

## Gabriella Daughter of God

What would it take to change a people? A people who had grown cold with fear and oppressed by a tyranny of the spirit and for whom conformity was glorified and all differences reviled. For them, there was only one way of truth—the Law, and the people lived in strict adherence to it and to the absolute power of the High Priest who presided over them.

This is the mythical story of a remarkable girl-child, whose birth was kept secret from the authorities by both midwife and mother for fear of the ultimate penalty that would be wreaked upon them if the truth became known; for she was born with only one arm, a horrible lump of disfigured skin, where the other ought to have been. And such deformity was an abomination to the Law. Despite their careful plan to protect the child, all is discovered, but Gabriella and her mother are ultimately saved from death by the sacrifice of the midwife, who is burnt at the stake, in front of a vengeful crowd. But her death is no ordinary death, as the sudden arrival of a mysterious grey owl, the same owl that heralded Gabriella's birth, marks the beginning of change for the people of the land.

Gabriella and her mother find, in quite frightening ways, that they are no longer welcomed by their community and in order to keep them safe, the mother leaves the only home she knows, in search of another. This journey leads them across a wide ravine, away from the Land, to a tiny cottage tucked far away within the woods of a safer place. Here they find peace and all seems well, until, years later, she and her mother are discovered and are forced to flee for their lives. Together they are swept into the flooded River of Dreams as it is the only way to escape a ruthless gang of men, from the Land, who are intent upon their destruction and both would have drowned in its icy waters but for the heroism of Middenight their black-coated dog, Gabriella's first friend. But for Gabriella, this is just the beginning of a very solitary journey, for not only is Middenight swept away by the River, but her mother soon succumbs from exhaustion and cold. Alone, for the first time in her life, Gabriella finds herself stranded at the base of the forbidden Mountain of Remembrance without hope of return.

She falls asleep, weary to the bone, but her rest is interrupted by a remarkable dream; a dream in which she climbs a rainbow coloured ladder from the base of the Mountain up to the very summit, where a cave, filled with treasures, awaits her arrival. Her Mother's voice calls to her from within the cave saying, 'Come. Come. Here you shall find your gift. Come to the cave at the summit of the Mountain of Remembrance. She wakes with a start to find she is still at the foot of the Mountain, but is now completely committed to reaching the summit. As she begins her journey, she is aided on her way by the magnificent grey owl. With only the memory of the dream and the love of her Mother and Middenight to spur her on, she encounters a strange and mysterious landscape, replete with enormous waterfalls, forests, lakes and all manner of living things, and as she goes forward she faces six enormous challenges that test her to her limits and ultimately teach her lessons of courage and truth, wisdom and love, expression and compassion. With each new discovery, she receives a gift of a brilliant touch-stone to mark the lesson. And as she continues on her path, she uncovers the mystery of what had happened on the Mountain so very long ago. When Gabriella ultimately

finds herself confronted with the most gruelling test of all, she, at last, becomes true to her highest calling and the lessons that she has learned, along the way, open the door to a new and profound understanding of her Self and her world. In her heroic journey towards the Self, she finds wholeness and in that, comes true freedom.

Drawing on the concept of Carl Jung's collective unconscious, Joseph Campbell's comparative mythology, Robert Johnson's wisdom on symbol and dream and utterly informed by the mystical traditions hidden within all the major religions, while at the same time, deeply honouring the ancient healing traditions of both Eastern and Western cultures, the story seeks to celebrate that which unites, rather than divides, that which heals rather than harms, that which draws us away from the Darkness of prejudice and towards the Light.

What will it take to change a people? A truly authentic daughter of God.