

The journey of the Golden Egg

Part One: A story's unfolding

When in the North all life was already preparing for the winter, eleven wise men and women from all over the land gathered in the South. Here the sun was still warm enough to embrace them on their mission to connect the human world to that of honey bees. In a time when the world seemed to close in, when the climate was changing, and when the Earth Mother was suffering from all the greed that is put upon her, they came. They came, with their dreams, their knowledge, their hopes and their belief that they could make a difference.

There was a shaman, a clear voyant, a faery, a poet-philosopher, a jester, an actor, a cook, a storyteller, a herbalist, a beekeeper, and a dancer. Together they formed the human hive called Bee Time. This magical realm, that exists outside of time and space, enabled them to gather and disperse the wisdom of the old traditions that integrate practical arts with the rhythms of the wider universe. From there they could raise collective awareness, responsibility and confidence that change is possible.

For a period of two weeks - that of course lasted much longer in Bee Time - they studied beehives, systems thinking, complexity theory...piecing together the puzzles of our social and material reality. They shared, learned, and discovered questions they did not know they had. In the end they concluded that all the powers in the universe are connected in complex ways. That each and every particle is just one of many realisations of all the possibilities it carries within. And that everything when put together over time forms more than the sum of its parts. With these insights they wanted to enlighten the world and create beauty and harmony throughout the land.

The wise ones decided to combine their acquired knowledge, wisdom, wishes, dreams, and love and put it into a Golden Egg that was to be shared with the world in a public ceremony. A wool thread that would run through the crowd would connect all the people into a chaordic dance ritual. This would lead to the Golden Egg's opening up and releasing its colourful content into the stream of a natural spring that feeds the land and its population. Through this powerful symbolism, they would explain and give meaning to all the things they had learned, and it would most certainly expand the borders of Bee Time to include all those touched by the public ceremony. It seemed to be a perfect plan.

But none of that ever happened....

Well before the ceremony took place, the wise ones learned that the Golden Egg's potential would only realise itself at its own pace. The complex world outside Bee Time could not be forced in any direction by a single group of wise men and women. None of them knew where and when, but it was clear to all that the Golden Egg was destined to some day release its magic somewhere else.

And so they chose two of the disciples from their hive to accompany the Golden Egg on its path to realisation. Not at all aware of what that might mean, and where that might take them, they honourably accepted their task.

And so their journey began...

And there we were, me, her, and the Golden Egg, packing our belongings and our memories of the Bee Time residency into the car, and saying our goodbyes. We were really excited to go on a road trip. Having to crack the Egg was just a minor detail. We thought the Egg could be cracked just about anywhere outside of Bee Time, so we were looking for a place that was conveniently located along our route home. We had joked that maybe it should be opened in a foul and miserable place, a place that desperately needed some of the magic that was captured in the Golden Egg. The other Beetimers had ignored our provocative jokes and somehow trusted us to do what's right.

We were given complete freedom to do with the Egg what we wanted. And we wanted something fun. That is how the beeswax relic of our never-happened opening performance became repurposed as our toy. And a playground of possibilities opened up.

The cook and the storyteller decided to set up camp early that first day at a site that had been welcoming to them before. Most importantly they knew that there was good internet, which they needed to share their recorded images and witty comments with other Beetimers and friends back home...It was one of the more powerful addictions in their days...

The chosen ones had been having great fun all day taking the Golden Egg everywhere and inscribing it with personality.

We had taken a bundle of silly selfies: the three of us having coffee, doing our shopping, sightseeing in the Old village...We were already imagining how, after the Egg was cracked, we would combine all our pictures into a funny report of our roadtrip. We had already found the perfect sound for our roadmovie in the music of a local artist that was playing in the streets of the Old village close to our camp. We decided to buy a copy of his cd. We put the Egg next to him to take their picture and document this happy accident. Well before we could explain our intentions, his eyes lit up and he started serenading the Golden Egg.

And so that night, with a big smile on their faces and a naughty giggle in their hearts, they uploaded some photos from the first day of their roadtrip with the Golden Egg. They had no idea yet what that would put in motion...

The next morning, we discovered we had forgotten to pack the coffee maker. That is pretty bad...

Coffee had always been an important ingredient in any of our plans. It was one of these things that we shared that would always work well. A good coffee ceremony would open up a space of sharing without judging, where undeveloped thoughts, unimaginable ideas, and unexplained feelings would flow uninhibited. Coffee drinking meant digesting and realigning with each other and with ourselves. Coffee stimulates clarity of thought and action. A good plan requires coffee.

No coffee maker...what a slap in the face! ...Anxiety struck, and with the last of our strength we packed up camp hoping we would find coffee somewhere else.

But the chosen ones had judged too soon. A couple that had set up camp behind theirs invited them for coffee and pancakes. They immediately revised their plans and accepted this kind offer.

And apart from providing coffee, these neighbors were of great help. They were travellers who knew these parts well and could advise on many interesting locations to visit. They chose a life of being on the road. They had no urgent obligations back home, and were moving around from site to site at their own pace, meeting many people and places along their route.

I remember him as a big and jolly man with a long beard, and wavy hair. The colourful apron around his big belly together with his friendly smile changed his raw biker's looks into that of a family man. The kids around the campsite called him Papa Noel, the Southern name for Santa Claus. The name fitted him, and so I never remembered his birth name. Her name was Diane. She was a much smaller and more timid woman that had two wild dogs hidden in the camper. She had accepted her husband's whims and aligned her lifestyle with his. He drove her and her dogs around the world, and she could make requests for locations to visit. And while he fed new friends every day, she maintained these relations and kept in touch with everyone. They worked well together...

The coffee was plentiful and the pancakes were made with love and generously filled with marshmallows or lemon-sugar. We were afraid to indulge in so much sweetness as we'd just eaten our breakfast and were in a hurry to get back on the road... but it is hard to resist someone's wish to please you. So we ate, drank and exchanged stories until well in the afternoon. And of course, we told them the story of the Golden Egg and our intention to crack it somewhere yet unknown.

Papa Noel was from the Northern Islands, where there are many remnants of the old traditions and sacred places. The storyteller had visited this realm frequently, as it was a land where the storytelling traditions were strong. And the father of her first born is from there...

They mentioned many sacred sites from there where new traditions were built on top of the old ones, aligning old ways with the new, and keeping both visibly present in the landscape. I was fascinated to hear about these places, such as Devil's Bridge, where

several generations have built bridges on top of the old existing bridge, creating a multi-level bridge that crosses ages.

Unfortunately, the Noels couldn't point out any similar sites down South. So we went back on the road much later than we had intended, and without a clear plan for the day. Before we left, Diane took our facebook address so they could keep in touch and find out how the story with the egg would end.

Back on the road, we looked at each other and said: "Wouldn't it be nice to be on the road all the time and have no hurry of any kind?" We sighed...We both could imagine a new nomadic life, seeing new things every day, and meeting faraway friends whenever we wanted. After a while I asked: "But what about our homes, our communities? I would feel terribly homesick to leave them for so long." She agreed: "Travelling requires a home, a safe haven where you can recover and evaluate." I told her I can grow roots anywhere, but I can never be derooted completely.

They drove for hours through deserted yellow fields before they finally left the main road to have a picnic. Generally, the picnic stops along the main roads were dreadful soulless places, so small village squares were to be preferred. But this time, the village they found felt quite unwelcoming. It was a like a ghost town, where only a few of the houses were inhabited, but most buildings were crumbling down. What was once a river stream, was now no more than a trail of mud with yellow reeds broken in the wind. The streets and bushes were filled with litter and the smell was all but pleasant. None of the very few and very old people that walked the streets greeted the visitors. They completely ignored them as though they were invisible, or gave them a suspicious look at best. It was clear that visitors were not common in these parts.

Nonetheless, the chosen ones found places of beauty in the middle of this decaying scenery. A little fountain with fresh spring water and fish swimming around provided the threesome a sunny spot to sit and enjoy their lunch. But that was all this town had to offer. Surely this was no place for a Golden Egg.

The threesome hurried to leave this grim place to go to a place of hope. Just a few more hours of travel would get them to a famous pilgrim route. A series of walking tracks that were used by pilgrims of all religions and walks of life. A place of worship for some, a place of self-growth for others...a place of hope for all.

We figured that maybe a little pilgrimage could provide the three of us some clarity, and provide us with fresh ideas of where to go, we were on a roadtrip in search of the Golden Egg's self-realisation after all. Of course, we had no real intention to walk a lot, nor reflect much...We just thought it would be funny to have Egg meet some fellow pilgrims. Take some more pictures for our Bee Time friends. It was all still fun and games back then. Ignorance is bliss, indeed.

However, it was not so easy to find a campsite that was still open that late in the season. The many websites, apps, roadmaps, and tour guides that we combined in our daily efforts to find shelter all agreed: in this area there was only one campsite still open to visitors. And we had to get there in a hurry because it was already getting dark. Despite

the hiccups of the navigation system, and our night blindness, we arrived safely. And we even managed to set up camp and eat dinner in record time. All the more time for our next photo update to the Beetimers. And now, it was Halloween night, so surely Egg had to be dressed up to go for 'trick or treat'. With Bee Time still in our minds, we chose a bee costume. And, content with our next picture, we went to sleep early.

It was freaking cold that night. The next morning the neighbour informed us that we were on a mountain. The soy milk for our porridge was a frozen block. All of our supplies were frozen solid. No breakfast, no coffee... So we gently packed Egg into a bag and started our pilgrimage immediately... in search of the nearest café.

Egg had been with us all the time, as we didn't want to miss a good photo opportunity. Supportive comments and likes from the Beetimers, Diane and some friends back home had been raining down like a waterfall, motivating us to continue our playful stream of silly pictures.

The town was beautiful. It was on a steep hillside with parallel streets on different levels. The buildings looked like time had stood still for many centuries. Ancient wood, natural stone, and beautiful metal work everywhere along our route. Several cathedrals, and an old fortress all restored or in the process of being restored to the condition of their glory days. The streets were clean and the few people around were calm and smiling. And...no advertisements anywhere.

Our idea of taking funny pictures of pilgrims with Egg didn't feel appealing anymore. We much rather wanted to just walk around and let ourselves be consumed by all this beauty. We walked all the way to the summit where the fortress is located. The fortress was being restored to its original state with great precision. I noticed how little fragments of terracotta pots formed a red line cemented into the walls and floors, separating the original from the renovated parts. They were hardly noticeable, but once you've seen them, they were everywhere. They aligned old and new fragments of history, fitting together perfectly, but somehow remaining separate and identifiable.

From the summit you could see the landscape all around. The village embracing the hill on one side, and on the other side a waving landscape of rectangular grainfields until the horizon. Every cell in our body was touched by this titillating scenery. After watching in awe for a bit, we decided to take Egg out of the bag to take a picture to salute our Bee Time friends. This time it would be us three dancing naked on the summit.

To our astonishment Egg had started to bleed. Thick red drops were coming out of its waist and rolling down its little body, its blanket stained dark red. We could only assume that it was the enormous change in temperatures that had caused this problem. For a moment we felt a light panic because it looked like Egg might choose its own location to crack open, and well before we were ready. We were getting more and more excited about our roadtrip with Egg, and were not at all willing to end it so soon. Luckily, I managed to shut the wounds... at least temporarily.

On the way back down the hill, the chosen ones took a different route, and the village looked quite different. The back of the buildings were made of cement blocks and cheap bricks, or they were missing altogether and had only some metal contraption holding up

the façade. There was trash in every backyard and streets were covered in dog shit, although there was not a living thing in sight. Apart from the many hostels on the main street, the few other buildings that seemed inhabitable were fenced off and had security cameras. In this town, people were meant to pass through, not stick around. If you wander off the yellow brick road, you cannot help but unveil it of its mysteries.

And just like that, the magic was gone...

And so once again we packed up our camp and headed to the next unknown destination. Egg was still bleeding. Drops of thick blood formed little lines on the beeswax eggshell. We had put some plasters on Egg. And we posted pictures of the wounds. Maybe so all of the Beetimers could sense that there was a breakthrough?

Somewhere near a petrol station there was a little Maria chapel. We put Egg in the middle of this sacred space, between the porcelain angels and candles. Another roadtrip picture, but also...well, you never know...We really hoped that Egg would survive until we would find its destination and fulfil our prophecy.

By now Egg had become a bit more than a joke. We had taken care of Egg. We had been travelling together for some time now, and in a sort of strange way it felt a bit difficult to just go and break it. If we had to break it, then it had to be in a very special place, with a beautiful ritual. We wanted to end our journey together in an honourable way. And we wanted some sort of closure, like a point at the end of a sentence where now still seemed many dots.

It's difficult to not know.

To let things be and just wait for your story to unfold...

And so they had another coffee break...

Suddenly an image of the labyrinth in Chartres came to mind...

Years ago, I was helping my daughter with a school paper about the cathedral of Chartres. We were both fascinated with this old place of worship, that was there long before Christianity. We had written a story about the Goddess of Chartres, how the labyrinth was made, and how this location became a place of worship for all kinds of religions. We both saw the images in our dreams, and with the visions we had as a guideline, we wove a story around the historical facts of this Cathedral. We fell in love with our story and we made a pledge that one day we would go and visit this magical place.

Chartres...The place where energies come together, past and present, and the labyrinth as an ancestral doorway, a place to connect timelines. Maybe that would be the place to break Egg? My god! An old dream in me came alive. Egg was gonna take me to a place I always wanted to go!

We looked on the map. Chartres was less than two days away.

The plan was made with great conviction and dedication. The chosen ones would travel to Chartres, visit the Cathedral and break Egg in the middle of the sacred labyrinth. They could not think of anything more magnificent than that.

And after breaking the Golden Egg and releasing its fluids, they would take the beeswax eggshells, melt them and turn them into a candle that they would burn ceremonially. Earth, water, air, and fire would all be represented. The Egg, the Zero of infinite possibilities, would transform into a One. The One would finally have direction and clarity, the goal and journey would become clear.

This was going to be the moment.

We would go to Chartres and ceremonially break the Golden Egg. We booked an Airbnb for that evening with a kitchen to melt the eggshells to make a candle.

We were so excited!

Egg was now wrapped up in a bandage. Wounded... still bleeding. The chosen ones became slightly worried that maybe Egg wouldn't make it to their chosen destination and would break during transport or just spontaneously. But if that happened, than that would be it. So they tried to accept that possibility. Since everything seemed possible.

The evening before we arrived in Chartres we set up camp in a town nearby. We had left the dry warm South behind us and it was cold and humid. A thick mist covered the earth around us like a blanket. We stood on the empty campsite and smelled the fallen leaves under our feet. We looked at the night sky and there it was...we saw the almost full moon rising. Tomorrow the moon would be full.

Our hearts started racing as we stood there stunned with delight. Tomorrow we would hatch the Golden Egg in the centre of Chartres' Labyrinth and then light its rebirth at the full moon. Can you think of a better way to end the Golden Egg's story?!?

That night, we posted a picture of the wounded Golden Egg in the light of the Moon:
"The end is nigh...There is a full moon rising."

*But there's this thing about the real world and the world in fantasy...
They don't match.*

Chartres was not at all the place she had dreamt of going to. Of course, it was clear that the cathedral would not be in a beautiful ancient landscape, with rivers, nature and the smell of old forest and the sound of birds. But they were not prepared to find a city with ugly buildings, lots of traffic, and the smell of petrol. This Chartres was filled with tourists, souvenir shops, big shopping streets, advertisements, café's, restaurants... There seemed to be nothing sacred about it at all.

Now they were finally convinced of their mission to release the Golden Egg's powers, and the world around them seemed bereft of all magic.

But at least the cathedral was there, in the middle of the city. And just like them, it seemed to have been teleported from its original position into this strange new world of cameras, advertisements and souvenir shops.

We were impressed by the size of it, by the old stones, the artwork. It was breathtaking! When we entered the Cathedral the city just vanished and time stood still. There was this vast realm of energy, smell, sound and it was so huge. Stained glass of all ages, statues with great detail, made with love and craftsmanship. We had stepped into another world.

And there it was.... the labyrinth.

It was hidden under church chairs, but clearly visible. Only the middle of it was bare. We stood in its centre without walking the labyrinth. It felt impressive.

And right then, I got a phone call. It snapped me out of the scene, and the noise in the church was suddenly very disturbing. It was an unknown number, but I somehow had to answer it, so I quickly ran outside. It was my daughter... She had no idea about this trip of ours and we were both amazed that she rang just as I was standing in the middle of our story. There is a great power of connection that is not understandable by common sense. But it's everywhere. And it was there in that moment.

Still amazed, we went back to the labyrinth and stood there with Egg. And now what? Smash it? We didn't dare to smash it. People were everywhere and it would probably look like a deed of aggression to smash something, blood pouring out of it. We couldn't.

So we unwrapped Egg from its bandages and put it in the middle of the labyrinth to at least take pictures. Then a woman came up to us and looked at Egg. She was old, had a trolley with her belongings, red gloves on her hands, and a loving smile on her face. She looked at Egg. She looked at us taking pictures of Egg. She said something in French and pointed to Egg. If she could be in a picture with Egg?

We looked at each other. This fragile old woman wanted to hold Egg. What if she drops it?

And immediately after, we thought: Yes! If she drops it then it's an accident! Maybe this is the moment?!?

The old woman took the Egg. But she didn't drop it. She held it like it was her baby. Her eyes lit up and she turned into a young woman. And she spoke. She told the story of her life. How she had five children. How she had lived this long, having an active lifestyle. Her 100th birthday would be in two weeks' time. We couldn't understand all she was saying, but we felt her words. The whole time, it seemed the old woman, Egg and us were all alone in this huge place. For a moment she took us into her world. She took Egg into her world. And we stood there...baffled. We tried to speak as well, but words came out deformed and strange. We had no words. But she did not mind. She had enough. She looked at Egg and us with great love, and her face shined with pure happiness. After she spoke, she gave Egg back to us and left, still smiling.

We were standing there with Egg in our arms, quietly digesting what had just happened. Had we just met the Goddess of Chartres?

We went out of the cathedral to get some air and digest.
When we came outside, into the daylight we noticed something.
Egg had stopped bleeding.
Egg was healed!

The chosen ones were amazed and confused. Amazed that the Golden Egg had stopped bleeding. And confused because again their fantastic plans fell apart.

Expectations. What are expectations? Are they possibilities to aim for? They learned again that they don't know everything. There might be directions, plans, convictions, but they are only guidelines on the road to travel. The point on the horizon may never become stable.

For hours they walked the streets of Chartres, searching for answers, searching for another place that invited them to break the Golden Egg. Inside they both knew that that was not going to happen, but they needed to find themselves again in the knowledge of not knowing and accepting that they had no clue.

So they walked and digested, wondering what to do now.

When night fell, we returned to our Airbnb, the place we had specially booked because it had a cooker to melt the broken eggshells. But the Egg was still intact, in fact in better condition than it ever had been. When we tried to warm up some soup, we found out that the stove didn't work...It was never meant to be.

Tomorrow our journey home would continue, but we had no clue where to go next with Egg and our time was running out. We were devastated that our plan failed again. We decided to just go. Take the route straight North, avoiding highways, and maybe if we were to drive through villages and towns, we would get fresh ideas or signs...

The chosen ones decided to let go of expectations. To just see what happens. They would let the Egg lead them. Or in this case the electronic navigator, Tomtom. They had set off to a town a few hours away and made sure to avoid highways. It was raining, and heavy clouds were following them on their journey. They passed many villages, many roundabouts, many possibilities to break the Egg. They didn't stop, they saw no signs.

Somewhere that day the Tomtom started to play tricks with us. The town that we were heading for was clearly pointed out on a road sign but Tom had decided another route. Now what? Was it a sign? Eager for any hint, or any symbol that would tell us something, we decided we would follow whatever thread we found and we would now give ourselves and Egg to the Tom. Who knew what that would bring us.

So we drove with Tom as captain. Over small country roads, on roads that were not suitable for cars, through tiny villages, forests, past old churches, big supermarkets and still many more roundabouts. We started to see eggs everywhere. Buildings that were egg-shaped, advertisements with egg shapes, words with egg in it... Were we getting obsessed?

At some point there were road signs with eggs in it everywhere. It must be the logo of this county, we thought. The road was very wobbly but we agreed with Tom as we seemed to be on our way to Egg county.

In one of the villages we drove through we saw a beautiful church, it looked like Chartres Cathedral, but a smaller version. Maybe that was it? A beautiful cathedral in the same style as the one in Chartres, but this time without tourists and souvenir shops. It was surrounded by trees and shrubs. Here it was quiet and calm... We took some pictures of Egg in front of the amazing church door. It was locked. There was nobody there. A silent Church in the middle of Egg county. We walked around the church. We wanted to go clockwise, but a big fence stopped us. We had to go widdershins instead. Maybe something would happen...but nothing happened. This was not it... again. We went back to the car, wet and cold. And drove on.

More villages. More rain. Tom directed us. We just followed. At a roundabout at the end of a small village, the egg road signs suddenly pointed in the opposite direction than we had been going. We decided that before we would leave Egg county, we would need to take a picture of Egg with the egg road sign. And so we did. That's all we could think of. We didn't feel that this Egglan was the place to break Egg and we were starting to wonder if Egg would want to break at all.

We got back into the car and started the engine. It was not until then that we realised that Tom told us to go back, back to the main road, close to where they had started. We were puzzled. Why it had sent us into this Egglan and then back again? Were we supposed to go there to take the picture of the Egg next to the sign? Or did we do something else of importance that made Tom change its mind about the route? We had no clue what had just happened.

They drove away a bit confused...on to bigger roads, eventually back on the toll roads.

By then the mood had changed. They felt they were running out of time to complete their mission. Lost for words, and lost in thoughts, they each sat in their own side of the car, that had slowly been piling up with litter. And it never stopped raining.

The road signs kept mentioning the distance to my hometown, and the goddamn egg was still uncracked. What had we gotten ourselves into? What were we gonna do? We can't just smash the Egg somewhere along the road. But then what else? Had we missed a sign along the way? Had we already failed our mission?

We were desperately looking for places and ways to open the Egg with some dignity, but couldn't come up with anything. Our last hope was set on the Storytelling festival that had its last day that day. Perhaps we could tell our story there, and find the help of others to finish the Golden Egg prophecy? But none of our contacts answered the phone, nor messenger...

And then it was too late...Our journey had finished.

The chosen ones arrived at the mansion of the cook with a restless feeling. They had been on the road together for a long time. And they had been on a mission together. It awakened something inside them. Something old and familiar, something that had woven them together again and again.

Separating our belongings from the car into 'mine' and 'hers' felt alienating.

And then there was the matter of the Golden Egg... where was Egg going to go?

It couldn't just end here?

We tried to prepare ourselves for, or maybe distract ourselves from, the inevitable goodbye. We both felt that this goodbye would not just separate us from each other, but also separate us from our uncompleted mission with Egg.

During our last coffee together, we spoke about writing down the story of the Golden Egg, at least what happened until that moment. By now, many old and new friends had heard a variety of stories about the Golden Egg's journey and wanted to find out how it ended. But first of all, the story had to be written for ourselves. As a way to remind us of all that had happened, and to plan our next steps. It was already clear by then that the three of us would continue our journey.

Although the aims of their mission had been unclear from the start and had shifted multiple times, they embraced the uncertainties that laid before them. It had spurred a playful creativity, and gave them freedom and belief that anything is possible. They had been put to the test, had faced disappointment, but continued seeing sparks in others, from the past and the future, and trusted that together they will figure it out somehow. They are on the right path, without knowing why. The three of them are destined to fulfil their mission. They just have no idea how...

Telling the story keeps us from being absorbed too much by the responsibilities of our mundane existence. It gives meaning to what we are doing when things are less clear. Collaged recollections are a way to stay open to all possibilities, as we let our story unfold, step by step. As many have done before us, and many yet will.

And the Golden Egg?

If the prophecy was an invitation to engage with the idea and the experience that everything is connected and that anything is possible until it's realised, then this road trip was just the beginning of Egg's journey, and ours. And maybe yours as well.