

# BEHOLD NOW

Lynn Edith Paulson, PhD

*The woman who does not require  
validation from anyone  
is the most feared individual  
on the planet.*

– Mohadesa Najumi

*Be Her Now.*

– Lynn Edith Paulson

*The idea for this book began a dozen years ago when even I, who had spent the previous dozen years working on external barriers to women's equality, had to admit there were internal ones, too ...*

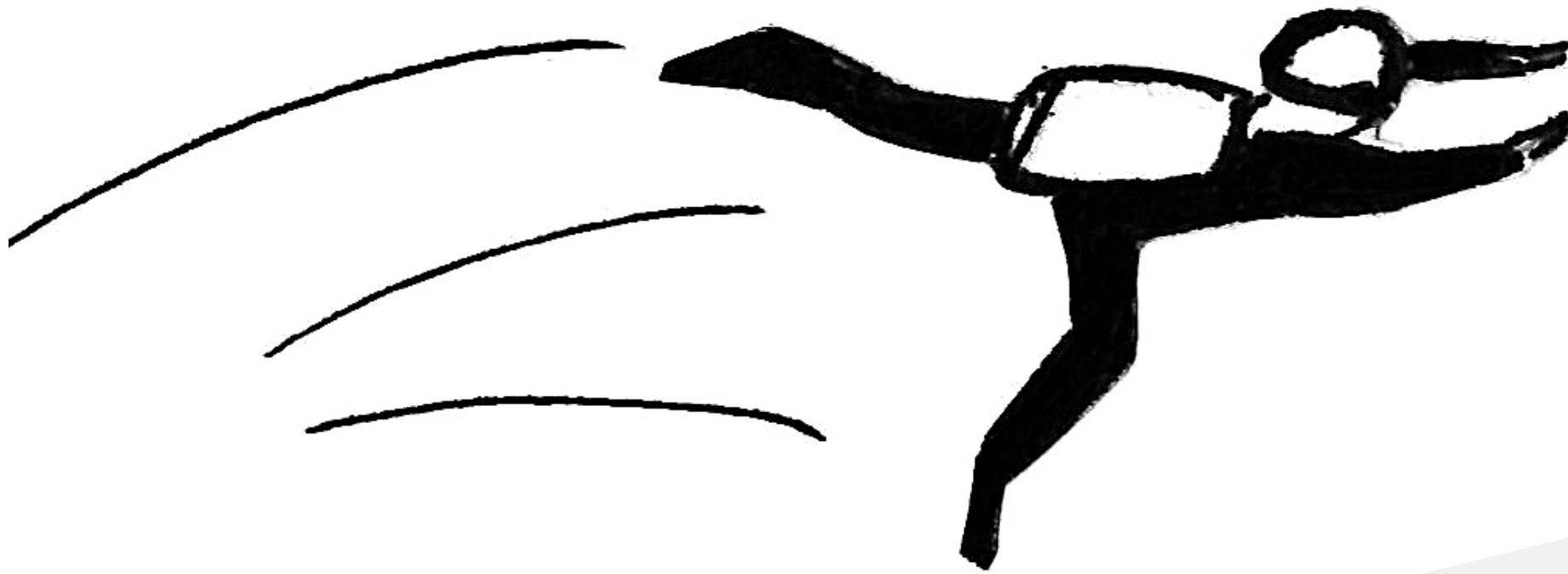
– Gloria Steinem, *Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem*



# INTRODUCTION

*A few years ago, I did a mad thing ...*

I base-jumped out of a comfortable, middle-class, home-owning life, leaving over 20 years of a successful, professional career behind me. I left steady work at a decent wage that did more than sustain me. I left a job that came with good benefits. I left a job that came with more freedom and ownership of my time than most people will ever have in their entire professional lives. More than that?



I left a job that I *liked*.  
With *colleagues* I liked.  
With colleagues I *respected*.  
When the economy was in the toilet.

**WTF, right???**



But wait—  
There's more!!!

Not only did I quit my job, I left a marriage that wasn't working. I gave away, donated or sold almost everything I owned, including my house.

I left town.

It was nothing less than my mother's worst nightmare and in my imagination I could hear her howling at me from beyond the grave ...

ARE YOU INSANE??!!!  
ANY MINUTE NOW YOU ARE GOING  
TO BE DESTITUTE, STUMBLING DOWN A HALLWAY  
IN SOME FLOPHOUSE WITH NEEDLE MARKS ON YOUR  
ARMS AND CHIPPED NAIL POLISH AND DARK ROOTS SHOWING  
IN YOUR RATTY, OVER-PROCESSED, HAIR, WEARING A DIRTY  
SLIP AND NO UNDERPANTS. ALL YOUR MONEY WILL BE GONE.  
GONE! SPENT ON LIPSTICK, GIN AND ABORTIONS. FOR GOD'S  
SAKE, DON'T DO THIS! DON'T BE IMPULSIVE!  
BE SENSIBLE!

And yes, for  
your information, I  
did get into Heaven.



The madness had actually started a few years earlier, on my birthday. That night, I scribbled the following sentence at the top of a clean page in my journal:





I was so surprised that I stopped writing and sat back to contemplate the ten words that had seemingly bubbled up from my unconscious, unbidden, and worked their way onto the page from the pen in my hand:

From now on I will live and speak my truth?

What *was* my truth? And what exactly had I *been* doing?

To be honest, that wasn't an especially difficult question to answer. Like many women I knew, what I genuinely thought, how I truly felt and what I really wanted were not always reflected directly, or even reliably, in what I said or did.

**I wanted people to like me.  
I didn't want to make them angry.  
I didn't want them to judge or reject me.**

This compelled me to hide or distort my truth and misrepresent myself in various ways in order to maintain their approval and good will.

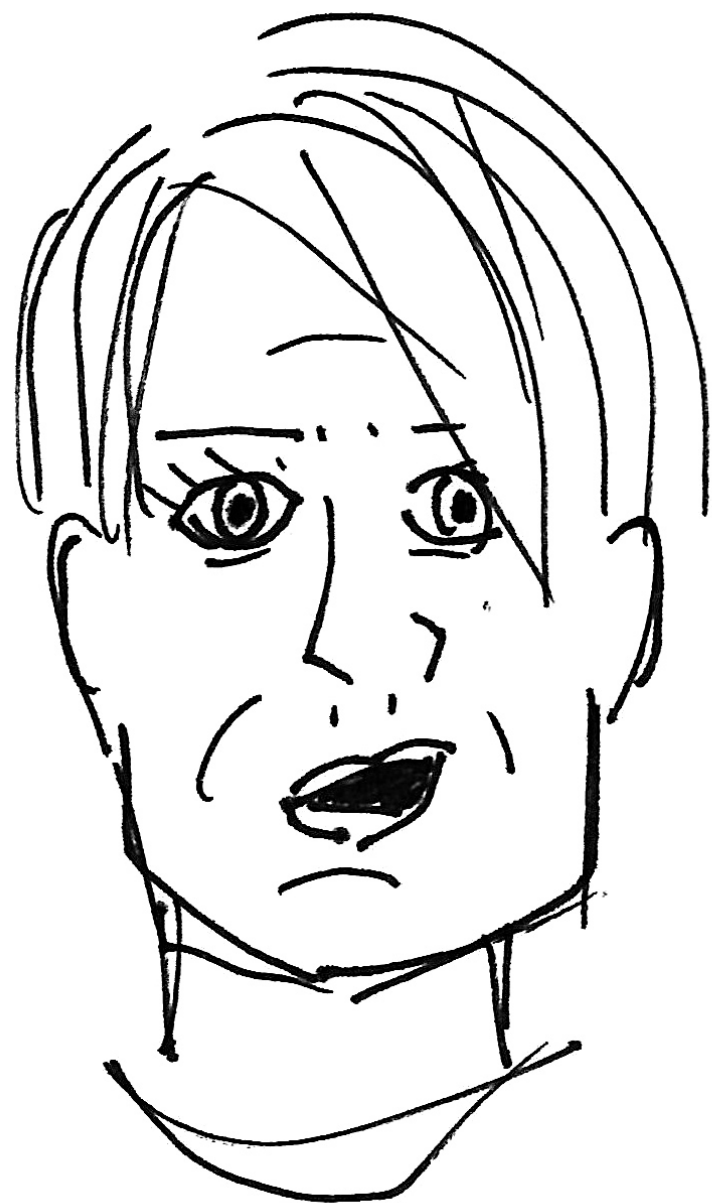


— Like you've never done that...

Oh, sure, I spoke loudly and with confidence, yes. To all appearances, I seemed forthright, independent and self-assured. Brash, even. That's certainly how most people would have described me.

Truthfully, I was a pleaser. And if I took an honest look at my life, the evidence was all around me:

Two injudicious marriages. The job I loved was turning into an unchallenging routine. I spent way too much time doing things I didn't want with people I didn't like.



Did I mention  
I was eating pain-killers  
— like Pez?

I knew my life had been built upon the choices I'd made over the years, but that night I recognized that some of those choices were based to a degree I could not ignore on my need for approval and positive regard from other people. As successful as my life appeared to be by any ordinary standards, and as much as it had satisfied me for many years, it had begun to feel like a cage in which I could no longer stand up.



**My TRUTH?**



— I'm depressed.  
I feel trapped.  
I want out!

Immediately, I could hear the shrill voice of that bitch, Convention, making her way down the hallway in my head in her sensible shoes, shaking a finger at me and mocking me with that scornful question:



Just who  
the hell do you  
think you  
are ??!!

Even though it was a rhetorical question, intended to shame and scare me into staying right where I was and sticking things out, I realized I had a choice:

Give Convention  
the finger  
and bounce?



Roll over?  
Do what's expected?

Leaving behind the security of the life I had, especially as the economy was tanking, was risky. I knew that people would judge me insane, stupid or both. But I decided that night that whatever was left of my life belonged to me.



— Fuck 'em.

Instead of being controlled by my fears, I decided to listen to my heart. I would follow the directive of my journal – living and speaking my truth – and pay close attention to what happened when I didn't. I would find the courage to go ahead and answer that question –

**JUST WHO THE HELL  
DO I THINK I AM?**

– in earnest.





SHiiiiit

It was the best birthday present I ever gave myself.

It also scared the shit out of me.

(But I went ahead and did it anyway.)

I wrote Be Her Now because way too often, due to fear, insecurity, our need to please and all the other pressures of our social programming, **She**, the almighty woman we are inside, and the woman we present to the world are not the same person.

Be Her Now is about loving **Her** fiercely and being **Her** without apology. Being Her Now is about bringing all Her game to the table because this is key to the most meaningful and satisfying life possible, to being more effective in, and of greater service to, the world.

Creating this book was a much more challenging task than I ever imagined, not least of all because I wrote *Be Her Now* while I was in the midst of learning how to do it.

And FYI? The learning never stops.

(More about that later.)

I'm making no claim here to speak for all women in this book. *Be Her Now* is written with my most affluent sisters in mind, we privileged women here in America and the other gated communities of the industrialized world who have access to books, the money to buy them and the time to read them.

I wrote Be Her Now for those of us who enjoy freedom and distance from warfare, persecution, poverty and the immediate threats to survival like a lack of food, clean water, shelter and medical care.

I wrote Be Her Now for those of us who aren't living where violence toward females is openly sanctioned and practiced or where females are denied a basic education as a matter of cultural practice and tradition.

I wrote Be Her Now for my friends, my clients, my students, for all of us who, by reason of our immense good fortune, opportunities and resources, bear the greatest responsibility for advancing the cause of freedom for women everywhere.





## *Where do we begin?*

By slipping the collar and leash we've put around our own necks.

My goal is to convince you  
that this is a good idea.

That it's not only necessary.

***It's urgent.***



OINK  
OINK  
OINK  
OINK  
OINK

I'm not assuming here that the experience of being female is the same for all of us. Class, race, nationality, sexuality and a multitude of other differences shape our lives in distinct and significant ways. Be Her Now focuses on the social conditioning we share as females and the way it hides inside our heads, telling us to shut up and behave ourselves and pretend to be someone we're not.

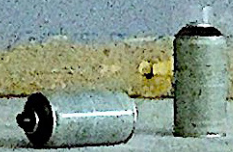
Our Feminist Foremothers unlocked the door to the social and political freedoms you and I enjoy today. But even now, even here, we can't take those freedoms for granted. Each woman still has to choose for herself to walk through that door, living and speaking her truth.

As simple as that sounds, you and I both know it can be one of the most frightening, radical, outrageous and provocative things any of us can do. It is nothing less than a political act with profound personal implications. It requires courage and a commitment to overcome a lifetime of brainwashing.



**IT  
CAN  
ALSO  
BE  
FUN!**

**BETTER  
NOW**





I wrote this book to encourage you to do exactly that. To open that door, to walk through it and to claim authority over your own life by embracing – without shame or hesitation – the woman you are and were always meant to be, and to **BE HER NOW.**

LEP  
Anchorage, Alaska