

MUSINGS

Sea men's secret

Rx

rx@floridaweekly.com



It is no secret that one of my favorite stories is "Night Sea Journey" by John Barth. In this tale, the philosophically inclined narrator is on his dark watery voyage, driven by love to an other shore. This pirate is looking for a mysterious being who is wholly different and yet perfectly complementary. When he finds her, he will certainly lose his very self, la petite morte, plunging into her.

Of his voyage, both path and destiny, he is completely certain. Certainty is perfect knowledge, total security, doubtless, and free from error. The certain etymology is from the Latin *cernere*, which means to sift and sort out what is useful and valuable. The certain is sorted, wheat from chaff, clear and chosen.

Our night sojourner clearly, certainly, knows he is en route to her. But she in her very essence is the ever secret treasure. I think she can best be identified via a koan given to me by a salty mentor. This secret koan riddle might defy identification: "A box without handle, key, or lid; yet, golden treasure inside is hid."

Give up? Are you certain?

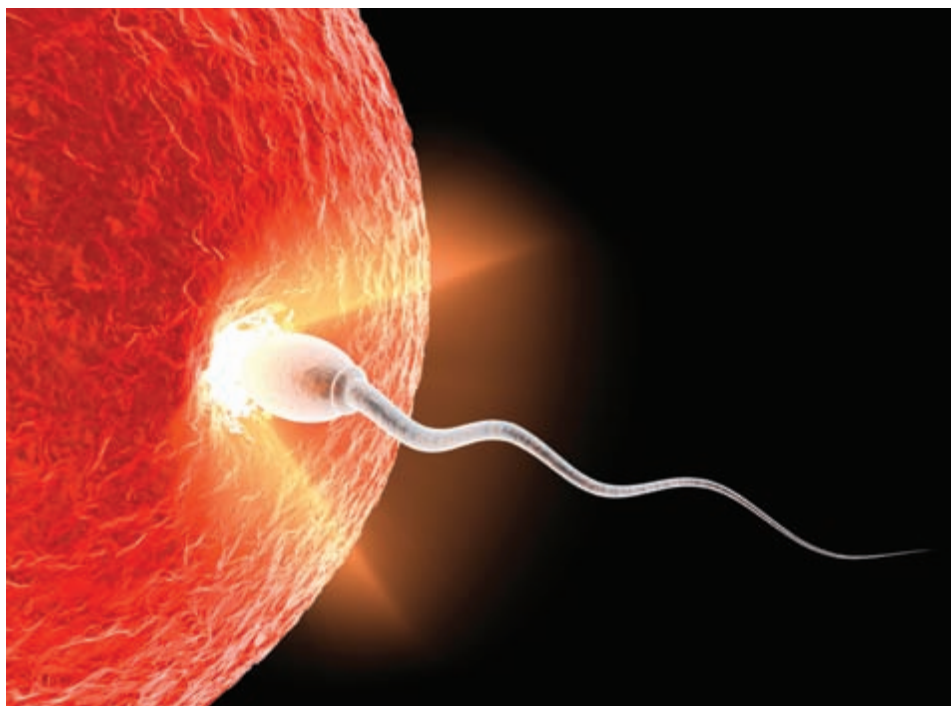
The word "certain" shares its etymological root with the word "secret." Secret has the prefix *se*, which means "apart," added to the certain root we discussed above. In secret, that which is certainly sorted out is set apart, relegated to the hidden separate place.

The certain night sojourner travels toward the secret she. And in the course of Barth's story, we discover that this traveler is a sperm cell racing toward his immersion into the secret koan riddle subject, the egg.

The certain sperm traveler has the goal sorted, clearly chosen. He knows the pragmatic, and translates that into action. It is his uncanny arrival at his certain destiny, the height of his clarity of purpose, that is his undoing. It is his most certainly necessary arrival at the secret egg destination that ultimately separates him from his certainty. He is plunged into, he is apart, separated from the original essence of his discrete self into a merger beyond his wildest dreams.

His greatest certainty is his melting into her secret groundlessness.

Amazingly, this is the human essence, the origin. This narrative is more than mere story. It is one telling of the endlessly repeating, mysterious union of opposites that is the essence of all birthings. We can experience this in the day to day of our lives as little breaths of creative fresh air that enliven us.



And we can experience it as the terror of collapse of the ground of our meaning. Both perspectives are certainly, secretly, true.

Joseph Campbell says it well: "It is by going into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure."

Our sea-men journey inexorably toward the treasure. Manifestation is inevitable. But to see it, the treasure itself, we must stop staring at the certain clarity of the map. We must make the plunge into the secret treasure itself, unafraid of loss, certain only in the hope of the journey that continually promises the unfolding secret arrival.

The sea men's blissful secret is unknown. And even she, in her wisdom, speaks it not. This truest, most certain bit of piracy is the essence of our secret being, right from the very beginning. To be certainly secret and secretly certain pirates, we need only awaken to it. ■

— Rx is the FloridaWeekly muse who hopes to inspire profound mutiny in all those who care to read. Our Rx may be wearing a pirate cloak of invisibility, but emanating from within this shadow is hope that readers will feel free to respond. Who knows: You may even inspire the muse. Make contact if you dare.

THE WIZARD OF ARTS

Sponsored in part by:
VISITFLORIDA
www.VISITFLORIDA.com

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center
presents
The 4th Annual Gala Fundraiser
Saturday, November 1, 2008 • 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Grab your Ruby Slippers and travel the yellow brick road to our Emerald City, The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center. Broadway performances by stars from the show "Wicked", a delicious seated dinner, and a silent art auction featuring fine art from around the world, will create an event you wont want to miss.

This year's Gala is dedicated to **Robert Rauschenberg** (1925-2008) our very own "Wizard" of Southwest Florida Arts. The money raised will help us continue the final phases of construction to this historic gem in downtown Fort Myers.

Visit www.Wizard2008.com or call 239-333-1933 for details and tickets.
Individual tickets are \$250. Seating is limited. Evening attire, but costumes are encouraged.