

## On Heart Rock Consciousness

an essay by the groom

Heart rocks are a state of mind.

I used to think that the classic heart shape was entirely a product of Hallmark culture. When I was feeling generous, I could vaguely imagine how the shape might have evolved from the shape of an actual human heart. However, as I have grown older and wiser, or perhaps just loopier, I have come to realize that the heart shape is an archetype that can be found all over the place in nature. I have also found that the more I am feeling in love with Rachel, the more heart rocks I find.

We found the first heart rock in the summer of 2001, when we were living on Metinic Island in Maine. We were monitoring a colony of arctic terns—quite literally watching the birds and the bees—and we had the place completely to ourselves (human-wise, anyway) most of the time. The solitude and peacefulness of the island, its aliveness with the tern colony, the guillemots, gulls, eagles, merlins, sheep, and so on, helped Rachel and I both return to a kind of purified state of being for a while. Our pure selves got along really well. We loved each other more purely, more clearly, than ever before.

It was in that state of mind that I had the eyes to see the rock: a chunky, grey specimen like so many others on the beach, but with a white ring in the center, a narrow vein in an almost perfect classic heart shape. I was at peace with myself, in love with Rachel, in love with the world, in touch with nature, and far enough from modern civilization to safely suspend my cynicism—so it didn't seem even remotely cheesy to recognize the heart, to immediately imbue it with significance, to let it be a symbol of that pure state of being. The heart rock seemed to want to be such a symbol.

A heart is a twoness becoming a oneness. Or, depending on where you start looking at it—or thinking about it—a oneness blossoming into a twoness. It is also a trinity.

After finding that first rock, I started seeing heart shapes everywhere—rocks, leaves, the knots of trees, flower petals, and so on. I started collecting smaller specimens and giving them to Rachel as little token gifts. I also found a few larger ones that I couldn't resist lugging home. The collection you see here is a representative sample.

As you look at the collection, see if you can find a state of mind where love is possible, where cynicism falls away, where symbols and meaning are not meaningless, where you are open to seeing heart shapes in stones—a state in which you can open your heart to the hearts of those around you.