

After the Tower

September 6, 2026 | Blueprint HOPE



When Everything Familiar Is Gone, What Remains?

A Blueprint HOPE exploration of Tower Moments—when the familiar falls away and we're left to discover what remains.

I've had more than a few Tower Moments in my life.

You know the kind.

Life is proceeding more or less according to plan—or at least according to the loose collection of assumptions you have generously decided qualifies as a plan—when suddenly:

BOOM.

A relationship. A career. Health. A home. Finances. An identity. A carefully constructed idea about where life is going.

Something falls.

Over the years, I've had enough smaller Tower Moments that I thought I understood the general concept.

I should probably point out here that I've never been particularly attached to physical possessions.

I've moved a lot over the course of my life, and with each move, I've tended to downsize quite a bit.

I'd accumulate things again, then downsize again with the next move—but over time, the overall effect was fewer possessions.

Things come and go.

And when previous Tower Moments came with the loss of physical things, that was rarely the part I struggled with.

Regardless, after enough smaller Towers, I thought I had a pretty good handle on the whole concept.

Apparently, I did not.

Tower.

Before we get to the really big one, there's something you need to know about the life I was living when it happened.

At the time, Felix and Chloe were traveling with me in Bumblebee, my school-bus-yellow Jeep. They weren't simply my cats. They were my family.

Felix came into my life as a foster kitten in 2013 and stayed beside me through some of the hardest and most transformative years of my life. He was my constant. My anchor. My confidant. My snuggle-buddy. He was extraordinarily smart and perceptive, with an uncanny awareness of me—and there were times when his ability to recognize that something was physically wrong undoubtedly saved my life.

Then Chloe arrived in 2022—a little barn-cat kitten overflowing with joy and curiosity and, I remain convinced, an otter somehow delivered in a cat body. She completed our little family by bringing a whole new kind of energy into our home—playful, adventurous, endlessly curious, and utterly her own.

And then there was Bumblebee herself. Together, we were quite the traveling team—exploring, adventuring, following our curiosity, and often ending up somewhere entirely different from where I intended.

Bumblebee gave me freedom, safety, and protection on the road. And with that school-bus-yellow paint, we weren't exactly traveling incognito. That was intentional. We left the sneaking around to the shiny-black-SUV crowd.

Bumblebee also absorbed more than a few of my adult-toddler temper tantrums.

They're hilarious to me now.

When Source called, I rarely knew where we were going or had any advance notice. I just followed—which, for reasons known only to Source, seemed to involve an extraordinary amount of going up, down, and all around mountains across multiple states, while GPS struggled to figure out what the hell we were doing.

GPS occasionally had other ideas.

Felix, Chloe, and Bumblebee were the heart of my life.

The Really Big One

I'm not going to try to explain everything that happened last summer here. Some experiences are too complicated to squeeze into a tidy narrative.

And frankly, I've become increasingly suspicious of tidy narratives anyway.

Let's just say the road from where I had been to where I eventually landed is a story of its own.

What matters for this story is where I eventually found myself.

Walking out of a hospital in North Platte, Nebraska, roughly 1,500 miles from home, in a place I had never been before.

I was wearing clothes the hospital had provided.

I was carrying the plastic bag that was given to me containing the clothes I'd been wearing while traveling before everything went blank—the ones that had literally been cut off my body.

My jeans were gone. I never got those back.

My shoes were in the bag. Tucked inside them were the few small personal items that had remained with me—my watch, necklace, bracelets, rings, and a little pill box containing Tylenol and aspirin.

Also in the bag were my hospital discharge records.

My phone and travel wallet had remained with me too.

When I came to in the hospital, they were in the phone holster I'd been using to carry them, attached to my belt which someone had strapped around my bare waist beneath the hospital gown.

My phone had no charger.

My travel wallet had very little in it.

That was all I had.

My purse wasn't with me. Most of my important belongings were in it.

My prescription glasses weren't with me. Without them, I can't see clearly at a distance or up close—including well enough to read or confidently sign anything.

I didn't even have my keys.

Those things, along with everything else I'd been traveling with, had remained behind in the Jeep.

I didn't even know exactly where my Jeep was or how I had gotten from where I last remembered being with it to coming to in the hospital.

Felix and Chloe weren't physically with me either.

And as I walked out of the hospital, I didn't yet understand the full ramifications of any of this.

That would come later.

At that moment, I was simply trying to orient myself to the reality directly in front of me.

I was in a place I had never been before.

I didn't know how I was going to get home.

I didn't have most of the things I normally relied on to navigate everyday life.

What I did have was a dead phone and my travel wallet, with very little in it.

Even the geography beneath my feet was unfamiliar.

And there I was.

Whatever had just happened, one thing was clear: distractions were no longer going to be a problem.

I'd say we had comfortably exceeded the project requirements.

Apparently Felix Drives a Bus

The hospital had arranged for a local commuter bus to take me to a hotel.

Since I'd never been to North Platte, I asked one of my attending physicians for a hotel recommendation. She recommended one. My phone was dead, and without my glasses I couldn't see well enough to book it myself anyway, so I asked if she could do it for me on her computer. She did.

Until then, I had been led to believe I would remain in the hospital at least another day. I had also been told several times that someone from social services would come meet with me, help me figure out my next steps, and connect me with resources. It seemed strange to me at the time, but I was still trying to get my bearings. I wasn't really in a place to question much of anything.

That meeting never happened.

Instead, a physical therapy team came to evaluate whether I could walk and move safely.

That felt oddly familiar. I'd been through similar evaluations after my spinal surgeries.

And then, rather suddenly, everything shifted.

There was a rush to discharge me and get me onto the bus.

NEBRASKAland DAYS was underway, which apparently meant something important for transportation logistics.

I wasn't entirely clear on what.

I wasn't entirely clear on why I was suddenly leaving the hospital, either.

At that point, I was still confused, disoriented, and trying to recover from something I didn't yet understand.

So I boarded the bus.

I sat down.

And then I saw it, directly in front of me.

Posted on the windshield was a sign.

“Hi, I’m your driver today”

A black and white cat.

His name was Felix.

And beneath his name:

Since 2013.

My Felix, a black and white cat, came into my life in 2013.

Back home, I'd had a magnet on my refrigerator of Felix riding his magic carpet.

And now, physically separated from both Felix and Chloe, roughly 1,500 miles from home, in a state I'd never been to, let alone a town I'd never been in, wearing hospital-provided clothes and carrying my old cut-up ones in a plastic bag, I had climbed aboard a bus...

and there was Felix.

A black and white cat.

Since 2013.

Seeing that sign brought me tremendous comfort.

Nothing about the sign changed my physical circumstances.

But for a moment, in a world where everything familiar had disappeared, something deeply familiar appeared.

What was it?

Coincidence?

Synchronicity?

Source?

Some kind of connection we don't yet understand?

Felix?

I don't know.

And increasingly, I think those may be three of the wisest words I've learned.

I still feel Felix and Chloe with me.

What does that mean?

I don't know that either.

What does it mean to be physically present?

What does gone mean?

What is consciousness?

What is connection?

What does physical life even mean?

We know quite a bit about physical reality.

But do we know enough to confidently declare that what we can currently perceive and measure is all there is?

I don't.

So I leave room.

Room for mystery.

Room for the mystical.

Room for possibilities that don't fit neatly inside what I currently understand.

I've had numerous experiences over the years that I can only describe as mystical. Often, those experiences have appeared during some of my lowest moments and offered me something I desperately needed.

Sometimes comfort.

Sometimes a different lens.

Sometimes simply a reason to stop and wonder.

I don't claim to understand them.

If anything, experiencing them has made me less certain about the nature of reality, not more.

Besides, Felix apparently found employment with Nebraska public transportation.

At this point, I'm keeping my options open.

Reality Would Like a Word

I arrived at the hotel around noon.

My room wasn't ready yet, and check-in was still a few hours away, so I spent some time in the lobby.

Something didn't feel right.

I couldn't pinpoint it.

But I trusted my intuition and decided to see if there were any other hotels around.

I walked outside and noticed another hotel across the highway.

I decided to go see if they had a room.

They did.

So I checked in there and cancelled my reservation at the other hotel.

The hotel assigned me Room 326.

My birthday is 6/23.

I noticed.

It felt like another wink from the universe.

It was later, at the hotel, that the reality and gravity of my situation began to sink in.

My body was still healing from whatever I had just survived and my mind was only beginning to process something I still don't fully understand.

WTF?

First things first.

I needed clothes.

The hospital had given me a white T-shirt, grey sweatpants, and paper underwear to leave in—no bra.

So, yes, a bra and actual underwear were fairly high on the priority list.

I needed a phone charger.

Toiletries.

Other basic necessities.

So I asked the front desk where the nearest Walmart was.

About a mile away.

Which meant walking there. In the middle of summer. In a white T-shirt. With no bra.

Excellent.

But not that day.

I still needed to rest.

So I waited until the next day, then walked to Walmart.

And because I was walking, I could only buy what I could carry back.

I also had no idea what lay ahead, so I needed to be careful with the little money I had.

So I bought what I needed most—and what I could carry.

Then I walked back to the hotel.

Before I move beyond the hotel, there's something important I need to acknowledge.

There was another layer to all of this that I'm not going to unpack here.

My well-being and safety were very much on my mind.

I didn't know who I could trust.

Survivors will understand what I mean by that.

We learn that reality has layers.

And sometimes what is presented as the official truth—no matter how convincing it appears—is not the truth at all.

For those who haven't lived through something like this, I'll simply say that there are experiences that change the way you assess people, places, safety—and even what you accept as truth. I explore some of that terrain elsewhere on BHOPE.TODAY, on [A Survivor's Path](#).

That being said, one thing about the hotel immediately caught my attention.

Every room door had heavy metal reinforcement running around the frame.

That mattered to me.

I had seen similar reinforcement before, including in professional settings where physical security mattered, so I recognized it immediately.

Years earlier, in 2021, I had helped another Survivor whose story I had been following online.

During one livestream, I watched police remove the doors from her hotel room from the outside while she was still inside, terrified. The hotel knew she was a Trafficking Survivor.

And after everything I had just experienced myself, that metal reinforcement around the doors stood out to me immediately.

I later learned the hotel had recently been renovated.

Whatever the reason those doors had been reinforced, they helped me feel safer there.

And at that moment, that mattered.

More than anyone around me could have known.

There were also cameras throughout the hotel.

I noticed those too.

For reasons I couldn't explain, I felt guided to leave my room periodically throughout the day—to walk the hallways, pass through the common areas, and simply be seen.

Seen by the cameras.

I didn't know whether anyone was actually watching. But there was something reassuring about knowing that, for those moments at least, there would be a record that I was there.

And somehow, that made me feel as though someone, somewhere, was looking out for me.

Once the immediate necessities were handled, I started trying to figure out the larger problem.

How do I even get home?

I didn't have anyone I could call.

What resources did I actually have?

What could I recover?

Felix, Chloe, and Bumblebee were still out there.

But getting back to them wasn't possible. By then, I suspected they were in a small town roughly 160 miles away, but I didn't know for sure or exactly where.

There wasn't a bus that could take me there, and Uber wouldn't take me that far. There simply wasn't a feasible way for me to get there. Nor did I have the financial means even if there were.

More importantly, going back there didn't feel safe.

Source confirmed.

There are deeper layers to that statement that I won't unpack here—layers that those who have survived extreme trauma, specifically MK Ultra, may understand without explanation.

The fact that I couldn't get back to them was heartbreaking. It still is.

There are parts of what happened to Felix and Chloe that I still don't have confirmed answers to, and I'm not going to speculate here.

What I do know is that I survived.

And I continue to trust that Source knows the pieces of this story that I don't.

There is some peace in that.

In trusting that even the pieces I cannot yet make sense of belong to something larger.

And that whatever I still need to understand will come in its own time.

So What Now?

I stayed at the hotel for three weeks.

During that time, I tried to find support and another way forward. I wasn't successful.

Eventually, I was down to two options: a homeless shelter or the street.

I only knew the shelter existed because I'd been told about it at the hospital.

I remember being confused when they did. A homeless shelter? Why were we talking about that? It hadn't made any sense to me at the time.

Three weeks later, I understood why knowing about it mattered.

So I called.

“Do you have room?”

“All we have is a chair.”

“Great. I’ll take it.”

I also asked whether it mattered that I was from out of state.

It didn't.

I remember being both surprised and incredibly grateful.

That was how far outside anything I had ever known I had landed.

So I went to the shelter.

And slowly, as I began putting the pieces together, I began to understand that I couldn't simply go back to the life I'd had before.

The shelter had cameras too. And once again, I found myself periodically making sure I was seen by them.

The events of that day had set off a series of ripple effects that would ultimately cost me everything.

My home.

My vehicle.

My job.

All of my possessions, except for what I walked out of the hospital with.

My familiar surroundings and routines.

The entire digital archive of my life except for the relatively small portion that was in the cloud.

And most heartbreakingly, the physical presence of Felix and Chloe.

Some of those losses were immediate. Others unfolded in the days, weeks, and months that followed. Some are still unfolding.

Even now, I'm still discovering the full magnitude of what was lost.

The Trouble with Tidy Lessons

There's a danger in telling stories like this.

It's very easy to take something extraordinarily difficult and turn it into a tidy spiritual lesson.

Everything happens for a reason.

The universe had a better plan.

Look for the blessing.

No.

From the physical, human perspective, this has been hard.

Really hard.

Trusting Source doesn't remove the realities of physical existence.

Housing matters.

Rent has to be paid.

Food has to be bought.

Transportation matters.

Resources matter.

I'm still rebuilding the basic conditions of an ordinary physical life.

No One in My Corner

There was something else I had lost along the way: my support system.

That part of the story had begun years earlier.

Beginning in 2020, I had to make a series of difficult decisions to step away from relationships—including family relationships—that no longer aligned with who I was becoming.

There was another consideration, too. As a Survivor, there were times when I believed distance was the best way to protect not only myself, but people I cared about.

The reasons aren't important to this story. What matters here is the consequence.

My human circle became smaller.

And smaller.

Until eventually, there wasn't one.

Felix and Chloe were different.

They were my family. Companionship. Protection. Love. Home.

And through all those changes, they remained beside me—until last summer, when their physical presence was stripped away too.

By the time I walked out of that hospital, there wasn't a person waiting on the other end of a phone call saying, *I've got you. What do you need?*

And Felix and Chloe—the two little beings who had been my constants through so much, especially Felix—weren't physically there either.

All I had was me.

And even I wasn't exactly in pristine condition.

My entire left thigh was covered in deep bruising from blunt-force trauma. I had additional bruises on my arms.

I was emerging from a severely traumatic experience I still haven't fully wrapped my head around.

I wasn't the healed me.

I wasn't the clear-headed me, standing confidently in the rubble surveying my options.

I didn't even have my glasses.

I literally couldn't see clearly.

I was the me who had just survived the unimaginable.

Still trying to comprehend what had happened.

But I was there.

Underneath the trauma. Underneath the bruises. Underneath the confusion.

I was still there.

And I've proven pretty conclusively that I can survive with just me.

I also don't think anyone should have to.

If anything, the experience reinforced something I now believe even more deeply:

everyone should have someone in their corner.

At least one person. Ideally two or more.

Someone truly **trustworthy**. Someone who knows you well enough to notice when something isn't right. Someone you can call when life exceeds your individual capacity.

Not because you're incapable of standing on your own.

Because sometimes standing on your own shouldn't be the only option available.

A support system is a resource too.

Perhaps one of the most important ones.

Not Everything Was a Distraction

Being stripped of distractions doesn't mean everything that was stripped away **was a** distraction.

Some things were precious.

Some things were necessary.

Some losses created space.

Some losses revealed what matters.

And that doesn't diminish what Felix and Chloe were—and still are—to me.

Because while their physical presence is gone, something much harder to explain remains.

I still feel them with me.

Which brings me back to that bus in North Platte.

And Felix.

A black and white cat.

Since 2013.

So when I talk about beauty, mystery and possibility, I'm not pretending the rubble isn't rubble.

Both things are true.

This has been physically and emotionally difficult.

And I trust Source.

I have experienced profound loss.

And I see extraordinary beauty around me.

I cannot currently see how everything gets rebuilt.

And I see possibility.

Perhaps I've finally stopped insisting that one of those truths has to cancel out the other.

What If the Universe Is Conspiring *for* Me?

After all the smaller Tower Moments throughout my life, why did the massive one come?

Who knows?

I certainly don't.

But I've begun playing with a different question.

Not an answer.

A thought experiment.

What if the universe is conspiring for me rather than against me?

That doesn't mean I've decided my life was deliberately blown up because I needed some cosmic character development.

I'd like to think there are less expensive continuing-education programs.

It simply means I'm willing to question the frame.

Because watch what happens when the question changes.

Why was everything taken from me?

becomes:

What remains?

How do I get my old life back?

becomes:

What do I create from here?

And that one immediately leads to another:

And how?

Building a Vision While Rebuilding a Life

I remained.

And with me remained the things that couldn't be stripped away quite so easily.

Including the vision I have been carrying for years.

I've carried and worked with the vision for Blueprint HOPE since 2020.

The Tower didn't create it.

The vision was already there.

It survived the smaller Towers.

It survived the massive one.

Through everything that disappeared—

the vision remained.

But I'm not building Blueprint HOPE in isolation from my own life.

I'm rebuilding my physical life at the same time.

And at this stage, Blueprint HOPE and I are one and the same.

There's no staff. No team. No active community of supporters or encouragers. No one cheering me on from the sidelines.

Right now, it's still just me.

So rebuilding my life and continuing to build Blueprint HOPE aren't separate projects.

They're happening together.

And both require resources.

Some are the same resources.

Some may be entirely different.

And I don't yet know what all of them are.

Which leaves me with some very practical questions:

How do I build from here?

And with what resources?

Money?

People?

Tools?

Transportation?

Relationships?

Opportunity?

Timing?

Things I haven't thought of?

Things I can't currently see?

Which resources must I deliberately build?

Which might emerge?

Which might arrive through people or opportunities I cannot possibly anticipate?

Which might already be around me but look so different from what I expected that I don't recognize them as resources at all?

And which things am I absolutely convinced I'll need that might turn out not to be necessary?

I don't know.

There's that answer again.

Mama Rosie Seems Unconcerned

Meanwhile, Mama Rosie, the backyard rose bush, appears to have taken the deer's rather aggressive pruning in stride.

She's regenerating.

And blooming again.

Seemingly effortlessly.

This is mildly irritating when you're a human trying to figure out how to rebuild your life while also continuing to build Blueprint HOPE—*without **yet** having found the visibility or support that might make the road a little less solitary.*

But of course Mama Rosie's regeneration isn't actually effortless.

She's using resources.

Sunlight.

Water.

Soil.

Nutrients.

Roots.

Stored energy.

An entire ecosystem of relationships and processes, many of which I cannot see.

What looks effortless above ground is supported by an extraordinary amount happening below it.

Below the Waterline

There's another understanding I've carried for years.

Mountains grow beneath the surface too.

Long before they crest the waterline—and become visible from shore—something is already forming.

I know something about that now.

Last summer stripped away everything familiar.

The homeless shelter that followed was unfamiliar in an entirely different way.

I had no frame of reference for that life. Different surroundings. Different routines. People whose lives and experiences were largely unfamiliar to me.

And yet, in an odd way, the shelter became a cocoon.

I had food.

I had shelter.

I had a chair for the first five weeks and then a bed.

For the moment, my most basic survival needs were covered.

Everything else had been stripped away.

And something began forming in there.

I started building BlueprintHOPE.com while I was still at the shelter.

Then several months later I came here.

Another temporary landing place.

But this one has been soft.

Safe.

Comfortable.

There's a backyard sanctuary outside my door.

And with that safety came more room.

To heal.

To reconnect with nature.

To write.

To create.

To keep building Blueprint HOPE.

One thing has led to another.

And another.

The more room I've had to heal, the more room I've had to create.

What Emerged

My life today bears no resemblance to the one I was living before the Tower.

Neither do I.

Looking back, I understand last summer as the Second Gate—bookending the [Gates of Awakening](#) experience that began on January 13, 2020.

The First Gate opened my world.

The Second Gate took my world away—literally.

And somewhere beneath everything I can explain, I have this persistent sense that, for some cosmic reason I don't yet understand, *it had to play out exactly the way it did.*

I don't know why.

I don't know what that means.

I just feel it.

What I do know is that I didn't emerge from it the same.

Not simply into a new life.

Into a new way of moving through it.

I see differently now.

I navigate differently.

I pay attention differently.

My relationship with nature has deepened. So has my relationship with uncertainty, with creating, with what I know—and what I don't.

The world itself feels different from here.

And yet, there is a strange contradiction in all of this.

For all that has changed within me, the physical foundation of this new life is still being built.

The mountain hasn't crested the waterline yet.

I'm still financially hanging on by a thread.

This place is temporary.

And I know how quickly one broken thread could change everything again.

Human Brenda understands perfectly well that a mountain growing beneath the surface does not pay next month's rent.

That truth is real.

So is another one.

I can see what has been forming.

In me.

In Blueprint HOPE.

In the work.

I don't believe I'm standing still.

I think I'm standing above a mountain I can't fully see yet.

And somehow, I hold both.

The reality that everything could fall out from under me again.

And the persistent sense that something much larger is already rising beneath my feet.

The Mystery Is HOW

The question is how it breaks the surface.

How does the mountain crest the waterline?

How do the resources arrive?

The visibility?

The people?

The support?

What creates the turning point between all this building—
and something finally becoming visible?

I don't know.

I know what I can do.

Keep building.

Keep creating.

Keep putting the work into the world.

Keep following the routes that open.

Creating the Conditions

Blueprint HOPE has carried a principle for years:

Create conditions where life can thrive.

I still believe that.

But living inside that principle has complicated it.

Because sometimes you need resources just to create the conditions.

Mama Rosie already has an ecosystem.

Sunlight. Water. Soil. Nutrients. Roots.

None of those things is optional to the rose.

And human beings need ecosystems too.

Safety. Shelter. Food. Financial stability. Transportation. Relationships. Support.

I can do an extraordinary amount with what little I have.

But resourcefulness cannot eliminate the need for resources.

So the question remains:

How does the ecosystem form?

How do the missing resources arrive?

How does support enter the picture?

How does the work connect with the people and opportunities I cannot create by myself?

I don't know.

I understood the principle before the Tower.

I'm living it now.

But *creating* the conditions isn't the same thing as *controlling* what emerges from them.

Mama Rosie can use the sunlight, water, soil, roots, nutrients, and everything happening beneath her.

She still can't schedule the bloom.

Neither can I.

And that may be the hardest part of rebuilding from here.

I can do what I can with what little I have.

I can use the resources available to me as fully as I know how.

But there are limits to what I can build without more.

I can keep building the foundation.

Of my life.

Of Blueprint HOPE.

But I cannot build every part of it alone.

And I cannot manufacture the turning point.

Holding Both

So I keep building toward something I cannot yet see—

while Human Brenda keeps a very close eye on the bank account.

Both are true.

Reality and trust.

Precariousness and possibility.

What I can see.

And what I can't.

The mountain hasn't crested the waterline yet.

But I have a feeling we're getting close.

After Your Tower

Maybe you've had one too.

A Tower that changed the landscape so completely that rebuilding what was there before was no longer the question.

Maybe you're standing in the rubble.

Maybe you're already rebuilding.

Maybe something has been forming beneath the surface for years.

I don't know what your Tower means.

You may not know either.

And perhaps you don't need to know yet.

Look at what remains.

Look at what is asking to be built.

Use what you have.

Notice what you need.

Leave room for what you cannot yet see.

And remember:

Not everything growing is visible.

Sometimes the mountain is still beyond sight.

Sometimes the roots are doing their work.

Sometimes you are doing everything you can—

and the bloom simply isn't yours to schedule.

Maybe that's not the end of the story.

Maybe that's where the next part begins.

Still building,

Brenda

Brenda Jean Bullis

Founder, Blueprint HOPE

Continue the journey:

BHOPE.TODAY | BlueprintHOPE.com

YouTube: [@BlueprintHOPE1799](https://www.youtube.com/@BlueprintHOPE1799)

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 **[Beautiful World](#) by Michael Bolton**