

Chapter 1: In the Beginning

Growing up was methodical in school. There was a schedule, you stuck to it, no room for surprise, and you were thought out when you were there. Almost like punching that 9 to 5 ticket, comfortable and regular. The lesson was usually well thought out, you knew what you were going to learn about. Going through the monotonous motions of everyday school stuff was unchallenging. Then came Egypt. Something jolted my soul into submission, its beauty and love overcame me. I felt it in my bones, this was the place I needed to be. Its magic seemed attainable for me like I'd been there before. I became enthralled with Egypt after Mrs. McBride had us write our names in Hieroglyphs. I couldn't imagine a cooler way to spend my time than creating my pharaohs and symbols. My imagination ran wild dreaming up the lettuce-head pharaoh and the god of air balloons all getting along so we could go to school and enjoy our lives. Living

in Yuma Arizona, lettuce fields and hot air balloons were significant. I drew the Pharaohs in great detail and wanted only accuracy and improvement. Some kids would pick on me and say I was "tweaking" due to the amount of detail. I paid them no mind and didn't know what tweaking was



at the time. Young boys would yank my torn ratty poor smelling notebooks and tease my heartfelt creations. It was a blessing that my bulldog twin sister would catch wind of the predicament and usually blast the youngsters into next week; with her words of course. It was an interesting time in my life to reflect on these bullies while creating, in my mind, masterpieces. There will always be critics, but the only one that mattered at the time was my grandfather Ed Jonson. The artist extraordinaire; Photographer, writer, graphite, illustrations, and stone works, he was a bit of a Jack of all arts. All of us sisters and nieces would pile into mom's banana cream yellow, dot leather interior, diesel Mercedes' and chug-a-lug to

his drawing class and decide to hold off on painting until I gaged a better hand in graphite. I remember Bill Blomquist almost yelling at me that I should take the painting class and I have more of a painterly hand. I thought that was cool that he could see that from my drawings. So I dropped the class and moved over to the painting class to find he had a tape player and speakers dropped off the ceiling and the absolute vibe I've been looking for, painting on canvas became my jam. I gave ceramics a break and took a few years of painting and art history and just started falling in love with mixing colors and creating shapes. I loved to practice. I did portraits often off of photos and studied how the human form moves. I was going to school to be a nurse and all the anatomy classes helped in my art. Knowing exactly what muscles are attached to what, and what goes where. I moved to Tucson and took classes at Pima community college and took a writing course along with a sculptural design course. I learned how to weld, cut wood, more ceramics and work with materials I probably wouldn't have touched. I liked being out of my comfort zone for art only. I was still an awkward



nerd in real life. I didn't care, I was on a mission. I came back to Yuma to take care of my mother who had a couple of weeks to live. I was destroyed. I became depressed and took care of my father who was lower than I. I stuck my head in my books and got a job at Mountain Health and Wellness running art therapy groups and managing a caseload. I did art classes with patients of all ages and started to feel better myself. I think it was the perfect time to help others and reflect and help myself.

Enough about that, back to Egypt.

The destination kept me questioning what more did I want to learn about Egypt? When visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Michelle and I studied the Egyptian side of the museum almost right away. Unbeknownst to us, we talked about the beauty and strength of what we were about to witness in real life. It was a dream come true that landed in our laps. Michelle was doing a led meditation on the stage of her life and once she realized it was the stage of her life, she saw a black and white stage, rounded in the front, with wood planks. She saw herself standing in front of the sphinx posing in her blue seagull dress with a rope wrapped around doing the Michelle pose. Someone was low taking a good picture of her and she didn't know who it was but knew they loved her enough to get a great shot of her. Full of joy and smiles. That feeling of "I've arrived" overcame her. Then three days later, she got up in the middle of the night and went to the bathroom. Michelle was following a spiritualist named Peter Woodbury who sparked her interest on Facebook. She saw the tour of Egypt he had just shared, checked out the details, and called me. "Do you want to go to Egypt?" She asked. "Yes." I simply replied, and the planning began. The

tour was \$2600 which included location fees, lodging, breakfast, dinner, and transportation. We needed to get our tickets and pay for lunches and extra cash for tipping and any extra shopping we warranted. We found tickets the cheapest out of L.A.X. and paid our trip down. Boom, we are going to Egypt, ladies and gentlemen.

While we paid our trip off during the next year, Peter gave a series of classes and jokes he had picked up throughout his life. He walked us through the history and teachings of Edward Casey as well. Michelle and I would remind ourselves, "Hey, we're going to Egypt!" Probably twenty times a day. The excitement coursed through our brains and translated into our dreams. One of the later courses focused on dreaming. We noticed patterns in our groups' dreams. One, for example, is that by her own rule, Michelle does not dream. She dreamt of a room full of people, she picked out her crown on the upper left-hand side of her mouth, and she could see the damage under the crown and it made her self-conscious and uncomfortable. Upon sharing with the group, one of the members lost a tooth. It was creepy and cool.

The classes were fun and Michelle and I would try to get together and take the classes together on Zoom. Sometimes it worked out other times we both did it solo with our busy artistic schedules. Sometimes I would be on my earbuds taking the class and cleaning and I would have the coolest visuals of what Peter was talking about whether it be a scarab rolling dung or the Ankh breathing life. One of my favorite visualizations was the Ankh being used to blow bubbles by Nephretery on a pier. Michelle used to tell her kids, when you finish school you can blow bubbles off the pier, don't care what you do just finish school, it's your life. And so the visual had me roaring that a pharaoh would be doing so. These classes helped give me a perspective on what we are going to see and why we're going to see it. The classes were structured by month and followed also:

Introduction to Egyptian Gods & Hieroglyphics June 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2022 7:30 to 9 pm Eastern US/Canada time \$125

Egyptian Mysticism July 5, 12, 19 & 26, 2022 7:30 to 9 pm Eastern US/Canada time \$125

The Egyptian Book of The Dead September 6, 13, 20, 27, 2022 7:30 to 9 pm Eastern US/Canada time \$125

The Metaphysics of The Great Pyramid October 4, 11, 18 7:30 to 9 pm Eastern US/Canada time \$125

These classes were included with the tour, if you wanted to just take the classes, that was an option as well. It was fun to dive into an elaborate class right before our trip. We were able to apply it right in front of us.

After a long itchy year, we counted down the days, nine days, eight days, seven days, it gets closer and closer and now it was time to go to LA. We meet up with Michelle's friend and kick it in Hollywood/ West Hollywood, ate some grub, and enjoyed our moonlit evening. Our major surprise was tickets to the Broad Museum. What a freaking treat right before a dream vacation. The first dose of joy was served cold and raw. Tickets are shuffled and we wait in a line off to the side. Intrigued, I wonder what this line goes to. Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Mirrored Room - The Souls of Millions of light years away. The door is whooshed open, we walk in and our breaths walk out, the black nothingness twinkled with rainbows so bright it was glitter in the sun. In the words of Moody Blues, I felt small. We took videos and shots, played like kids then were brought back to reality by a firm knock. We are let out in awe and move on to the rest of today's broadcast. As we walked through the gallery we noticed Egypt was following us everywhere even in the art pieces hanging right in front of us. We saw the Nude with Pyramids by Roy Lichtenstein with the Pyramids to the upper left side. Jean-Michel Basquiat's Melting Point of Ice showcases the eye of Horus in the middle left side of the piece. Ellen Gallaghers Exelento showcased several Egyptian headdresses and crowns. Upon entering the Broad, you are welcomed by an escalator with a narrow smooth opening. It created a feel for climbing into the heart of the pyramid, like practice. Interesting observations before this trip. We go gallery hopping and find another piece that called to this trip. At the Corey Helford Gallery, we saw a piece by Kristen Liu-Wong of a detailed awesome bathroom with a woman sitting on the toilet reading a book, candles lit, cat playing with yarn, obviously a peaceful space. That piece described exactly how Michelle found this tour. Everything kept pointing to go. 3, 2, 1. It's time to go!



Chapter 2: The Royal Treatment

We were welcomed by fast-walking and fast-talking Tarek who gave Michelle and me our visas and held our hand through customs literally. Talk about a smooth operator. Next, we got our bags and rolled through security as if we had top clearance. I was starting to feel like we hit this trip out of the park! We were then greeted outside the airport by Ehab and Foad who insisted on juices and other refreshments with a smile. Michelle inquired about which juice they had, myself, water. Lighting up a cigarette the scene scans by us as we leave the heavily frequented doorways of Cairo airport and begin our journey into the heart of the unknown. Smiles tattooed on our faces, we take in the land of unfinished buildings, intricate tiles, laundry lines tacked up and speakers wired to every tall tower beyond vision. Feeling the ants in her pants, Michelle spans over to Ehab and asks about the policy for that certain green stuff no one talks about. While backseat driving, I notice a left cheek grow into a smile on his face. We have lift-off.

Blaring Bop Daddy, Foads favorite song, we come to a halt on a warm sunny day on Nov 8th, 2022. The door creaks open from the dusty roads, I pop out and head to the trunk for my things. Both Foad and Ehab stand there with a confused looks on their face and signal for me to go inside the hotel with a swift hand sweep towards the door like they were ZZ Top. We open the hotel door and our faces are kissed with heavenly incense and the smell of fresh paint. “Welcome to the Sahara Pyramid’s Inn, how was your flight?” Asked the very happy hairy short man behind the desk. A 34-hour travel day isn’t on anyone's bucket list, so we scampered around the question and politely gave the short answer of “It was a trip.”. Room keys were divided and the tour began. Each corner of this place was dripping in age, smoke, smog, and love. Historic pictures in cheap frames hung alongside Egyptian artifacts and detailed mirrors. I smell coffee dancing through the incense, now it’s a party.

We head upstairs to the 4th level where our view is exactly across the street from the Sphinx and Pyramids. What a first day to be wowed by this magnificent view in our temporary backyard. Our bags are dropped off and it’s time to explore the rest of the facilities. Learning our way through the fancy block wall mazes, we reach the top



floor balcony of 124 steps with the best view of all the Giza Pyramids, Sphinx, and sunset. Peckish we decide to try the Hotels restaurant and bar, after all, we are on vacation. Every employee raved about America and how it's number one, Michelle and I kept retorting, Egypt is number one, smiles all around. We order 2 plates to share, a chicken plate and a kabob plate adorned with heaping piles of rice and bread. I ordered a Stella, as they do not have Bud Light, and we met the most bubbly server yet. Amar was quick and punctual to any call and need. He fired up the outside speakers, binged his Bluetooth, and bam, it was D.J. time at the restaurant balcony. Taking turns we sang along, ate food, and drank Stella tall cans while enjoying that sunset dripping down behind the pyramids. It seemed surreal that we were in Egypt enjoying our lives and making friends on every corner we turned.



After having an extremely relaxing first day on the ground, it was time to explore! Foad was our driver for the day and we were excited to go exploring Alexandria! We left the hotel at about 8:45 am and made our way from Giza to Alexandria while blasting off the highways and into our first stop, coffee! We skid into a multipurpose gas station filled with wide-eyed men and thick smoke. In America, no one can smoke inside, tickled, Michelle lights up as Foad pulls out his smokes and gestures to me. I decline as I take in the scene. We get our coffee, and some supplies and snap a pic of Michelle smoking in a gas station. We are easily tickled. We are bopping through the busy streets watching car mechanics, window repairmen and sheep stand their ground as the fast-paced world spins without collision. I eyeball a 4-foot



parking space as Foad leans into the space with every soaring inch of his depth perception. We enter an opening of a closed-off front structure to bear the Serapeum of Alexandria. Squealing, we go through security who's amused by our excitement. We got our tickets, locate the closest W.C., and begin our trek. Cats greeted us upon entry. Michelle's favorite. We inspected each ruin numbered along the walkway to the north of the grounds. We take a bridge and walk north to south to the main pillar.

Magnificent, tall, untouched. We trample the earth and pathways into the underground layers. Cool damp walkways with scrapings and chisel marks

adorn every level of this underground magical palace. With time as our only restraint, it's time to move on. Next, we hit the Catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa. I



large spiral walkway takes us deep underground. We virtually had the place to ourselves. We explored and carefully checked out the architecture and art in awe. It was also strangely magical.

Next, we traveled to the Citadel of Qaitbay. We parked and walked up the boardwalk of street vendors, cats, and tons of kids. The air was fresh with the breeze of the sea slapping our faces. Being a small-time artist from Yuma, Az, it was a nice change of pace. I wanted to display my pride for this small town I call

home and rocked local businesses as we trekked Egypt. My first shirt, Prison Hill Brewery, a wonderful local brewery that sent your tastebuds to prison. Energetic and ready to give you a deal. Foad saw a young boy and asked about boat rides, he was ready with answers. He hops skips and jumps to his little row boat and brings it closer. We all fumble in, take a seat, and off into the Mediterranean we go! At top speed, this kid was booking it, I was impressed. With every ore pushed, a young breath of air rushed through his miniature sun-tanned lips. He asks us if we want pics in front of the Citadel, and we all agree. While trying to get my Hijab on correctly for the image, Foad helps me put it on right. Michelle asked, "How did you learn to do that?" Foad responded, "My sisters." I felt like family at that moment. We thank your skipper and jump off to the next exciting adventure. Foad goes to the ticket office, a block and rusty metal orphace containing not 2 but 3 men smoking behind the bars handling money and looks. Hiding my not-so-great poker face I notice all the guns. All the guns. I get security, this just seemed like a Micheal Bay movie and the bombs were about to go off. No bombs went off, yay. We walk through and are greeted with a large courtyard of old blocks, patinaed cannons, and enough grass to kill Cheech and Chong. The contrast of this alabaster castle against the blues of nature was truly breathtaking. We took Michelle's famous meditation photos and imagined how it would have been back then. What a castle. We pack our thoughts for the next adventure, onto the Bibliotheca Alexandria! A short hop skip and jump to this astonishing building blows us out of the water. We're so new to this that the size of the



building and the many levels confused us. We go down and we check out the art gallery and sculptures and get carried away in its bliss. We move upstairs and we find ourselves in the kids' section with a guard standing there looking at us as if we were adult kids. Michelle asks "Can we go in?" And the man replied "Of course" and we see ourselves in. The kids' rendition of Egyptian art melted our hearts, there were sculptures, paper crafts, puzzles, just everything to do with Egypt in a young person's mind. We were tickled. Then we decided let's try to find the books. Michelle is the seeker of religion and so we went to the level of religion in the Bibliotheca. I could see the sweat dripping from the back of her neck, there was so much there and so little time, I felt like we would be back and could spend at least 72 hours in that section and only scratch the surface. Seeing her face around that many rows and rows and stories and stories of books made me realize what appreciation she has for literature as I do for art. Michelle was truly in her happy place. On our first day in Egypt exploring, I felt like my friend was the happiest I'd ever seen her. Beaming if you will. Ok, it was time to hop back in the car and boogie to our next destination which was Mediterranean on the Mediterranean... let's see what unfolds. We park on a boardwalk with a beach having lounge chairs, umbrellas, and parrots. We are greeted right away by the colorful birds and make our way up the steps. Selfie after selfie stations roll past us and I congratulate ourselves on not being the worst tourists today. We arrive at an ice bath of today's catches. Fish, shrimp, crab, and squid. Feeling my oats, I ask if they have lobster... nope, but the healthy white vail of a squid pulled through for my seafood extravaganza. Foad was hungry and I knew calamari solo would leave me wanting more food later. We shared a fish plate and the calamari and he graciously deboned the fish, as I have never done so before. We all dined like kings after our first full day in Egypt. We topped the night off with ice cream a la mode filled with the warmest molten lava yet. It was so good, we had to take it home. We paid our bill, handled some silverware, and moved back to the boardwalk. Upon turning the building, we felt the beach air and the rumble of crashing waves that beat our souls. Out from a beach boat chair appeared a rabbit, one, two, three, rabbits on a beach. Kinda confused and enlightened, we took in the scene as Michelle manifested yet another relic, Mediterranean water. Foad had a spare pair of flip-flops and we're forever grateful. We load up and it's time to go back to Giza.



Ehab met us on the rooftop balcony after we landed back at home base. We change into silky lounge ware and climb the steps to meet Ehab and the clouds. The city was speaking to us, lightly enough to discuss today's adventures, thick enough to smell its long hours. Michelle starts the conversation between the three of us which resulted in my ultimate surprise. Ehab was working on a project called the Pyramid Lounge, a 5 story building he was renovating. We need a logo and possibly a mural, Ehab lays it on me. My mind felt like a clock that just busted, unhinged, smiling, I recoil, "A mural? In Egypt? And a logo?" Whoa, Michelle, you have outdone yourself bestie. My dream is to go to Egypt, my dream in heaven, Go to Egypt and paint a mural! I have my sketchbook handy, of course, and get to work. We talk about his visions, the elements he wants in them, and other important notes to keep close. My brain is firing faster than my hand. I start writing notes instead of sketching just to keep up with the upstairs. Michelle told me that Isaac hid my favorite paintbrushes in my luggage. Even more excited I grab my phone and WhatsApp video chat with Isaac in utter amazement. He answered I tell him what Michelle surprised me with, and I thank him for packing the brushes. He looked confused. "I forgot to pack your brushes." He replied. Butterflies in my stomach turned to stones. Welp, I'll just keep an eye out for brushes here I thought to myself. Egyptian brushes sound cool. I return to the party of three enlightened twilight goes and shove my head in my sketches. I order a Stella tall can and get lost in the Giza view in front of us.

Chapter 3: The Scene

And the award goes to... all the street kid vendors. Your attention is their business and they will do anything for it. Compliments, puppy eyes, deals, you name it, they are doing it. They are creative and help their parents, I assume. Banana leaves papyrus rip-off pieces of art, and Egyptian sculptures from China, are regular items sold cheaply. Some of the middle-aged street vendors would flirt, especially when wearing red lipstick, and hand you a "gift". I applaud their ways, they got your attention, and you're engaged in a convo. They ask questions and see your gullibility. I watched this happen many times and simply did not accept the gift.



Blazing in our gas-guzzling tour bus we pass front yards, farms, and irrigation canals loaded up with more styrofoam than a 4th of July cooler party. There were heaping piles of plastic and debris on fire at almost every bend of the road. The exhaust kept creeping through the ducts and ac shooting at all our inspired faces. I could smell its toxicity as soon as we left the hotel each day. I wore handkerchiefs around my neck for easy access and it helped. I also wore a hijab to not only keep the sun off my face but the fumes and smog. I could cut it with my eyelashes it was so thick. I kept thinking to myself, how do they live like this? Can't they smell this, doesn't it hurt them long-term? Why are we burning plastic? I know resources are different for everyone, it's just an interesting thought that such a magnificent place would have opposites for their environment. I'll never take for granted a smelly trash truck again. Cheap cigarettes were sold at every corner. It seemed as though every man in Cairo smoked and every place was legal to smoke in, they had beautiful ashtrays too. It went from a thin blanket of indulgence to a nap sack that you couldn't escape. Breathing became difficult, even though I was a smoker. I started to cut back as I felt my lungs getting heavy from the different scenes.

My gratitude didn't stop at trash trucks in America; I'm grateful for the amount of free toilet paper, too. That may sound weird so let me explain Lucy. It's customary to tip the person holding toilet paper outside a W.C. Because there will be absolutely no toilet paper in the stall. I mentioned before, nothing is free. Later in the trip, we started bringing our own each day on our adventures and tip for paper towels at the door. So currently 1 American dollar is 24 Egyptian

pounds. So tipping 1 to 2 dollars is great, but it does depend on what is being done, you don't want to undertip. Your heart is a good guide usually.

A dusty motorbike with taped up seats, trinkets glued all over it, and bells adorned by a medium-sized man holding firmly on the handlebars with square shoulders. On his lap, a young boy taking in the fun ride with no shoes and a piece of bread in his mouth holding onto the gas tank. Behind him, a woman sitting across the seat, ladylike, holding a swaddled baby bundle of cuteness. Of course, our first reaction is "That's dangerous" but when that's your mode of transportation, that's what you do. I studied each face delicately starting with the father, strong with soft eyes full of love for his family. The young boy's endless smile was as if he was on a carnival ride with food crust around his mouth and dirt smeared on his neck. The mother's pressed lips became softer as the bike finished its turn and straighten out. She held and rocked the newborn as it slept with dark eyelashes and a bubbly mouth. What a fun scene to roll up on, I thought to myself.

I wake up at 10 o'clock in kind of a stupor stunted in time as there are no windows in our room. In a rush, I knew we had to leave by noon so I woke Michelle instantly, she pops the lights on, lit a smoke, and turns on the shower. I give her some time as she talks to her loved ones and I excuse myself for one more delicious cup of coffee from Amar. Crap, he's not working this morning! Bummer! So I asked for a cup of coffee and unfortunately, it was just a regular cup of coffee. I hadn't realized the love and excellence that was poured into my original cup of coffee by Amar. I proceed to the room and gather my luggage outside. I tell Michelle about the unfortunate series of events regarding coffee and she zips her last luggage up and we head down together. We go down and are greeted with that heavenly incense again, pay our fees, and just as I am about to walk out the door Michelle surprises me with one of those amazing cups of coffee from a man two steps from our hotel entry. The sun is shining the caffeine is flowing the dirt is dirting and we're off. There's so much commotion on the street everyone flying somewhere at this particular moment. Horses hung over our backseat as we crawl through the entanglement of chaos. Foad told us there was a funeral happening and that's why there was so much movement on the streets. Respectfully I put my head down, peaking with a side eye trying to get a glimpse of what a funeral in Egypt looks like. It



was chaotic and beautiful. We leave the hustle and bustle and swing onto the highway toward our next destination the Helnan Dreamland Hotel & Conference Center. It was right around the corner from our new favorite hotel. We meet in the lobby as people started congregating we introduce ourselves and get familiar with all the new faces. Some people were whirl-winded and jet-lagged. So happy we decided to come to a couple of days early to prepare for such a nonstop excellent trip. Room keys are divided and we make our way to our rooms for some rest. Michelle has the energy of three 9-year-old boys so she was ready for the next step. I unpacked and moved into our very cute posh hotel with windows that completely opened on the 5th floor. Perks. We have a meeting in 2 hours so we hit the pools, check out what the spa has to offer and make a game plan for Moroccan baths after our first meeting.

November 10 schedule

530 to 7 pm/ Orientation Meeting/ Lily Meeting Room/ 7 pm Dinner - 1st Floor

Hellos are passed around, and stories, motivations, tears, and fears were all discussed. Very excited about our trip together we all do a prayer together. Not like a godly prayer, but more of a positive vibration for our endeavors ensued.

Chapter 4: Entering the Pyramids

11/11/22 schedule

645 am - exercises & meditation by the pool by the dining room. 1st floor

7 am - wake-up call/ Breakfast / 8 AM - PLEASE BE IN THE LOBBY

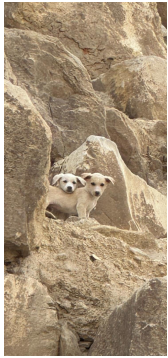
Camel ride/ Tour Giza plateau/ Visit small pyramid/ Visit the Sphinx/ Lunch at Pyramid Restaurant/ Essential Oil shop/ Return to hotel/ 5 to 7 meetings/ 7 dinners/ 8 left for our private time inside the Great Pyramid

The Bus pokes and prods its way through the herd of slow-moving tourists until we hear that exhale of exhaust blow from the back of the bus. We gather our thoughts and things and move towards the ticketing office where our security guy, Muhammad Saeid, is taking his job to a seriously new level. I was waiting for him to start talking into his wrist at any moment. It was nice to feel that safe though. Today I rocked one of my favorite local coffee shops from Yuma AZ called Cafecito. They are feel-good good people and remind me of what my Husband and I did when we ran a nonprofit art & music Co-Op. We head to the camels first. It was like a cartoon. We cleared a berm and bam, You ride this one, you ride that one, here this one is for you, this one's name is Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, just Egyptians having fun with gullible tourists. The air seemed to be a little more clear in Giza, it was morning time too. We rode, took selfies, rode again, and dismounted. I had fun and I felt guilty.

Now for the climb into the pyramid of Khafre to pop our pyramid cherry. The crowd narrowed into a single line, one in, one out. The shaft got smaller and smaller. We contorted our bodies into a 90-degree angle and shuffled down the chicken coop-like ramp. A little flat land break to stretch the question mark out of our back and then it was back to it but going up. Humidity and heat climb as we get closer to a growing buzz. We reach the opening and my eyes wander across the tall ceiling with some shadows of the onlookers lurking through. I see the tomb, and stantions that protect this ancient relic, so we move closer while politely waiting our turn. French do not wait their turn, they step on your new hiking shoes. I wasn't



in a rush. An usher sees us kinda meditating along the wall and takes us by the elbow softly and directs us to sit behind the stantions on the blocks in front of the tomb. What energy we felt, and to be in a pyramid, too. I let a few tears go and gather myself, dusted the blues off, and made my way so someone else could have a turn. I felt a soft jab, I recoil and it was the usher asking for a tip, nothing is free in Egypt. Still, on cloud 9 I delightfully give him 2 bucks, a smile on his face, and he cleared my path. It's much easier leaving the pyramid than entering. The wind on my face, the humidity and heat staying trapped in that room, and the energy we just received made me feel light as a feather.



I was listening to Abdallah talk about Ra and his rays protecting everything it touched, and my eyes are magnetized to puppies on the pyramid. Yep, you read that right! The commotion grew as more and more people saw the floppy-eared pyramid puppies jump block by block up the pyramid. "Where's the mom?" "Is someone going to do something about this?" The tour people's concerns were greater for the pups than the street kids selling 10 bookmarks for a dollar. It was interesting and weird, the placement of some people's hearts irks me. Ironically enough, the pyramids didn't have cats, just a ton of dogs. In town, however, tons of cats whose looks could tell you how hard they have had it.

It's time to get back on the bus. We load up and reflect on our first pyramid experience. It was one of the smallest ones so it could only get bigger and better from there. Our minds were blown already! Our bus heads to the plateau and drop us off in front of all the street vendors. As we come through all the wares and ways we come to a drop in the walkway. Watching our footing we make our way to the chamber of RA which was open to the sky for obvious reasons. Abdallah talks about the chamber and the oldest parts of the temple. On the south side there's a ramp that goes up to an enclosed walkway that opens to the bluest of skies. We rounded the corner at the top of the walkway and there she is, the sphinx loud and proud staring at us without a nose. Did you know that the sphinx was re-sculpted under each ruler hence the head getting smaller and smaller? We took photos both serious and funny, but most importantly. . . Thee shot!



Michelle saw herself in a dress in front of the sphinx where someone she loved took her pic. This was a big manifestation for her. Selfishly, for us. She

saw herself, and 3 days later, she saw Peters's tour on social media. She manifested Egypt, she got Egypt, she's a Nile Crocodile, a piranha.

Lunch at the Restaurant Pyramids
Gold mini fire ovens

Essential Oil shop fun at Al Amir Perfume Palace

Return to Helnan Dream Hotel and Resort
No hot water! Ahhhh!
Rest

7 dinner Buffett style.

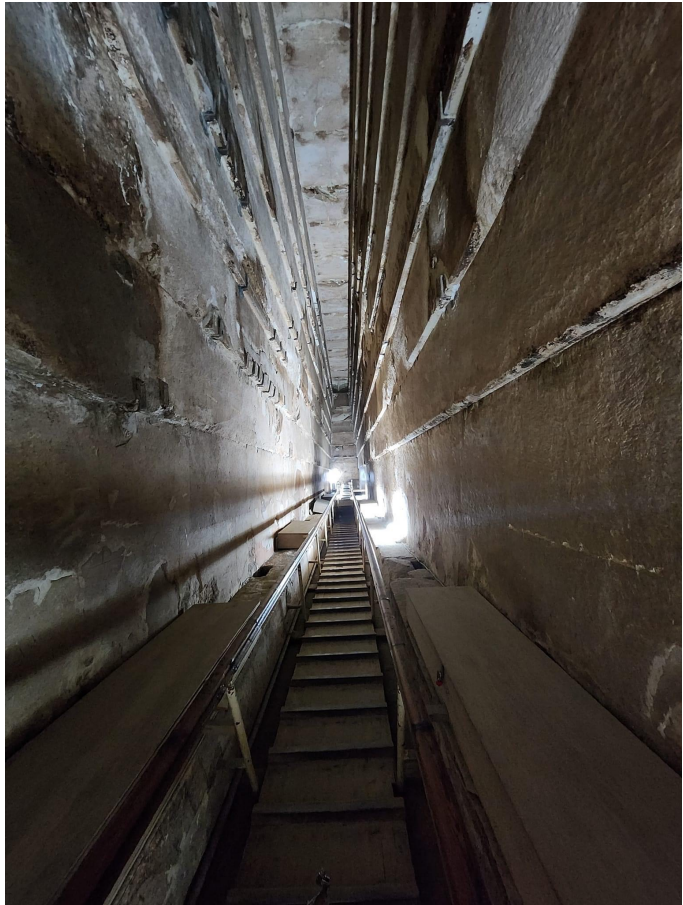
Private time in the pyramid

One of the highlights of the trip was having private time in the great pyramid in the evening. It was 11/11/2022, a super day for manifestation and healing. I had some ideas of what I wanted to do, and I wanted to stay open in case something else bubbled up and helped me on my path. I've been healing some personal childhood trauma and on this trip, I wanted to let some deaths go and look toward the future. We climbed through the base of the pyramid and up and up we went. It was tight at first, our spines were question marks again, but after a little tight spot, the pyramid opened up to us the amazing gallery entering the king's chamber where an open sarcophagus presented itself. Some gathered in the king's chamber, and some gathered in the queen's chamber below. We were quiet and respectful. I had positive thoughts flowing. I saw my parents. Mom said hi, Dad did a funny smile, and Leti said "Hey girl hey!" that's all I needed from them. It made me feel great. I then moved forward to what I wanted, what is my purpose? Why am I here? I believe that I am here for the art of course, not just to create art, but to help others create and get their emotions down. I used art as therapy all my life and didn't recognize it till later in life. The reflection time in the great pyramid helped me assert my beliefs and now I want to follow that path. I want to be an art therapist and help others cope through art whether in behavioral health, schools, elderly homes, or rehabs. It's wide enough for me to take on, yet specific enough to make an impact. I think. After shedding some tears and drawing my visions from our quiet time, it was time for me to go check out the stars. Michelle and I went down slowly and kicked it on the pyramid blocks till everyone else got out. Orion's Belt was right over us. Bright and shiny. Michelle Chris Laura and I chilled on the blocks up high for a bit and just reflected on



what we all had gone through. It was beautiful and healing. We load the bus up by 1:45 am and head back to our sleep resort as we are all live wired.

We got back to the hotel and what do you know? There's a beautiful Egyptian wedding taking place and we are on the ground floor with front porch view of all the beautiful sequenced dancers. Egyptian music bumping, we enjoy from our view. We wind down and its time to sleep. Easier said than done.



Chapter 5: Chain Reaction

November 12

7 am breakfast opens/ 815 exercise/meditation by the pool/ 815 wake up call/
845 am bags out/ 930 lobby for departure

Reaction and reaction time

12 severe reactions, 7 blackouts, 6x I thought I was going to die, and the goodbye videos I made for my friends and family.

The 1st reaction on the bus on Nov 12th after dinner at the Valley of the Kings dinner

Today, Michelle and I wore our matching tie-dye Leti shirts. “take my girls and ride on my spaceship” quote

Today we visited the Bent pyramid; Abdallah reminded me that the pyramid was one of the harder pyramids to navigate and suggested I not try it. Listening to wise words I walked around the base of the pyramid and stumbled across one temple to the east of the pyramid. I plopped myself down and started to draw it, Michelle did her meditation photo on top of the structure, looked pretty cool. Laura called us all over because she found selenite and other awesome gems. They rock hounded, I got lost in the drawing. The girls take off and walk around the perimeter and I sat quietly caressing every notch in those blocks with my pencil to paper. I get a frantic wave from Laura, “Lia, Lia! The bus is loaded.” Whoops, I got too lost on paper. I snap up and haul ass to the bus. Abdallah breathes a sigh of relief and pats me in the back. I apologize and show him the drawing, he thought it was well done. Back on the bus we head to the Pyramid of Djoser. I stayed on the bus with an aching knee. I drew some more and used the W.C. While we were there. Mid drip, the powder goes out. It’s light enough to see in there, but then my mind wanders to our tour group in the heart of a pyramid! People start filing out, one by one, laughing, and chatting about the power outage. We load on the bus and drive for a bit and arrive at Step pyramid.



We pass the step pyramid to check out the carvings of Saqqara's Monument. We park the bus, unload and get a rundown from Abdallah and Peter about where we are. We descended into the open air chamber and see several doorways. We enter, and my breath is taken away. My first in person visual of hieroglyphics! Embossed carvings, debossed carvings, color, and limestone. Just brilliant.

We arrive at the Funerary complex of King Teti next, where is as the ceiling of this pyramid had stars on it, not regular stars. I asked Abdallah why the stares were shaped like that. He answered that those are the stars of the underworld.



Wow, what a concept! From the outside, this pyramid looked like rubble. I couldn't believe how intact it was inside.

We go room by room in the tomb of Ptahhotep II. Each room more delicate than the one before. Our breath was taken away. We head back to the bus and make our way to our last pyramid of the day, the Step pyramid! Michelle and I drink some funny water and we travel to the entrance lined with tourists and vendors. I see Laura struggling to say no, I step in front and said no, in all my tallness, and they scurry away softly. We head down the clean stairs with hand rails. As we entered this pyramid, it was bigger, we only had to duck our heads a little, well, I had to duck my head anyways. There were crystals in the ceiling sparkling at us as we moved through the insides.

We reached the center where there was at least a 80 ft drop to the bottom floor. Amazing how deep this was. We take pics, feel the cool air and let the other tourist have a turn. Walking across the courtyard to the exit, we get pushed, by the French again, michelle flairs her Taurus nose and stands her ground as we head for the bus.

Next stop before dinner was the Sakkara Carpet School! We head from the sandy desert scene into a grassy, agriculture scene. The air is cooler with more pollen and wildlife. Less camels, more cows. We enter this school to many busy fingers working on chairs that would hurt everyone's knees it was so low. The man gives us a lesson on how to make these carpets and how they are teaching these young ladies how to do every design imaginable. There were silk rugs, heavy canvas rugs, and everything in-between. I'm not much of a shopper, but I did enjoy the artistry of weaving a design. Some of the



group make outlandish purchases and we head to dinner, which was literally up the street.

After a wonderfully long and jam-packed day, it was time for dinner, {lunch, and dinner} at the Valley of the King's restaurant. We entered through the small opening off a busy street to a quiet courtyard with selfie stations lit up like Vegas with cats lounging eyeing us as we entered their territory. The outside patio floor was adorned with broken detailed tiles mosaicked together in a colorful energetic way. There was something to look at in every corner. It was what I would say is "pinch-able" in my book. We took a seat and ordered beverages while we waited on the food to arrive. Hummus, baba ganoush, creamy cheeses, and pickled cucumbers were laid out with fresh bread for dipping.

Everything smelled great and then the meats came out. Beef, chicken, and steak sizzled atop a gold mini fire pit on our table and the cat's curiosity heightened. This is the type of food we've been eating since the tour began, didn't think anything of it. We finished our meals and I had one more round of falafel because it was so so good. It was time for the water closet and a desert cigarette. Everything was wonderful and the scene was beautiful. We hear the call and it's time to get back on the bus. A slight breeze filled the air as the sun was dipping below the trees. We take our seats and head to Cairo Airport to fly to Luxor. I'm still bundled up in my pink vest and hoodie and ask Michelle if I'm red at all, as I begin to feel my face. She turns off my ac on the bus and immediately I feel my eyes and mouth start to swell. Follow your protocol, Lia, chew up a Benadryl, sip



water, soak it in your mouth then swallow. Breathe slowly and take the layers off. This wasn't a normal reaction, I felt that right away, this is more dangerous. I chew another one for precaution and breathe w Michelle watching me. I feel something pull my head back, then my neck, then back. Everyone's eyes on the bus started to peer over the seat as I see rings of black vibrating from the center of my vision outwards, I'm blacking out. As I do so, I muster enough energy to say "Michelle"... she runs to the front of the bus and gets help. I come back and Abdallah has paper towels with water on them on my forehead and chest. Laura gives me her portable fan to keep cool, and the bus continues to the airport. I feel extremely sick, but everything I ate was what we'd been eating the whole

time. What now? I'm up to 2 Benadryl and you can take up to 6 a day. I monitor. We get to the airport and I'm violently sick. I vomited all of dinner and some pride, tipped the paper towel lady, and went to the lobby where our flight is being prepared. I hear whispers of snippy lady's mad that I'm getting special treatment because of my broken knee and now my illness which we haven't pinpointed yet. I could care less, I felt like a shovel in shit. Their eyebrows are manufactured anyways, and their too old to be acting like dumb catty kids. I felt like my stomach left my body for a rollercoaster ride. Up and down, good and bad. I finish emptying my body and it's time to load the plane. First class front seat, now I understand why the ladies were mad, again, I didn't care. My state of mind was worried that I'm having an allergic reaction and can't get down to the bottom of it. We take off and the cabin pressure sets me off. My reaction is hitting an all-time high. I have water and decided to rub my temples, crush another Benadryl in my mouth and fan myself into oblivion. The flight attendant gives me a cup of ice. I rub the back of my neck, my temples, cheeks, ears, and wrists, and try to stay calm. This is an hour and a half flight, I thought to myself, You can do this. We land and the pressure subsided while nausea came back. I try to hold the water down, but at this point, it's Benadryl water in my stomach and I need bread. But I'm allergic to wheat, all my allergies rush to my head and I'm baffled at what I can and cannot eat. We land, Michelle and Chris get my bags for me and I wobble to the new bus. We check into our Jolie Ville resort bungalow and rest. I plumage to sleep after fighting the stomach pain.

November 13 Recovery day k

630 am - Breakfast opens/ 845 am - Exercise & meditation - Meet at the pool by the breakfast area/ 10 am - Meet in the lobby/ Visit the Valley of the Kings / Alabaster shop/ Lunch/ Return early to enjoy the hotel

The next morning, I decided to stay in after that traumatic chaotic event. I needed to rest since this was only day 3 of a 10-day trip. The Benadryl hangover was strong, my words swam through my teeth as my lips were limp and tired. We had a wonderful breakfast on the Nile in our P.J.'s. Croissant and coffee with a pink yogurt that may have been strawberry. I walked Michelle to the tour bus and found an alternate path back to the bungalow where I retired for a 7-hour nap. 3:30 pm came around and I decided I needed to get up so I could sleep properly that night. I gathered my strength and took a hot rinse. I felt the reaction coming back, so I turned the tap to cooler water, and it subsided a bit. I hadn't eaten yet, how am I having another reaction? Is it still in my body? I decided I needed some fresh air, I changed into my most modest bathing suit and hit the pools, yes plural, pools. The water was cold and refreshing and felt great on my knee and hot skin. I felt normal for a bit, not sick, nice, cold, and refreshed. I watched the sunset and forgot all the troubles in the world till the

sun went down. I started folding my lent pool towel from the nice hairy pool boy and he motioned for me to stop, he said, "You do nothing, I get it for you Russian lady." I laughed and answered that I was American, he lit up with surprise. That's the 4th person who thought I was Russian. I give a thank you wave, snap one last pic of the sunset and walk back to the room. I spot Laura kicking it in front of her bungalow. We chat, I light up a smoke, and sit as a buffet for mosquitos while we chat about our days. The tour bus arrives and the place is a buzz with energy my hunger finally happened. I asked Michelle if she was hungry, they had eaten on the boat, so I moseyed over to the restaurant/ Buffett and eyeballed things I think I can eat. I'm scared to eat as I've taken too much Benadryl in 24 hours so I lightly grab some white rice and a small piece of chicken. \$16 later, I remember why I hate buffets. I lay down and every time I fell asleep, my airways were cut off and I shot up out of bed gasping for air frightened. Crunched up that Benadryl, soak in water, and swallow. I felt I was catapulted out of bed. What is making me react this way? Never have I felt so out of breath and terrified. I fall back asleep after it settles and again it happens. I decided to just prop myself up in bed and chill.



November 14 Schedule

715 am - Exercise & Meditation/ 7 am - Wake up call/ 730 - breakfast/ 8 am - Bags out/ 830 am - Lobby/ Visit Karnak Temple/ Jewelry Shop/ 130 pm - Lunch on cruise boat/ 430 pm - Lobby/ Papyrus shop/ Luxor Temple/

We pack our bags, it's time to leave the resort and head to the Karnak Temple and off-limits areas. Today we wore our Niagara shirts and so many people thought we ere a couple. We laughed it up. Michelle and I love a parade, so for our bus tour, we rode in the very back of the bus. We pull up, park and unload into the sea of tourists from every part of the world. Street vendors whistle, shouting, getting our gullible attention as we head to security. We get through and are welcomed with the big energy of this monumental place. Beautiful! We go straight down the middle to the end and start at the end. We pray/meditate

for a bit, then Abdallah begins his excellent rendition of a tour. We roll through he



points out important facts and we continue the tour. Catty ladies gossiping as we enter one of the off-limits temples. I chalked it up to old ladies getting tired and needing their diapers changed. We are on a spiritual tour, maybe their religion is practicing being petty, that's cool, to each their own man. Michelle would say, "Not my circus, not my monkeys." We continue and the scenes are just absolutely gorgeous, like wow, amazing and we had

to keep telling each other we are actually in Egypt and taking this tour.

We arrive to our cruise ship on the Nile! Wow, royalty, I thought to myself. What a beautiful ship, but the smell of diesel was smacking me hard. We meet in the dinning room where Peter talks about tomorrows adventure. We listen with open ears on the edge of our seats as he goes through the list. We grab dinner, an included buffet where you pay for your drinks, and feast on delicious delicacies.

I grabbed white rice and some chicken with plain salad. I ordered a coke for calories since I already went down 2 belt sizes in 3 days. I love my love handles damn it. We explore the ship, make new friends then head to our room to chill. Michelle and I were in a room together on the second floor, first door on the right. We checked out the corks and elegance of our room, we were tickled pink. I took a cold shower and opened our window. Nope! It was so polluted from being



d o c k e d w i t h

other ships. I kept it shut. The air was a circulated mess of smog, exhaust and smoke. You could see the smoke on the water from the fields burning, and not the deep purple good kind of smoke.

It was time to check out the Isis papyrus museum! We got the rundown on how to make papyrus paper and how their in-house artists created their works. They had walls and walls of breathtaking work! It was amazing and affordable! I bought one that says "Be Here Now" in hieroglyphs surrounded by 2 scarabs and gold leafing. It was my personal selfish souvenir. Just for me. When I picked up my freshly painted piece, I chatted with the half English



speaking artist. We understood each other and shared our works. I was in heaven, obviously.

Most everyone ordered something that night and started filing onto the bus again. One more stop! The Roman LUXOR Temple!!! We visited it at night, absolutely breathtaking, what little breath I had.

We relax, use the poor Wi-Fi and drift away to sleep. Another reaction. I'm upset, I'm on a dream vacation and my body is revolting. Mind over matter, mind over matter. Another reaction. That night was a long night.

Tuesday, November 15

US \$120 per person for air balloon ride/ Meet in the lobby at 5 am/ Come back by 8 am/ About 1 hour in the air/ 830am - Lobby of the boat/ Queen Hatshepsut's Temple/ Statues of Memnon/ 1 pm - Back on the boat/ Lunch/ Set sail/ Free afternoon / 7 pm - Dinner

10 pm tick tick tick, 11 pm, 12, 1 am, bust. I rolled in my bed trying to relax and rest when I'm rocked by another reaction. Stressed at the unknown cause, I crush another Benadryl in my mouth as it burns my tongue and cheeks my mind wonders to the pain. My chest is tight, my lungs popping like pomegranate seeds and bleeding down the walls when all I want is a deep fresh breath, it gargles like a flame to oil. I gather my passport, pills, and paper and head out of the room, this is beyond me now. I need help. I cover my mouth with two masks and my fluffy pink jacket and cut through the diesel-looming lobby to find the smirky front desk guy. Awkward situations were not his strong suit. I ask if there's a doctor or nurse aboard. "... No, no Doctor." He scattered out, "Call one?" "Yes please yes. I'm having an emergency, I can't breathe." I called out from the second-level balcony. "Let's go above, on top, fresh air" I follow him frantically climbing into the thickest of the hazy poison. Opening the door and gliding atop the faux grass steps to the top of the spiral, I whiff the air only to be slapped by the engines nearby. It's worse, hope is lost. I'm going to die on a cruise ship in Egypt. What an interesting thought to have as a 34-year-old on her first trip abroad. We fly back down to the lobby and I sit in front of the desk while he fumbled through drawers. I start writing letters to everyone in my sketchbook. I had a great trip. I knew everyone would know I died happy in



beautiful Egypt. My head was flowing with ideas, thoughts, and peace. The



Benadryl kicked in, I was calm and high. Really high. I knew the dry mouth ratio was 1 liter per crush, so I began to hydrate. Rolling with the punches, I needed to eat some of my room rice so my stomach would chill. The chest pains lightened. My head swam and my legs followed up the stairs into my room. I grabbed the room rice, had a spoonful full, and felt the heaviness of the earth flow from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet aura. I slid towards the bed and felt the big blackout coming on. My last thought was I wrote everyone, it's in my sketchbook safe, it's ok to go. Pink Floyd pops though, "There's no reason for it, you got to go some time." Everything turned black.

Like a mummy being resurrected, I shot up from my bed gasping for air at a thrusting 90-degree angle. Another reaction, 4 am, closer and closer together, I'm running out of options. Benadryl cannot keep up with what's happening. My body was being dragged through the Nile. I told Peter and Abdallah I seriously need help, from a doctor or hospital. It's not my nerves. It's real. "The doctor is on his way dear" Abdallah assured me via WhatsApp. I wait, in meditation and exhaustion. The early group met up for a hot air balloon ride, which would have been my first, but with this reaction, the doctor was more important. As I kissed my \$120 hot air balloon ride ticket goodbye, the group leaped onto adventure. Peter and Abdallah came into the room while waiting for the doctor and asked some questions. Has this happened before? No. Do you think it's food-related? Not sure. Do you want to go home? Fuck, do I have to? I'd like to finish the tour and just get better. Let's see what the doctor can do.

Dr. Eshak Pakhom Naserallah M.BB.CH, M.Sc Internal Medicine enters the room with Abdallah briskly and sits on the adjacent bed, and begins. "What's happening with you miss..." "Lia, I'm waking up from not breathing and having allergic reactions. The length between them is getting shorter and shorter, and I'm taking too much Benadryl." "Has this happened before?" He asked. "Never" I replied. He told me calmly and collectively he was going to give me a shot and prescribe some meds for me to take and monitor my progress. He asked if I wanted antidepressant medication. I thought to myself, does he think this is all in my head? I don't need meds like that, I never take that kind of stuff, "No, thank you." I declined, and he asked me to lay down for the shot as he prepares it. Abdallah and Peter both glue their eyeballs to the carpet as they see themselves out. That strange feeling of a needle through your ticklish glutes

goes through, tightening of the skin begins, then the spread. He gave me a shot containing dexamethasone, pheniramine, and B6 complex and a burning sensation went right to my knee. The doctor left, Abdallah sent for the pharmacy list and I rest. I felt a moment of clarity and tried to breathe deeply, slowly, the chambers opened. Feeling exhausted, hungry, and otherwise defeated, I get up to eat breakfast. White rice, a potato wedge, an orange slice, and some water. Safe. I have to sit today's activities out and the boat was making me nauseous. I



should have gone with them, but then I'd be stuck on a bus with that same stagnant engine air pumped into my weakened lungs. I wore the 2 masks, taped up the windows and vents, and tried to keep the fan on high. I managed to sneak some rest in the in-between reaction. Deciding that even the doctor couldn't get it right, I needed to go. The air is killing me, and now I know it. Everyone went onto the deck to enjoy the sunset. I used my masks and too it off for pics. I've lost too much weight I'm feeling the weakest I've ever felt, and now I'm getting eyebrows from people who were helping me. Why am I the only one getting sick? My father was a Vietnam vet who died from agent orange. My mom died of uterus cancer. My twin and I were born in March instead of July, ultra premature, is this me being weak? Can I be saved or am I now doomed.

Did I poison myself because I'm the only family member who travels? Questioned ruminates but don't make me feel better, now I start reflecting internally. I don't want to go home. I also have never felt my lungs this heavy or my esophagus like coffee straws. How can this be? I'm heart broken, alone, and just downright mad.

Chapter 6: It's Time To Go Home

Nov 16

multiple reactions early morning asked for hospital

Peter and Abdallah watched after me in the lobby because Michelle was dead asleep and I didn't want to be alone.

Luxor to Cairo

I said my tearful goodbyes to Michelle as she squeaks out "Am I the asshole?" Stupefied, I shake my head and tell her she has to do this tour for the both of us. I wanted nothing but to stay, but my body wasn't having it. She always says "Self-first, not selfish" and that is exactly why I had to leave. I wasn't homesick, I wasn't having a panic attack, and my body shut down too many times for me to ignore it. I had to go home, or at least get medical help. I say goodbyes to my new friends and tour-mates and watched them go on with their adventure without me. Ehab gathered my bags and escorted me off the boat onto a horse piss-filled dirt road that stunk to high heaven with beggars and trash piles burning. Romantic right? Ehab dropped me off with Abdula the taxi driver and assured me I would be safe on the car ride to Luxor from Edna's lock. Weaving in and out of traffic, Abdula was a pro on the stick shift blowing around cows, street bikes, dogs, and vendors. I told him how much I missed driving a stick, and he slowed down and asked if I wanted to drive. Excited, I said yes, but then remembered my knee was broken. So I corrected my answer and told him he better drive since he knows the roads and the way. Checkpoint after checkpoint, yelling American! American! We flew threw like a breeze on the ocean. I asked him why they didn't even stop us when he said I was an American passenger. He replied, " We don't want a bad name for an American getting hurt here." Interestingly enough, I surveyed the beautiful scenery of rolling farms and people tending to their animals, shops, and kids. We came colliding into Luxor proper where we literally swung by an intersection, open the door and the president ran into the passenger seat. 'Hello again! How are you?' I said. He nodded and said he was doing good and was happy to see a smile on my face. He asked for my passport, makes some calls and has my boarding pass ready at the airport. We come to a screeching halt in the airport drop-off section. We go into security, take off my knee brace, belt, watch and sunglasses, throw them into that overused grey bin, and send it off through the machines. Off without a hitch. The

excitement runs through my veins every time I go through security. It's just so fast, move, go, go, go! I checked both my luggage so I don't have to worry about carrying my bags and using the crutches. Easier, and I had my day bag so, I had my most important things on me. It's time to fly. I haven't flown since that first day I had an allergic reaction so I became nervous but stayed calm. I have an inhaler, Benadryl, and ice for my neck and temples, and faith that this will go smoothly. Nope. As soon as we started our ascent, it came on thick. Bright red, chest pain and arm pain, throat closing up, I crush up a pill and take one of the pills the doctor prescribed. I breathe, stretch my arms out and just try to relax. It was an hour and a half of fretting, I let the airline crew know what I was going through and helped keep it together after one crying spell. We started our descent and the pressure becomes less and less. The 100-pound block is removed from my chest and my lungs inflate like a whoopi-cushion. I stood up and grabbed my crutches and yelled I was having a reaction and it was a medical emergency. Everyone was compliant, not cool with it but compliant. I could feel it getting worse as we idled in the cabin and the oxygen was getting thinner and thinner. I had to move quickly. I'm off, it's wonderfully cold getting off and a wheelchair is waiting for me. I blow past it just to get to the end of the hallway and get some circulation going. One flight down, two more to go. Terek is back to help hold my hand through the airport again! I'm at baggage claim when I see his fast face rolling through the crowd looking for me. I send an up and down Yoo-hoo wave that catches his eye and we wait for my plastic wrapped checked



luggage to come through. We load up and Abdallah has already arranged a hotel for me at Le Passage, a casino and hotel. Having all these complications, I couldn't believe I was about to stay at a hotel that allows smoking. I quit smoking but also was still having this problem breathing because of the environment. Don't look a gift camel in the mouth. Checked in, said thank yous and goodbyes, and went our separate ways. I get to the room, roach smells hardcore with cigarette smoke. I decided to brush it off, wear a mask and take a shower. I change into my p.j.s and start to feel tightening in my chest and hard

to breathe again. I was talking with my husband Isaac looking for a ticket and was striking out. All of a sudden, I was in deep water, I couldn't breathe and had to make that scary decision. Ambulance time. Here they come, front desk, managers, all the eyeballs. My bags are packed. I asked to keep them w me even in the ambulance. We get to the vehicle and a scuffle has started. Yelling in Arabic, shouting, gesturing. What could be the problem? I feel like I'm dying again, slowly on my feet, I'm fading. The hotel manager asked if I'm alone, and I say yes, then he retorts, "They won't take a foreigner who is traveling alone, but they can give you oxygen." At this point, Inshaallaah. I've lost hope in life, I've made peace with dying, again. I take the oxygen while on a WhatsApp video chat w my husband to assure me I'm not going to die alone today while the Egyptians argue in a foul tone I can't understand. I feel oxygen in my lungs, my chest pains ease up and I feel a sense of chillness for a bit. The hotel manager walks me back to the hotel room where we call the in-house doctor, he says the doctor is on his way in 30 min and for me to wait in my room. I curl up under the blanket and feel the coma coming on. I'm relaxed, I don't care anymore about what happens next, I just want to pain to stop. I fell asleep. My phone rings, it's Isaac. I answer quietly and slowly due to the Benadryl coma that's coming on. The door knocks, it's the doctor, he takes my blood, and vitals and listens to my breathing. I showed him my meds, and he changed the dosage and it instantly made a difference. I felt the air, the tension lifted, and my head less heavy. Hunger finally happened so I ordered a Cesar salad and some fruit. Its limp white lettuce with blasé dressing made me thankful for something in my stomach. I took a cold shower, turned on my YouTube sleep playlist, and send off into the dreamworld knowing I would wake to breathe easy.

Nov 17

Cairo to London

7 hours of nonstop rest. I hadn't had solid rest since I landed in Egypt. Glorious but starting to turn red, it's time to take the meds. I used the proper dosage of the meds and take another shower. This time I test the waters and make it a hot one. Every time my body temp got too warm, the reaction would happen. I wanted to know if I'm doing better or not. Successful hot shower but a red face stayed on for a few hours. I pack my day bag and go downstairs to check out the breakfast menu. Not hungry, I have my leftover Cesar salad and a few bits of a banana.

Terek takes me through security where I meet a disgruntled woman who smells my fear. On the taxi ride, I had taken my knee brace off to go through security. I gather all my belongings and throw them into the grey worn-down bins as they scoot through the scanner. I hobble through the body scanner and I get the pat down. A lady in a white hijab and black robe yells at me and gestures to move

my foot. I copy her and she throws the world's darkest look at my confused American face. She yells and grabs my pant leg and shoves my foot on a box. I let out a loud cry at the top of my lungs followed by escaping tears crawling out of my eyes. She puts my knee down and then motions the other knee. I balance and do it myself. My brace and crutches come out of the scanner, I grab them and I see the lady's face remain disgruntled.

Nov 18

London to Phoenix

I land in London, Heathrow Airport at midnight. I'm exhausted and ready for an airport chair nap for my nine-hour layover. I live in Yuma Arizona and never plan for cold weather as I'm a creature of the heat, I forgot it gets cold in other places. Realizing I checked my bags, all I had for warmth was on my person so I got creative wrapped my head up and held my backpack to my chest, and slipped into meditative airport sounds of the night. I get woken up by a lady pushing a purple wheelchair, she asked if I'm Mrs. Littlewood. "I'm a frozen Mrs. Littlewood, yes," I replied hopping into the chair. She wheels me about 30 feet to the broken-r-us section of the airport, I was the youngest in the room. One by one the wheelchairs filed out to catch their plane. It's my turn. Wheeled to the gate I talk with the flight attendants right off the bat, they have oxygen ready, an epi-pen, and ice on standby for me. Yay. I feel this giant plane might be better pressure-wise, I don't know, I may be getting ahead of myself. I tell my seatmates the deal and to not freak out if I'm throwing ice down my shirt and puffing inhalers like a lunatic. The Tucson goes thanked me in advance.

As we start to climb I feel the reaction, redness, heat, and swell in my face and my chest. I could still breathe but I definitely felt the reaction starting. Prepared with pocket Benadryl, I crush one in my mouth, sipped water, and swished it in my mouth. I feel that burn of medicine swirl and swallow. I grabbed the cup of ice and pin my veins down section by section. Puffed the inhaler and breathed slowly. I envisioned myself flying outside the plane and just gobbling up all that clean air like the pathways in my lungs were flowing. I put on my headphones crush another Benadryl and start to relax.

Chapter 7: Home

I land in Phoenix and instantly feel the dryness of the desert heat. It is a dry heat. My lungs felt less full. I knew I had help now. I get my bags and run to the exits to breathe anything other than recycled airport air. My love Isaac is there in white like a white knight I didn't know I needed until this trip. I wasn't heard, I wasn't taken seriously, I was treated like I was a crazy woman. I was absolutely flabbergasted by this trip. We got Phoenix Street tacos, drove back to Yuma, and saw my family. I have never been so upset in my life. I wanted this trip. My body revolted, and no one helped me. I wish that pain on no one. Today, I'm still going through doctor appointments, PTSD therapy, and distancing myself from people who didn't believe me. After all, I survived and now I know better. Another delegation is that no one will ever understand what I went through, but that's ok, it makes me and my art go deeper into the psyche.

The reflection of death overcame my path several times, my takeaway. . . I was fine with dying, I lived knowing I took care of my parents, sisters, and nieces. I knew I tried to help the community with art and support the LGBTQ+ community. The Art co-op was born, and fell to the coronavirus. Full-time muralist then break my knee. Signs led me to Egypt, then Egypt spat me out and said get serious. I thought I was a goner. I wrote my family, and recorded videos of my goodbyes to everyone and how they touched my soul. I'm happy to not have shared those videos. I survived many reactions, and live to tell the tale.

With all that said, I now focus on my mental health and PTSD with a therapist who has really helped me solve my lifelong triggers. I feel complete, I feel worthy, I feel whole, I feel heard. I'm in a very vulnerable spot sharing that, and I know others will benefit from my journey. In the healing process, I created over 100 pieces to be exhibited at the Yuma Art Center June 2nd, 2023 featuring paintings, collages, sculptures, carvings, drawings, and this book. Until we meet again,

Lia the crazy artist from Yuma.

