

Awaken Your Inner Wisdom Podcast

with
Cissi Williams



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Descent and Rising

with Carly Mountain



HI, AND WELCOME TO AWAKEN YOUR INNER WISDOM. I'm Cissi Williams and in this interview, you'll meet Carly Mountain, who is a psychotherapist, women's initiatory guide and writer. She's written the amazing book, "Descent and Rising: Women's Stories and the Embodiment of the Inanna Myth". And in this interview, she shares with us how the ancient myth of Inanna, the Queen of Heaven, and her dark sister Ereshkigal, provides us with a map for our own healing journey. So, let's head over to this interview now with the amazing Carly Mountain.

Cissi:



Hi Carly, thank you so much for coming, and I'm delighted to have you here with us today, and I'm going to love the topic we're going to dive into, which is all about Inanna. So, thank you so much for coming.

Carly:

00:50 Oh, thank you very much for inviting me.



Cissi:



You have written an amazing book called, "Descent and Rising" and it's all about the Inanna Myth, and I love, love, love, love the Inanna Myth. So, first of all, I was quite intrigued to read in your book the difference of the hero's journey and the heroine's journey, so could you clarify that for our listeners, please.

Carly:

So, the hero's journey tends to be a journey where the hero puts on armour and leaves the village and goes out into the world on a heroic quest. Whereas the heroine's journey is the opposite, and particularly in the Inanna myth, the heroine actually goes down into herself and into the underworld, and actually takes off the layers until she becomes naked. So rather than being an outward quest, it's very much an inward, downward into the dark, into the layers of our lives and our embodied subconscious. So it's a very different pathway. And whilst the hero definitely meets lots of things in his subconscious, the heroine's journey is very much an interior journey.



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



Cissi:

02:10



Yeah, beautiful, beautiful. Then what comes to my mind is like the hero's journey, is like a journey of the mind and the heroine's journey is whenever it is that she calls us to journey down, it's very much a journey of the feminine, of journeying into, that's at least how I experienced it, to journey into that deeper mythical realm of the soul, of the feminine. Rather than with a mind, in that way the mind couldn't come with me on that journey, had to surrender, had to release its hold on me. So, thank you for explaining that so beautifully. Because I think that's something that as women we have missed, you know, a map for us to follow when we actually get these really strong calls from the underworld as the Inanna Myth from the great below, she hears the call. And we've all heard that call. We've all felt it, but there is no map for us to follow. So could you share the map of the Inanna Myth and how we can actually help us to make that beautiful journey of descent where we come to the dark womb of the Dark Mothers, so we can be reborn. But we can't go there with a head going, "yes, I'm gonna go in on a quest to be reborn," it's not that type of journey. So please, share with us that.

Carly:

Yeah, and it's interesting, as I was hearing you speak to that, I think a lot of times when the sort of Hollywood films and the modern-day portrayal tries to speak to a female journey, they just put a female in male shoes. Yeah. Just repeat the same thing. But in the hero's journey, Sharon Blackie talks about how it used to be, it used to be that even the hero would have to go down into relationship and ask what they call the compassionate question, which is, "what ails thee?" And I think that this is very much the journey of the feminine and I think both the hero and heroines journey used to include the feminine. The oldest thing I think, it's been the hero's journey has been sort of stripped down and down and down to be more and more light and linear over time.



Cissi:

04:27



It's more Western really. Yeah, because in the Norse Myths, that Hero's Journey follows a similar formula with that the hero sets off on a quest and the hero then is masculine, represents the mind. The Norse scholar Maria Kvilhaug, she's beautiful with this, she really decodes the Norse myths. And he sets off on a quest down into the lower world to meet the goddess, meet the feminine because she's the soul. The feminine is the soul and the golden mead is the golden essence, the magic and the light of the feminine, that he's always looking for, searching for, hungry for. So, it is

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



following that, that they have to descend. So, it's so interesting that you mentioned that later with the Western mind that was just stripped bare, like everything in the western society of the feminine was stripped away. So instead, we're just left with that linear path.

Carly:

05:19

Yes, but the difference is with Inanna, so the map of the Inanna myth really gives us the embodied descent. And so, Jungian analyst Sylvia Brinton Perera was the first person that I came across who was writing about the seven gates down to the underworld, corresponding with seven chakra points of the body. So the crown, the third eye, the throat, the heart, the solar plexus, the womb, and the root. And I really just...everything in my body just kind of, um, I was so hungry for it, because I think that's what I'd been going through, but I didn't have a map. So the heroines journey, the other thing I love about the Inanna Myth is that she chooses to descend, she chooses to descend, because like you were just saying so beautifully, she could hear a moan and a call from inside of her that was undeniable. And that moan and that call was actually from her dark sister Ereshkigal, who is Queen of the underworld.



So when Inanna as Queen of the upper world, this heavenly goddess goes down to be reunited with her dark sister who's been in exile for eternity. And, in order to do that, she has to go down through seven gates. And at each of the seven gates she stripped, and I go in great detail in the book, the majority, the belly of my book is about the seven gates because for me, there's so much in there about how we are stripped in these descent journeys of our ideas, ideals, conditioning, both cultural, social, familial, we meet our ancestral wounding, any trauma that has not been met or needs to be re-met. And we tend to the embodied subconscious. And in doing so, I feel that we're then also attending to what is in the collective unconscious, as well. So, it's a personal journey. But it's also a personal journey that we are undertaking on behalf of all beings and our relationships in the world.

Cissi:

07:35



Yeah, absolutely. I think that is such an important point. Because quite many that I meet, they underestimate the value in doing these very deep transformational journeys. Because they feel well, I'm not out there on a big stage, I'm not sharing it in that way...and I go, oh, in the, you know, in the lower world, the moment you journey in, and you start to work on healing your own personal stuff, eventually, you'll come

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



to also connect with the ancestral, and with the collective, and you're helping to shift enormously at that lower mythical landscape of the soul, that I mean, it is so important. Imagine if all of us did it! It would just transform everything but imagine now with enough of us doing this, it is having a massive impact on the outside world eventually. It just may take a little bit of time. So, thank you for sharing that because I think that's really important that we're not just on our own when we do this. We are also doing it with all our brothers and sisters making these journeys. Yeah, changing the weave for the future and back in time.

Carly:

08:53

Yes, definitely. And I think the beauty is at the very base of this map, it's not a loving sister, sisterly reunion, you know. Ereshkigal steaks Inanna and hangs her on a meat hook to rot out, you feel despair, hopelessness, very dark place where we have to give up for a moment, and I feel like a lot of people are meeting that place in themselves right now with the amount of war and difficulty going on in the world. But the beautiful thing about the myth is as soon as that place in us is empathized with in the myths, so the little emissaries come down sent by the sky god Enki, who is a soulful sky god, and he empathizes with Ereshkigal. And she starts to make these birthing sounds where she feels her pain. It's, "oh my heart, oh my belly, oh my back", and these little creatures, they just these creatures that are made out of earth, they simply reflect back to her, "oh your heart, oh, your belly", you know. And through that empathy, she just goes, "who are you?", you know. "Who are you, who is empathizing with me?" She's never had empathy. She's never had that relational care. And through it, she starts to, she offers basically the food of water, the food of life, and a rebirth starts to happen. Inanna then is able to rise. And she moves the second half of the map, it's about rising.



So, it's about what we have to do as we rise. And the key things for me in that rising process is that we have to make a sacrifice. So, it's not all like out and done out of the underworld, we have to sacrifice something, we have to sacrifice the ways we were before, perhaps that are no longer working, perhaps we have to sacrifice relationships. And finally, we have to be really compassionate, the final piece of the map is in compassion. And that is embodied by Geshtinanna, who is thought to be like a bodhisattva type character. And bodhisattvas for anyone who doesn't know who's listening to this are compassionate beings who stay on the earth to help other suffering beings. So that compassion that to suffer with is a key part of rising that we

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



have to be willing to suffer with ourselves and the parts of ourselves that are learning and stumbling their way up to the upper world again, but also to be compassionate with others and compassionate in the way that we live in relationship with the earth. And all beings, I suppose. It's a web of connection that we're rising into. I think it's a very relational myth, it's a very relational map.

Cissi:

11.53



Yeah, beautiful, beautiful. For me that also with the two mourners going down from Enki, and meeting her with just compassion, not trying to fix her, you know, not trying to sort her out, just being compassionate. It's such a beautiful medicine in that, and the healing that happens from that. And again, you know, what's happening in the world, compassion and empathy is key, is key. Also, in our own lives, I know someone very close to me was going through a really difficult time, and it was someone that it was hard for me to witness the pain. But as long as I tried to fix, it just didn't work. But the moment I actually stopped trying to fix and instead was just compassionate, their pain then, the healing started to happen. And I work with this, you know, I work with this. And then when it was someone really close to me, that was really, really hard. And again, it was the same medicine, because it's very easy to be compassionate and empathic with someone who's like a client, but when it's someone that is really close to us, and they're really, really suffering, of course, we feel empathy, but to feel empathy without trying to go into fix mode is really difficult.

Carly:

Yeah, and I really appreciate you naming that, because I feel like the desire to fix is often one of the things that has to be sacrificed. Yeah, and rise, because the "fix it" paradigm is so much part of this patriarchal linear rising. It's almost like, oh, I want to be healed now. And actually...



Cissi:

I can fix others and all of that. Yeah.



Carly:

"I want to heal you now." It's like a domination of that Ereshkigal wisdom that actually I feel like the paradigm of healing held in the heroine's journey is asking for us to be then guided by our wounds, and guided by them as continual teachers that we will bump into again whenever we need to.



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



Cissi:

14:17



Yeah, I love that you say that! I love that you say that! Thank you. Sorry for interrupting. But that is such an important point, because so many go on the healing journey and they go, “yeah, I’m fixed now. You know, that will never happen again.” And it’s like, well actually, it’s your teacher. So that is so beautiful that you are sharing that, thank you.

Carly:

I feel it’s a partnership. And we have to be in partnership with the parts of ourselves that have been in pain and will continue to possibly show up again, if we need to be with them again. I just, I really feel like we need to let ourselves off that hook of expecting us to be as we were before or that it should be all better now like some things we can’t fully heal from and how do we live with that and walk with that and walk with it with others? That’s, it’s really vulnerable, isn’t it? Yeah, I find it to be very vulnerable.



Cissi:



Absolutely. And so, when I had my heart attack in 2019, when I realized that I had a choice and I talked about this often, so I apologize to the listeners who will hear this again. But I realized when I was at the hospital that I had a choice, I could either go down the path where I would feel helpless, my mom had a heart attack when she was 48 and I saw what happened to her and we have a blood disorder and all of that. Or I could choose the other pathway, which was to let my heart awaken me, to let my heart guide me on this journey. And it did. It did. And as I, as I started to listen to my heart, and it took me on an amazing journey actually. The intention was never to heal my heart, you know, it was never an agenda, it was just to let my heart be my teacher. And it is very much that. Whilst if I would have gone into that healing journey with “I am going to heal my heart”, and “I’m going to be back to where I was”, and all of that, I would have missed that. And my heart now according to the cardiologist, I’m fine. And I still get, you know, signs and symptoms, and I’m, you know, I am on paper healed, absolutely. But for me, my heart is still my teacher. So, when it has something to signal to me, it will signal it to me with I get chest pains, or suddenly my blood pressure goes all weird. And I know ah, you want me to listen to something. And I do now, and it’s quite extraordinary. What an incredible tuning fork it is for me as a teacher. It’s like Inanna, you know, it’s like Ereshkigal calling. “Hello”, yeah come here, journey in. It’s something you need to pay attention to.

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



Carly:

16:59

I love the idea of it being a tuning fork, that sort of, can we attune to those resonances, and I love the way that it's in the body. It's like when we go down into the body and we've gone through those seven gates, as you're saying, we really are much more literate in the body and are able to hear and be guided by that wisdom that often the western world, as it's set up, really teaches us to override that all the time, doesn't it? So yeah.



Cissi:



Both is the medicine, and you know, medicine is needed, for sure. I'm not saying that we shouldn't take medicine. But also, I'm an osteopath, and also in the complementary world it overrides that at times when you know, well, if you do this, this, this, then your body will heal. And it's like, well, actually, maybe it's still meant to teach us something through our discomfort or various symptoms and signs that it's telling us something. And I feel that with the new age world, where it's been instead that you put the blame on yourself, when you develop an illness. And I had that, you know, I had some clients, for example, that cancelled their session with me when they realized that I'd had a heart attack is like, it was like I was not living my truth. And I'm like, I'm absolutely living my truth is just not the truth of the linear pathway, of to heal so you're fixed. Yeah.

Carly:

18:35

And you're mortal, aren't you? We're mortal with immortality when we feel our woundedness. And I feel like part of the myth is that Ninshubur goes to the sky gods for help. And the sky gods, I guess, would be that part of our medical culture, and that part of us that wants to think that there is some god that can fix and heal everything. And of course, it can't, and we are all going to die and there is no medical person on this earth that will stop that happening. And if they do, then I think we really are in trouble because then that lifecycle is interrupted, and we would turn into well, we wouldn't be human anymore, we would lose that human soul, I think. So yeah, I think that, you know, Ninshubur realizes that she's knocking on the door of the wrong gods. And I think so many times in life where that can be such a great metaphor of "Oh god, I'm knocking on the door of the wrong gods again", you know, I really need to yield to this and empathize and dare to allow whatever the death is, that's being required, even if it's not our final death that really teaches us that we will meet death in our lifetimes in many ways. And how can we embrace that? And God you know as I



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



say it, I can feel that part of me that's like, oh, because it's so hard when we meet those deaths in life.

Cissi:

20:02



At the same time, this is actually what my heart was teaching me, especially as the medicine of the four chambers in the heart, it was showing me as the blood flows through the heart, that it follows the four seasons. And I'm not going to go into it here, but it was so beautiful to witness that, of course, in nature, you know, death comes every year. It has to in order for new life, so it's that portal of death, life and rebirth that is such an important portal, that all the dark Goddesses are. And of course, they were vilified by patriarchy made into being rulers of hell, which is a Norse goddess Hel, for example, in that she's scary and you know, all of that. So we disconnected from that very, very deep wisdom that is there. And of course, then we disconnect from being able to move through these portals of life, death and rebirth in our, in our lives. So when they then happen, which they're gonna happen for all of us several times, as you say, we have no map to follow. We just think we go mad, or that we've done something wrong or like from the New Age industry, "I've been thinking the wrong thoughts, and therefore this is now happening to me." It's like a punishment instead of an invitation. Yeah, yeah. So, what happened for you that started this journey of descent, that now has resulted in this magnificent sharing of your wisdom and your medicine?

Carly:

21:37

Well, I think as I share in the book, it's never just one thing. I feel like it's a number of things. So, I had my daughters, gave birth to my daughters, and though I had two beautiful births, I feel like they opened up my body and took my energy down through my body to connect with that primal feminine in a way that I'd never experienced before. And as I rose into my motherhood, I definitely had to hold the question, "how am I going to now walk with them, with two daughters in this world, into life?" And it brought up so many different questions and lots of different challenges for myself as a perfectionist, for myself as a daughter, a lot of my key relationships in my life started to shift. And I also had two significant relationship endings, which also then really thrust me down into the underworld.



And so, through grief, and a complete shift in what I thought I was supposed to be doing with my life as a teacher and a sacred space holder, it was like I kind of had

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



this real sense of this is what is my mission, and this is what I should be doing. And it was almost like everything just had to just be wiped out. And it was a no, that's actually not what you're doing. You need to be over here. And I found that incredibly difficult. I think when our relationships start to change, and our sense of self gets stripped, and we lose key people, and key ideas about what we should be doing in life, it really can leave us feeling utterly lost. But where I landed was into the arms of Inanna, essentially. I discovered this myth and when, "oh my gosh, like that's what's been happenin. That's what all this loss and all this grief and bewilderment has been leading towards." And so yeah, it took some time to, I think this is the thing about rising, as we rise, we're sort of creating the structures through the process of rising. When I was being stripped, I was so compelled by the things that were happening in my life's unfolding that I was held by that.



But as I rose, there was this acute vulnerability because it was like that nakedness. And the energy of rising held all the questions of, "Okay, so what holds me now? What are the structures that hold me and those that I'm holding now?" And the Eros rising, the creativity rising, sort of showed me that as I went, but that was, I would say, equally as vulnerable. Becoming visible in that, in a world that actually really doesn't want you to change. And doesn't really welcome women working in their deep feminine, was very vulnerable. Yeah. I think a lot of people think, "well, they don't recognize you anymore, and they don't know who you are and think that you have gone mad." And you have to sit there and go, "no, I haven't." But it's okay, if you think that I'm still going to live the way I'm going to live. And it's a challenge, I think we need to make a lot of community connections that support us in that journey, it's my experience. And what's been so beautiful about the book coming out, is that it's been such a collaborative process meeting people like you, working with Womancraft Publishing, Trista, from "Girl God Books" has been a huge support just the network of, of women that I have been blessed with, through the rising process is just testament to how actually how these webs of connection can be made and are possible, and will support anyone who dares to step off that beaten track.

Cissi:



Yeah, beautiful, beautiful. As you were sharing, I see this image also of, it's like, we make the journey of descent, and we are often then in such acute pain that we eventually just realize we have to go. We have to just drop deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper. So, it's kind of as you say, that's kind of also the pull.

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



And it's like the dark goddess, the Dark Mother, Ereshkigal in Inanna story is calling us calling us calling us. And then we are reborn, and naked and vulnerable in that. And then as we start to rise, it can be so easy to try and rise too quickly. So, then we jump straight into the mind to, "Okay, now I got this, and now I'm gonna set it up!" I see this all the time with people that I work with. And I did that too. You know, after my first descent, I was still so much in my head. I took a few descents to really realize. Because then they rise and they go okay, I'm gonna now share this, I'm gonna put it out in a business plan and get out. And they go straight back into the patriarchal mindset. And then instead to rise with still the feminine, this is how I've experienced it to still rise with the feminine is still that unfolding. And it takes time, than what we've been perhaps used to. And it feels so not head. It feels so of that unfolding. And then as you say, you notice all these collaborations. Because it's the weaving, isn't it? Of something new from the feminine, which is the opposite to the spinning of up here (our head). Does that make sense?

Carly:

27:51

It makes sense. And I love that weaving that you're naming. That weaving, that spinning of an actually, this was why it was so beautiful to have so many women's stories in the book, because a lot of the women's stories really echo what you're saying. That actually rising can take years, we're talking not weeks or days, certainly not. Yeah, exactly years. And so, it's really slow, it's the slow time of the underworld above ground. And I feel like that's one of the things we've really lost. But the outside world just doesn't want that, we want to negate all of that slowing. So, it can feel like there's something wrong with us when we can't do it quickly. But I think one of the things, like you, I had concentric cycles inside of the bigger cycle and one of them was that I had a whole medical process as part of my rising, where I had three months sitting with a potential cancer diagnosis and multiple tests. So, you know, I ended up having a biopsy under a full moon, January moon, where I was impaled through the hip to clip this bone in my hip. It was like being impaled by Ereshkigal. And the message was you have to slow down now. You have to slow as you rise, you cannot just shoot up.



Cissi:

Exactly and then just walk as well. So very metaphorical it was in your hip.



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



Carly:

Exactly. So it was like in my bone, in my hip and the deep part of my body, there was this wound that that kind of came to surface and went “Stop.” “Slow.” And I did. And I think that these the dark Goddess, that dark energy will interrupt us if we don’t listen in sometimes the harshest ways.



Cissi:

29:45



But sometimes though, even though it feels harsh, I would say every time, even though it feels harsh, it’s really compassionate. It’s just very fiercely compassionate because it’s like to wake us up, to like, “Listen!” And as we listen, she saves us so much real heartache further down the line because she, at least that’s been my experience, she really shakes me to be brought back into my path. Yeah, into my soul’s path. And, and that is such an incredible blessing. It’s so fulfilling and deep and difficult and all of all of that too. But it’s, it’s your path. Instead of running someone else’s idea of what your path should be, or even your own kind of idea what it should be that has got no basis in who you truly are at that deeper level. Yeah, at least that was my experience, because I think there’s so much fear in us about meeting her because, you know, she’s fierce and all of that but there is love in that fierceness.

Carly:

31:10

There’s love in the fierceness, and I think sometimes certainly, in my case, I found a real desire to hold on to what I thought should be staying in my life, when actually like fingers that were hanging on there, had to actually just go, okay, I’m going to let go of what I think should be happening here. And trust that there’s something I don’t yet know. And I feel like that’s, you know as Inanna is rising, the sacrifice she makes as Dumuzi, her husband, he symbolizes the elevated masculine, that mind led, knowing, arrogance, the part of us that is so resistant and fearful of change.



And often times the things we think we want are actually not the things we need. So, when we can sacrifice that part of us, or the physical representation of it, if it’s someone or something out there, then true desire can start to emerge. And I think true desire comes from a darker, deeper place and is so trustworthy. But we can’t always hear it if we’re not willing to sacrifice the thing we think we know. It’s an incredibly humbling thing.

Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



Cissi:

32:35



Yeah, yeah. It takes a while until you figure it out, as well. Like I had this really, really strong dream and longing and yearning to live in Sweden. I'd been outside of Sweden for 20 years and it was my big dream. And eventually, you know, we all were moved over there. My husband and our two girls, and we were there for seven years, seven and a half years. And after about three years, we kind of all knew we were not meant to be there. But I just went, "No! We are gonna make this!" And just carried on and carried on and carried on. And eventually, eventually, I had to surrender to the deeper messages coming through from everybody actually. From psychics to accountants, to my own soul, to my husband saying, "we really should move back." Eventually I'm like, we really got to move back.

And then, also what happened was during that process for the last year or so, all my guidance stopped. Until I finally listened to the guidance that we should move back. It was like, because I was so not listening, eventually all my faculties that I'm very reliant on, I'm very intuitive, just, they just stopped functioning. It was like, I could not get anything. And then as we moved back, I thought I would get it back again. But I didn't. Instead, I went deep into a grieving process. And it was not until I finished grieving, and that took me about a year and a half, that finally, because by that point, it was that actually that caused me to finally surrender my mind, because I had created a life in Sweden, and we ran a magazine and it was, you know, all that, that you're saying, clinging on to it, I don't want to let go of this dream life, and I had to surrender it. And through that, eventually, this now could emerge, and my life now is so different and so much better and so much deeper than before. But if someone would have told me you have to sacrifice your dream of Sweden in order to get it, I would never have done it. It was such a, such a deep, deep dream in my, in my soul. And I feel that that's what often stops us, that fear as you're saying, of what will I have to sacrifice?

Carly:

35:17

It's making me think of one of my favourite poems that I share in the book if you're up for a poem.



Cissi:

Yeah, absolutely.



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain

Poem



35:26 Carly:
It's a Rilke poem..

*You darkness, that I come from,
I love you more than all the fires that fence in the world.
With a fire makes a circle of light for everyone,
and then no one outside can learn of you.
But darkness pulls in everything.
Shapes, fires, animals, and myself.
How easily it gathers them, powers and people.
And I can feel a great presence may be moving beside me.
I have faith in nights.*



Cissi:
Beautiful, beautiful. Thank you.



Carly:
The nights is something that can be really tricky. But I remember when I first heard that poem, everything in me just went. Relax. Relief.



Cissi:
Yeah... yeah. Beautiful. Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to share?



Carly:
No, I feel like that's really complete. I think I would really like to let people know that I have lots of free resources via my website, lots of conversations around Inanna, around the book that you can access. So, if you want to know more about, "Descent & Rising", you're really welcome to go to my website, carlymountain.com. And dive into those because there's lots there as well. So, I feel like we need support on these journeys, they're not really meant to be done alone, are they? So, it feels like, yeah, to find support in any of the places that you find it is so important.



Cissi:
Yeah, absolutely. Beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. It's been amazing having you here today. It really has been a wonderful conversation. Thank you so much for answering her call, to make your journey below and to move through this very deep, deep



Descent and Rising



with Carly Mountain



process, transformation and healing that you have moved through so that you can now share it. And I'm sure you're moving through it many many times still, as we all do, but thank you.

Carly:

Yeah. And thank you so much for having work that resonates and inviting me into this because, yeah, it's so joyful to have these conversations and I'm very grateful.



Cissi:

To find out more about Carly and her beautiful work visit [carlymountain.com](https://www.carlymountain.com)

