness to me. It was my revenge. I kind of shut down my body. If I wasn't attractive to them, they were never going to be attractive to me.

So maybe it's because Jack was the man he was that I felt reduced to nothing but a swooning 36 year old woman. But I think that day, I was having a good day, and I felt free.

I don't know if it was being around Laura's children that made me that way, because I was rarely around children.

As I walked up to Laura and Jack, Leila skipping next to me, he was talking, both hands with palms facing up, one palm cradling the coffee cup, talking gently but purposefully about something that happened the day before at work. I was jealous that every word he spoke was to Laura and not me.

As I walked up to them, they stopped and greeted me. I did hear that their conversation stopped, and even though I was so nervous and jittery, Jack reached out his free hand and looked me straight in the eye, saying: "I hear you are good with the little ones. I'm Jack." and held out his rigid and strong hand to shake mine.

Laura darted me a wink while he wasn't looking and I darted her back a tight pout of disapproval. It seemed she'd picked up on my nerves. Was it that obvious, I wondered?

I thought to myself: "Jack made the first move to introduce himself. I should say something..." so I cleared my throat and asked: "how are you enjoying the fair?" he cocked his head back and chuckled and said: "I got dragged along. Not my scene." I laughed and nodded, looking away as I laughed.

I hated his abrupt answer, but at the same time, I was drawn to it, like someone had grabbed me by the collar and yanked me in to them. Though I was careful not to really fall on to him like that.

Talking to him, I felt like my heart had been suspended from my body, swinging back and forth, my heart encrusted in tinkling stars and sparkles for a moment. His comment was abrupt enough to make me worry about what kind of silly thing I'd have to say next to keep our chat going. And I started feeling a grey fog entering me, I started thinking 'oh God, if I feel THIS much attraction for him, I'm SURE to do something that pushes him away or turns him off. He probably already thinks I'm ugly.'

The funny thing was, I think he already knew at that point that I liked him a little. And I wondered how many women before me had felt the same way about him. I felt my body heavy for a moment, wondering how much competition I'd have, and I imagined many tall, slim, model-like women with luscious, neat hair and perfectly applied natural make up waiting in front of me in line. The kind of look that would kick my bed hair and make-up free look to the curb.

The reason I wanted to talk to you about this is because as I look back, it seems a kind of miracle that I met and married Jack at all. And I believe that if it weren't for my magical meeting with Anastasia, I don't think I would have ever had a date with him.

It's what Anastasia taught me that let me marry Jack. We even had a son together in my reproductively wobbly late 30s. A beautiful boy, he came out tanned and dark eyed.

I feel that in honour of Jack and my beautiful relationship, and in honour of the adorable saviour that Anastasia was to me, I have to show you the way, like she showed me. I owe her my life with what she showed me. Without her, I wouldn't have married Jack and had my son.

So let me sit here and share Anastasia's Truths about men to you. Because I know that it is oh so hard to stay positive when every man you meet wants something unattached with you.

It's even harder when the men you WANT are not the ones who are willing to commit. It seems that a lot of the time, the ones who are willing to commit are the ones who are slow, fat, or boring.

Anastasia used to say to me: "Ella, you know, many women are good at attracting men. But less are good at keeping them." Then she'd say to me: That's how you have been your whole life, but it is easy to change. I know you will, because you love Jack."

And she was my message of hope. Because the day I decided to tell her my dating woes, was the day my life kind of turned magical. You know how they always say to you: "fantasy is nothing like Reality". Well, my life and my relationship with Jack turned in to something greater than fantasy.

As is the way when we realise in our rigid, tired, scared bodies, that the fantasy is ours to take and hold close to our beating hearts, not something to resist just for the sake of protecting ourselves.

**You are 'The One' or 'One of Many', she Said...**

(To be continued in chapter 2...)