

# TRUSTING *the* GOLD

UNCOVERING YOUR NATURAL GOODNESS

TARA BRACH

Illustrations by Vicky Alvarez



# CONTENTS

An Opening Invitation 1

## TRUTH



Our Basic Goodness	11
What Is Good Enough?	12
Thank You for Everything	14
The Second Arrow	15
Resisting the Demons	18
This Too	21
Newspaper Meditation	23
Meet Your Edge and Soften	27
The Gift of a Failed Strategy	29
From White Guilt to Heartbreak	32
Speaking and Receiving Difficult Truths	39
Not a Problem	43
Thank You, Siri	45
What You Practice Grows Stronger	49
Real but Not True	51
Sacred Presence	52
Every Day, No Matter What	53



# LOVE



Love Is Always Loving You	59
Loving Ourselves into Healing	63
The Boundary of Our Freedom	67
Living True to Ourselves	70
Please, May I Be Kind	75
Narayan's Ant Farm	78
We Are Friends	81
Reverence for Life	84
Our Secret Beauty	89
The Bridge Between Longing and Belonging	92
Keeping Company with Grief	95
Our World's Fear	98
Loving Life No Matter What	103

# FREEDOM



Two Wings	109
A Sunlit Sky	111
“This Is It”	114
Remembering the Way Home	115
Surrendering Again and Again	118
Touching Presence	125
Saying Yes	126
The Unreal Other	129
The Vast Sky of Awareness	132
Seeing Behind the Mask	135
“I’m an Undo”	139
Is This Universe a Friendly Place?	140
A Prayer for Mia	144
Happy for No Reason	145
The Lion’s Roar	150
These Precious Moments	151
Standing Still	153
Our True Home	155
A Heart Ready for Anything	157
The Fragrance of Awareness	158
Truth or Love?	161
Acknowledgments	165
Notes	167
About the Author	171
About the Illustrator	173



## AN OPENING INVITATION

For decades a prayer has circulated in the background of my daily life: May I trust my own goodness. May I see the goodness in others. This longing emerged from a deep place of suffering I went through as a young adult. During that dark time, I felt anxious and depressed, separate from the world around me. I was continually judging myself as falling short, not good enough, doubting my basic worth. That of course kept me from feeling close and connected to others and to the world. It blocked me from feeling creative, stopped me from being fully alive.

It feels like grace that this “trance of unworthiness” led me onto a spiritual path that showed me how to hold myself with compassion. This allowed me to see through the layers of judgment and doubt

and to discover beneath them clarity, openness, presence, and love. Increasingly over the years, my trust in this loving awareness as the essence of who we all are has become a guiding light. No matter how wrong or lacking we may feel, how caught in separation, or how trapped by the messages, violations, and inequities of the society we live in, this basic goodness remains the essence of our Being.

A beautiful story holds within it this truth. During the mid-1950s in Bangkok, Thailand, a huge clay statue of the Buddha began to crack due to heat and drought. When some monks arrived to investigate, they shined a flashlight into the largest of the cracks. What they saw surprised everyone. Deep under the gray clay was the gleam of gold.

No one had known that inside this popular but ordinary-looking statue was a solid-gold Buddha. As it turns out, the statue had been covered with plaster and clay six hundred years earlier to protect it from invading armies. Although all the monks who lived in the monastery at that time had been killed in the attack, the golden Buddha, its beauty and value covered over, had survived untouched.

Just as the monks disguised the beauty of the golden Buddha in order to protect it during dangerous



times, we cover our own innate purity and goodness as we encounter a challenging world. As children many of us were criticized, ignored, misunderstood, or abused, leading us to doubt that gold within us. As we grow up, we increasingly internalize the judgments and values of our society, further losing touch with our innocence, our creativity, and our tender hearts. We cover over the gold as we seek the approval of others, looking to them to measure our worth—to determine whether we are good enough, smart enough, successful enough. And if we are part of a nondominant group in our culture, we take on additional layers of protection to help us face the violence of social injustice and oppression.

Adding layer after layer to protect ourselves, we become identified with our coverings, believing ourselves to be separate, threatened, and deficient. Yet even when we cannot see the gold, the light and love of our true nature cannot be dimmed, tarnished, or erased. It calls to us daily through our longing for connection, our urge to understand reality, our delight in beauty, our natural desire to help others. Our deepest intuition is that there is something beyond our habitual story of a separate and isolated self: something vast, mysterious, and sacred.

What helps us uncover that gold? How can we learn to trust the pure awareness and love, the basic goodness that is our very essence? How can our lives be an active expression of our natural wisdom and kindness? And how can we respond with a wise heart to the human ignorance, greed, and hatred that perpetuates violence toward each other, racial and other caste systems, cruelty toward non-human animals, and destruction of our living Earth? These questions have shaped my spiritual path, and in *Trusting the Gold* I share my own challenges and discoveries in stories that I hope you'll find meaningful on your path as well.

The three sections of *Trusting the Gold*—Truth, Love, and Freedom—explore the basic teachings of the Buddha that awaken us to who we are. We begin with learning to recognize the Truth of our experience by opening to life, just as it is. Then we discover how to awaken our inherent capacity to meet this ever-changing life with Love. This unfolding of presence and love reveals the Freedom of our true nature. You might find it beneficial to follow the sequence of these teachings by reading the book from beginning to end. But because the teachings are so interwoven, you might also open the book



randomly to discover what, in any given moment, might bring some illumination into your life.

Some of the stories here are accompanied by an invitation to pause, reflect, and allow your own wisdom and understanding to awaken. These moments of going beyond the words and coming home to presence are the gateway to all true healing and freedom.

Even though the gold of your true nature can get buried beneath fear, uncertainty, and confusion, the more you trust this loving presence as the truth of who you are, the more fully you will call it forth in yourself and in all those you touch. And in our communities, as we humans increasingly remember that gold, we'll treat each other and all beings with a growing reverence and love.







*May we trust and live from the purity of  
our boundless, radiant heart.*

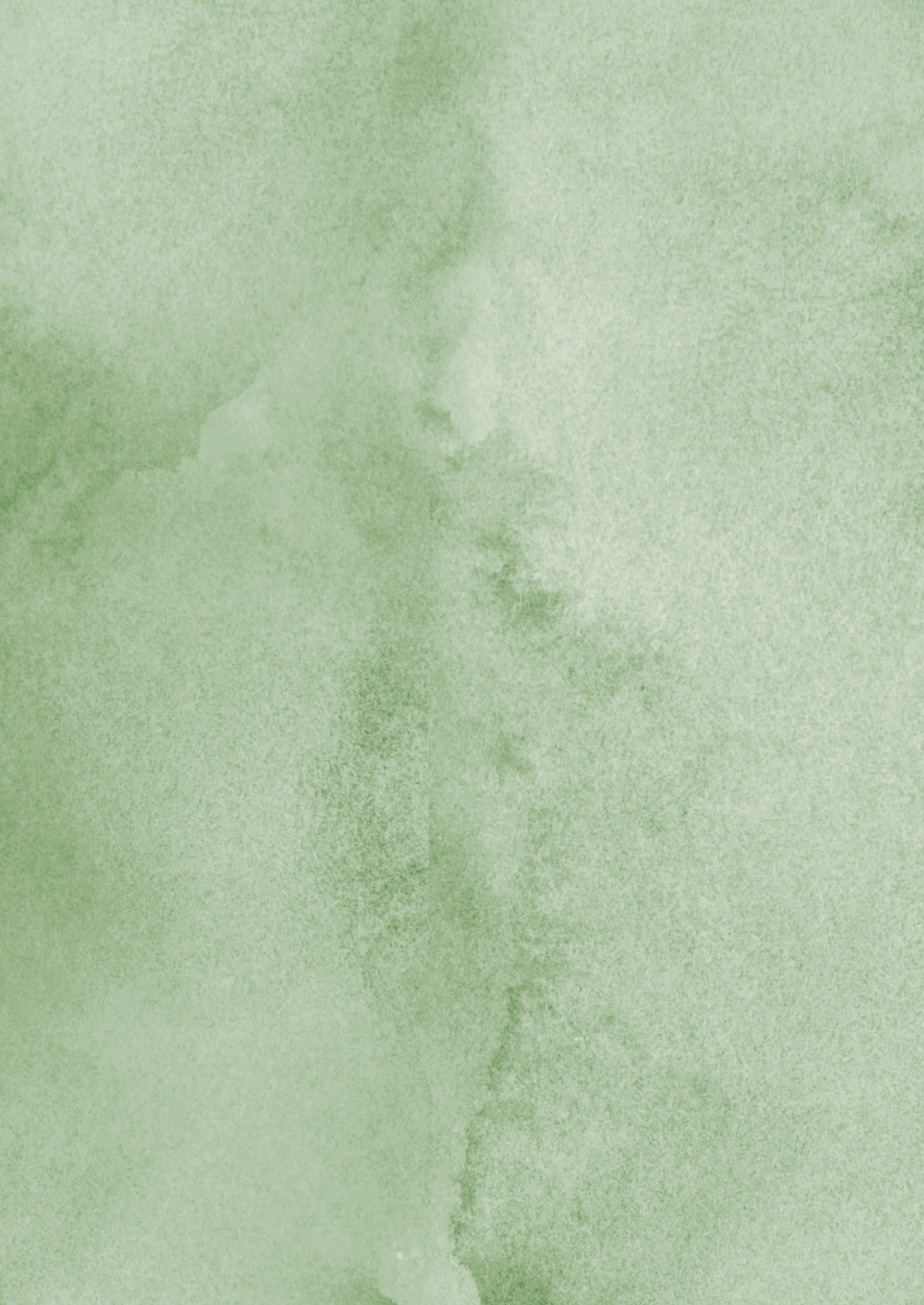
*And may we hold hands as we awaken together,  
bringing our shared caring*

*to this precious, troubled, mysterious,  
and beautiful world.*

With loving blessings,

Tann







SECTION ONE

# TRUTH



