

# A Tale of Two Times

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.*  
—Charles Dickens

Once upon a time.  
Up until this time.  
For the time being.  
Time and time again.  
All in good time.  
Time's up!

Since the dawn of Time, we've tried to understand her nature. Why? In order to control her. But time is a holy mystery, an extravagant gift meant to be experienced, not understood. Certainly not controlled. Why do you think we're crazed half the time?

Time's mystery is difficult for most women and men to appreciate because we've so little of it. Although we've all be allotted twenty-four hours each day, it doesn't seem to go very far. So if we experience anything at all, it's dread, because we keep running out of time. Again and again. And it doesn't matter what *kind* of time it is—Greenwich, daylight saving, standard, eastern, mountain, central, or pacific. All that matters is we never seem to have enough of it. Which is why all the people I know constantly feel time-worn.

For centuries those with time on their hands—saints, poets, mystics, masters, sages, and philosophers—have pondered time's enigma. They've discovered her duality. As the sculptor and poet Henry Van Dyke explains: "time is/Too slow for those who Wait/Too swift for those who fear/Too long for those who grieve/Too short for those who Rejoice . . ." Slow and swift are time's parallel realities, the yin and yang of existence.

In order to know a semblance of serenity during the days of our lives, we also need to discover Time's twin nature, which the ancient Greeks called *chronos* and *kairos*.

*Chronos* is clocks, deadlines, watches, calendars, agendas, planners, schedules, beepers. Chronos is time at her worst. Chronos keeps track. Chronos is a delusion of grandeur. Chronos is running the Marine Corps marathon in heels. In chronos we think only of ourselves. Chronos is the world's time.

*Kairos* is transcendence, infinity, reverence, joy, passion, love, the Sacred. Kairos is intimacy with the Real. Kairos is time at her best. Kairos lets go. In Kairos we escape the dungeon of self. Kairos is a Schubert waltz in nineteenth-century Vienna with your soul mate. Kairos is a Spirit's time.

We exist in chronos. We long for Kairos. That's *our* duality. Chronos requires speed so that it won't be wasted. Kairos requires space so that it might be savored. *We do* in chronos. In kairos we're allowed *to be*.

We think we've never known Kairos, but we have: when making love, when meditating or praying, when lost in music's rapture or literature's reverie, when planting bulbs or pulling weeds, when watching over a sleeping child, when reading the Sunday comics together in bed, when delighting in a sunset, when exulting in our passions. We know joy in Kairos, glimpse beauty in Kairos, remember what it means to be alive in Kairos, reconnect with our Divinity in Kairos.

So how do we exchange chronos for kairos?

By slowing down.

By concentrating on one thing at a time.

By going about whatever we are doing as if it were the only thing worth doing at that moment.

By pretending we have all the time in the world, so that our subconscious will kick in and make it so.

By making time.

By taking time.

It only takes a moment to cross over from chronos into kairos, but it does take *a moment*. All that kairos asks is our willingness to stop running long enough to hear the music of the spheres.

Today, be willing to join in the dance.

Now you're in kairos.