7/3/17 - The Descent - 11:30 AM

Place: Super Max
From: John Auletta #1170408

Greetings From Down Below,

All Blessed Be, First and Foremost - I chant that these words are used as Vehicles of Wisdom so that what I write is of the highest purpose and will serve the greater good. I hope your Experience as you read this is one that evokes your own power when you feel surrounded by hardships. For Lifes hardships can strengthen you, depending on how you Respond to them. And this is an Essay in Response to my First hand Experience in Super Max in a unique sense of psychological survival. Now when it comes to dealing with and overcoming any hardships in life, it always boil down to how that person views life (perception). Depending on how you view life determines how most hardships will affect a person. So in better understanding a persons Experience on how they dealt with hardship (or Prison), its better to First understand that persons perception on life. For Example: Some peoples perception on Roses is that they are always complaining that Roses have thorns, while others like me see a different perspective on Roses - like being thankful that thorns have Roses. Now you see where I'm going with this? So now let me give you my brief perception on life so you can better understand how I cope with such hardships in a Super Max prison. Because knowing Someones perception is a key on knowing how that person dealt with their prison hardships. To introduce myself, my name is John Auletta,

a 31 year old Wiccan male, serving multiple life sentences at a super max prison. My last name derives from a small town on the seaport of SW Italy called 'Auletta.' Which is where my father and his family migrated from, bringing along their pagan religious beliefs to the states. And this is how I ended up following the path of my ancestors - which is an old Italian form of paganism called 'Stregheria'. So yes I honor, respect and cherish the old Pagan Goddesses and Gods. Proof of the Gods to me are written large in the worlds natural beauty, whereas the other proof is to take the inward journey to the mystery of the soul and mind (psychological concepts). So I let mystery have a place in me, leaving a little fallow corner in my heart ready for any seed the wind may bring, and reserving a nook of shadow for the passing bird, keeping a place in my heart for the unexpected guest, an inner altar for an unknown Goddess or God. Mystery is important because hardships in their many forms always seem to have a sense of Mystery to them. Doesn't the hardship of pouring down (stormy) rain causes the seed deep within the darkness of the Earth's soil to grow? The same goes for the heart - hardships that rain down on us at our darkest times can cause us to grow positively. So if your a person who honors Mystery then your hardships might not hurt as bad compared to others. Metaphorically - I see prison as an aspect of a karmic God, this aspect will either strengthen you or break you. So that place I left in my heart for the unexpected guest was a place that made room for this unexpected experience at super max. Prison illustration is its own karmic God and super max is the underworld

that is ran by that God. This might sound crazy to you but this is my perception on life which helps me to cope with the Reality of my Situation. This is the reason I say underworld - In the ancient myth of the Great Goddess 'Inanna' who descended to the underworld had to first enter through the seven gates of the underworld. At every gate she was forced to give up her jewels and clothes as she descended. Her crown taken from her at the first gate, then her earrings, her necklace, her diadem, her belt, her bracelets and finally - at the seventh gate, her very garment. Inanna was stripped and now stood naked before Eriskegal - Queen of the underworld (which was just an aspect of Inanna's darkself). The stripping of Inanna is a metaphor that we must strip away the illusions that cloud our vision so we can face the hardships alone that we've created in order to learn from them. Also it is glossed as stripping away the various disguises we present to the world, expressing our love and trust - expressing our shift of consciousness to more trusting openness to face our dark self. Just like in super max, being in a cell 23 hours a day alone, we must strip away any illusions thats keeping us from learning what we need to learn from the experience. The descent to the underworld itself is a metaphor (full knowledge of both light & dark requires the facing of the ultimate challenge). My descent to the underworld (super max) became me facing my darkself alone which brought the understanding of ultimate things by the experience of ultimate challenges. Inanna descends to her negative self (Eriskegal) - in this way she learns what she needs to know of supreme negativity (not in an evil way - just constant challenges & hardships to overcome).

The hardships we face in Super Max can be seen as supreme negativity. This descent is also called 'night journey of the soul' - it speaks to the need of individuals to descend into the self to face the demons and other dangers that lie there. Being in a cell for such a long time, no outside window for the sun to shine in (darkness) - the walls will start closing in and the only strength you can summon up is from your <u>self</u> (alone). The cell forces you to face your own demons that you've created in the past. So living in Super Max is metaphorically a descent to your own inner underworld. Either your inner demons that you've created is going to destroy you (and you fall victim to going crazy in your cell) or your strong enough to learn something positive from them demons so to banish them, making room for a positive future. Facing your demons alone comes with courage, courage is not the absence of fear, it is the ability to move through it. There's nothing wrong with fear, where there's fear, there is power to move through it. You must then have faith, faith is trusting in yourself to make it through the underworld (Super Max), so you may be reborn (released into the freeworld). What this prison experience metaphorically taught me about faith is that when you step off the cliff into the underworld (Super Max) your either going to discover you have wings on the drop won't be so far that it will kill you or maybe it's that - when you step off, even if the fall kills you, you have the inner power to give birth to your new self. I think rebirth (release or positive change) comes when you understand the purpose of the fall or descent. This facing your inner demons or descent may seem like inner conflict, however conflict creates positive change. (kites rise highest against the wind - not with it). It also may seem dark when facing our inner

demons however from the greatest darkness emerges the strongest spark. I see my experience in super max not simply a blessing or punishment conspired by the Gods, but a corrective process in the service of a transcendent purpose. And this purpose is that the individual evolves toward a fuller realization of the divine order that humans naturally embody. And that divine order is that life has the meaning we give it. I had come to understand through this prison experience, that ancient myths are not mere stories but mirrors of the great cosmic drama and psychological concepts of seemingly impersonal forces. Myths and metaphors enabled me to see my own personal story reflected in their ancient archetypal patterns. 23 hours a day within these small cells made me confront every demon I created within and in facing the demons (my dark self), I learnt so much. Like in fact its the dark, difficult and avoided parts of life that are often the most fertile of human experiences that give rise to our most enlightened achievements. At times there's more to learn from the dark (mistakes & hardships) then the light. Inner strength is also key when it comes to facing these four cornered cell walls. If there is no strength then these walls and their hardships will eat you alive. However, you have no idea how strong you truly are until being strong is your only option! Seeing this super max situation as a metaphor is so helpful because it gives every situation a symbolic meaning, yet the meaning depends on your perception. This type of world view doesn't hurt my spirituality because my spirituality isn't separate from the physical or material or the abstract. So then my Gods can also become metaphors, like how I see super max as a metaphoric underworld that has hidden wisdom. Also the Gods are embodiments and

expressions of concepts, For example: The Fides are the Goddesses of Good Faith, Vesta is Sacred Fire. And the God Dionysus is Ecstatic pleasure and wine. This type of perception towards prison might seem unrealistic however let me say this - The Gods does not promise to show you the one true path for the simple reason that the only true path is the one you forge yourself. And for this prison experience, I forged a Spiritual path of Metaphors, Sacred abstract concepts and Embodiments of Symbolic wisdom which has got me through the stress of my prison reality. Everything to me that exists in the natural world is a form or expression of the Divine. Meditation and Symbolic Action are expression of the Divine also. Some may belittle my concept of Sacred Meditation being an aspect of the Divine but it should be understood that I'm acting in part on the principal that everything is connected, what happens in the privacy of my mind is connected to every other part of this radically interconnected universe (The Goddess). A change in understanding or motivation is already a change in the web of all things. Since this web and this universe are full of life, the change is one of relationships. So, what begins as 'thinking nice things - good motivation' begins to affect 'world-views' and effect changes in lifestyle. Did religions not first start from a mental thought of sacred motivation? Even the imagination is an expression of the Divine and your imagination must be strong, positive and creative to survive within a cell for 23 hours a day. Because thats all the time in the world to just sit and think. And trust me I thought of every possible way I could have avoided coming to prison, I created every possible way to avoid prison if I was to be released. Mentally I created my own inner dream worlds to visit during my meditation once the stress got to heavy. The mind plays tricks on you behind these walls and working on your creative imagination helps to keep your mind under your own control. For example: there are days that us inmates experience mistreatment from the C.O's (correctional officers) all because the

C.O had a bad day at home. So he or she brings their pain and twisted emotions to work which only affects us inmates. Because everything we get depends totally on the C.O giving it to us which means we are the ones at the end of their bad day. On some days we may receive our dinner trays as late as 6:30pm which means the food would be super cold - this violates the S.O.P (standard operating procedures) because S.O.P states we must receive three hot meals during the weekdays. The C.O's would come to work lazy, mad and mistreatful to us all because they can't control their emotions. Constantly getting such mistreatment from them, attacts the mind of us inmates, especially in an environment where your taken advantage of for showing signs of weakness. This makes the mind ready to attack such mistreatment even though theres no win against the C.O.'s Sometimes its not about the win, its just about respect. How I cope with these mistreatments is through meditation - focusing in on my sacred inner world tree so to banish the mind from thinking negative. My perception of the world helps me with this meditation because I see the earth as an expression and form of the Divine (Mother Earth). For example: 'When I'm thinking negative or when I'm ready to snap, I'll lay down and close my eyes imagining myself as a tree with roots that go deep in the earth, and branches that disappear into the sky. Breathing slowly, feeling my roots and branches grow, feeling the warmth of the earth on my deepening roots, feeling the breezes of the sky in my branches. Through my roots, I pull up the energy of the earth and feel it rise through my body. Releasing it through my branches and feeling it falling back to earth around me. Coordinating this energy flow to my deep slow breathing and finding myself calm and peaceful.' Thats how I change my negative thoughts to something positive and peaceful. All because my perception of life is pagan, I'm able to invoke certain concepts, metaphors,

and expressions of symbolic wisdom to help me through certain hardships. I say certain hardships because in my past I know I've done some harmful things and got away with it, so to receive a certain hardship or pain during my time here- I'll just accept it as an aspect of karma. Respecting the cycle of cause and effect and allowing the pain to leave its mark within my heart. This helps me in many ways and if you don't respect karma in a place like this then your time will become extremely hard. A inmate the other day just got tased and beat up by the C.O's all because he didn't get a cake on his lunch tray. The inmate felt like the officer was disrespecting him because there wasn't a cake on his tray. However the officer isn't the person who make our trays, they only pass them out to us. So some inmates wouldn't have seen that as the officer disrespecting them. So now you see why I said a persons perception on life will affect his experience within super max. His own perception on disrespect just got him tased and beat up by five C.O's. When I receive trays that sometimes are missing food, I'll think how small this is compared to the things I did in my past. So I'll just accept the small hardship and eat the rest of the food on my tray. (Some people don't even receive 3 meals a day in the freeworld, so who am I to cry about a cake?) Oh yeah, the cell extraction (C.O's running in your cell using force to restrain you) they did on the inmate about the cake got him sent back to phase 1 and it took him 3 years to get to phase 2. So not only did he get tased and beat up about a cake, he also just backtracked 3 years from being released from super max. This super max is ran by phases, so let me explain. Phase 1 is made up of 3 units - E-wing, F-wing and D-wing. Each wing has 32 one man cells to them. Some wings have certain privileges and some don't. The privileges become better as you move up the wings. When you first come to super max all inmates are sent to E-wing- This wing, inmates are not allowed their personal property (books, magazines, pictures or food)

and they are not allowed to go to store for food or allowed to go to yard. Of course they are allowed their state trays. So this wing is 24 hour lock down, the only thing you can get off store is writing material (pens, paper, envelopes and stamps). A visit once a month behide the glass (however, all visits at this place is no contact- behide glass). If inmates do good in this wing for 3 months they move up to the next wing, which is F-wing. In F-wing we are allowed our person property and are allowed to go to store for only Hygiene products and writing material. We are able to go to yard on either Monday and Wednesday for 2½ hours or Tuesday and Thursday for 2½ hours, it depends on what tier your cell is on that determines your yard on them specific days. Visits are twice a month and throughout all phases - showers are on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And also we all receive only two meals a day (Breakfast & Dinner) on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. If you do good in F-wing for 3-6 months you move to D-wing where theres a TV in your cell, your allowed to go to store for $30 worth of food. 3 visits a month and 2 state phone calls a month for 15 minutes. We can buy phone time off our store - $15 for 150 minutes. Do good in this wing for 6 months to a year you move to the next phase which is phase 2. This phase also consist of 3 units: C-wing, B-wing and A-wing. C-wing is the next step after D-wing. In C-wing your allowed $40 worth of food, 3 state calls a month and 3 visits a month, and TV in cell. Do good in this wing for 6 months to a year and you move to B-wing which is the wing I'm in now. I've been in B-wing for 2 years without getting into any trouble. In B-wing we are allowed $50 store food, 4 visits, TV and 4 state calls. The next wing is A-wing which is now $60 store food, 4 state calls and 4 visits. After completing both phases the administration will recommend you to transfer back to General Population. The transfer back to population or release to the freeworld is a symbolic rebirth from the underworld. I see the different

Phases and wings as different symbolic levels of my own inner underworld. E-wing was the very harsh level of my underworld. It became more easier as I moved up throughout the levels yet each level presented their own form of hardships. Seeing it this way helped me deal with the stress better throughout the wings because I connected this reality with my own inner reality. To survive you must be your own hero of inner strength so to see yourself through these different wings. I summon my strength from different ancient myths. Growing up my Grams (Grandmother) use to tell me bed time Pagan myth stories of ancient Pagan Hero's and Heroines going on quest to the underworld. These Ancient Hero's fought against monsters and most of the Hero's overcame these monsters - sometimes with the help of the Gods. These Hero quest to the underworld symbolicly represents my inner demons (underworld monsters) that confront me in different forms - e-wing mental struggles, solitude, super max hardships, no mail from family - some more extreme than others. In ancient myths when Perseus decapitates Medusa and when Theseus defeats the Minotaur, their actions are, in the psychological sense, metaphors for vanquishing my own demons. The fact that hero's are help by the Gods symbolizes the 'divine' potential within me to overcome my own inner demons (in which ever form they take). Getting sent to super max was me creating my own underworld to quest, creating my own demons to fight and later overcome. The help from the Gods that I receive is basically my gift of perception which helps me to cope and understand my prison reality. Confronting these demons at time brought much pain however during the conflict i've learnt that pain is a form of energy, and being that im a Wiccan, I know how to work with energy. So when I find energy unconstructive in one form, I can spin it until it takes a form with which I can work. Working with energy I had to first identify and acknowledge it and the same goes for pain. Super

Max is manifested with many painful handships such as: (officer mis-treatment, inmates throwing their feces on you, your girl or wife breaking up with you because she can't take the stress - so now your alone doing time, no mail from family which causes you to feel more alone and hating everybody else who gets mail around you, mental health issues which causes the stress of your cell (solitude) to override your strength, no sleep do to inmates kicking on the doors all night, inmate workers putting broken razors in your food, discrimination from staff towards certain religions such as mine, etc, etc). The painful handships are endless yet my unique perception of my world view helps me to spin these painful handships into forms I can work with. Our personal energy field is never wholly separate from the earths energy field. We are each a ripple in the earths aura. When we connect deeply with that greater source of energy, we can renew and replenish our own vitality constantly. However, just because I have this type of perception doesn't mean my handships are easier then others. The time I did in 'E-wing' was the hardest journey within myself that I ever took. The 6 months I did in there was hard because first the Air conditioner was broke on that side of the prison which made the summer months feel like I was doing time at the Sahara Desert. I also was on silver lock status which meant only a Sergeant and up could feed me or could come to my cell - this meant I barely got cell clean out because the Sergeant and those above the Sergeant was always busy. No cell clean out, extreme heat, shower in cell with no Air condition only added to the harsh mold that was growing in my cell. My bed was a large concrete slab with mold on the sides and my matt on the top. For two weeks it was hard for me to breathe and finally I was sent to medical. The doctor gave me a 'Ventolin HFA inhaler' and ordered that I be moved out of the molded cell which Administration refused to do. Their excuse of not moving me was that I was a high profile inmate.

Some nights the mold was so bad I'll lay down on the floor with my head at the bottom of my cell door breathing in the air coming from outside my cell. The staff here don't treat us with respect or even see us as humans, all they see is animals who broke the law and they can care less about our well being which makes time and experience at super max hard. How I overcame these hardships was by shaping my perception within my own image which then allowed my perception to shape me into the strength (hero) I needed to overcome my monsters. Often, our true strength is not in the things that represent what is familiar, comfortable, but in our fears and even in our resistance to change. I didn't find my power of strength within B-wing (the easiest phase) but I found my power of strength in my inner monsters I faced within E-wing and in the strength of their stranglehold. Some of you fear the facing of your own inner demons or monsters. So you run from them. However, where there's fear, there's inner power. Like my High Priestess once told me, "Although ultimately we want to win the battle of facing our demons, metaphorically we may first have to lose, have to let ourselves be dissolved and experience annihilation, if only to stop running in terror from it." When I was in population I wanted to win the battle in never coming to super max, yet I lost the battle and allowed E-wing to metaphorically annihilate me, yet I found so much inner power, strength and wisdom from that annihilation. So I now understand my High Priestess's wisdom, I may have lost the battle of coming here but look at how much I've learned and changed for the better, plus I no longer run from my fear. To find your power you must only look at the ways in which you give it away. Being that E-wing was the most harsh level of my inner underworld, the most hardest part of super max - it forced me to confront silence and solitude. And solitude can be frightling because it invites us to meet a stranger we think we may not want to know -

ourselves. Yet there's a beautiful balance to silence. Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom. I have learned in E-Wing that waiting in silence (meditation) without a plan, inspiration comes. I have learned to wait for the up-welling of that inspiration and to express it when it comes, to let it out without censoring it or feeling shy. Within the E-Wing of silence and solitude I found inspiration to write my 2nd supernatural fiction novel. This experience in Super Max has showed me that there's also beauty in the dark. And when I say dark - I'm not speaking of evil, I'm speaking of hardships, mistakes, ultimate challenges and the shadow self, which helped shape me into the better person I am today. Contrary to popular belief, the inner shadow self may contain desirable things. It may hold power and talent - things we have kept at bay to make ourselves more acceptable to this judgemental twisted society. Both light and dark experiences all combine to create the person we are today. Life isn't about finding yourself, it's about creating yourself. And sometimes creation brings pain however at times we need bruises to know blessings and I have known both. If my inner dark Gods are to leave me, I fear my inner light Gods will take flight as well, so I keep my balance intact. The problem is not that there are problems, the problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem. For dark times are often times of discovery, we are thrown obstacles in life in order for us to grow stronger. So my way of coping with Super Max as you now have read is by creating metaphors, myths, symbolic wisdom to explain and to understand the reality of my situation in <u>my own unique way</u>, like making this harsh reality conscious of itself in a positive/spiritual way of personal growth. Make sense? It does to me! It's a creating of a psychological survival tactic! So basically my spirituality plays a huge part in my survival yet there's a balance to that as well, because being a Wiccan in prison brings its own challenges and hardships. For example: on my desk which is

next to my 3 shelf locker box has many pictures of Goddess and God idols on it. The top of my desk is my Pagan Altar, its beautiful - I swear it so. However, everytime there's a random search and my cell is up to be searched - somehow one of my Goddess idol pictures might be ripped, another steped on on in the toilet. I put fruits (oranges & apples) on my altar as herbal offerings to my Gods and ancestors - somehow when my cell is searched the fruits are busted or steped on to the point its ruin. I laugh to myself when I see this because for the last past 2 thousand years I know my ancestors have suffered much worst for being Pagans and Witches. The world only sees what they can comprehend, they can not understand whats within. Little souls can not see great truth. Do you not agree? At times, even their discrimination becomes physical which they justify by saying 'Im a High Profile Inmate'. Three years ago I was standing on my bed watching Tv when suddenly my cell door popped open and in ran the cert team with their all black riot gear to do a cell extraction, saying they got a tip that I had a cell phone which was a lie. I got restrained and beat up for no reason which had me so pissed and angered. However, I'll rather contain my anger so I can transform it to something positive. Its just so easy to give into your anger and snap but it takes strength and love to contain it and transform it. And I hate to do things the easy way because there's no wisdom in it. However containing emotions and energies is not the same as suppressing them. A ring of stones contains the fire (but does not smother it with dirt) so that the flames can warm us without burning down the forest. As I bring my story to an end, you now have a better understanding of my descent. The Mythical Hero's descent into the underworld became my 'Dark Night Journey of the Soul', my descent into the dark world of the 'Super Max Experience' to find a way to my wholeness (learning in a positive way from the experience of both the light and dark). The Mythical Hero's

Return (Rebirth From the Underworld) is my achievement of that wholeness. The difficult trials (Hardships) that Face the mythical Hero - metaphorically Represents the powerful guardians (C.O.) at each threshold (each wing) that stood between ME and progress. But the Hero (ME) Returns From the Underworld with Something learned. In ancient myth the Goddess INANNA Returns From the Underworld with a Fuller knowledge of the Whole (light & Dark) world She lives rather than just the positive side of it. The Gods Osiris and Dionysus Returns From the Underworld as Sources For Material or Spiritual Food For their people. Even though I'm Still Experiencing my descent, I know one day in the Future (on my Appeal) I'll Return to the Freeworld as a Source of Spiritual Food For my people. I Feel that when we know who the Gods are, they can tell us more about who we are. In Some of them, we can See Reflections of ourselves, as they Mirror the grandeur, meaning and limitations of the archetypes we live out. Other Gods tug at our Memory, and we recall that we once did know them. In another, we might See the Face of the God we Rejected - the archetype we Feared (our shadow Self). Thank you For Reading about how I Cope during the descent of My own Underworld (Super Max). All Blessed Be!

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Archetype - original model, a preexistent or latent, internally determined patterns of being and behaving, of perceiving and responding.

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