

The Chapel by the Sea

Following the Breadcrumbs Home

ZOE

The Chapel by the Sea: Following the Breadcrumbs Home

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This book reflects the author's personal experiences and recollections. Some names and identifying details may have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved. The events are portrayed to the best of the author's memory.

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Dedication

To my Daughter —

You walked beside me through the most confusing years of my life with a love far greater than your years. You reminded me to laugh, to dance, and to keep going when I wasn't sure I could.

To my Son —

Thank you for your forgiveness, your patience, and your love. You helped lead me out of one of the darkest seasons of my life, and I will always be grateful.

You have both been among my greatest teachers.

I love you beyond words.

Acknowledgements

This story would not exist without the people who loved me, encouraged me, challenged me, and helped me find my way.

To my parents, step-parents, siblings, family, and lifelong friends — thank you for your unwavering love and support through every season of my life.

To those who entered my life for only a moment yet left a lasting imprint, thank you for the lessons, the encouragement, and the light you shared along the way.

To my editor, thank you for helping bring this story to life with care, patience, and remarkable speed.

And to every teacher, healer, stranger, and friend who unknowingly became part of this journey —

Thank you.

Introduction

As a child, I was afraid to let anyone read my thoughts.

It wasn't because I had bad thoughts. I'd become so self-conscious about what other people might think of me that sharing my thoughts felt terrifying.

The idea that I would one day write a memoir would have seemed impossible.

This is the story of my spiritual awakening.

More than that, it is the story of an ordinary woman searching for answers — through illness, loss, love, motherhood, curiosity, and ultimately, herself.

I believe there is a Higher Power.

I believe that each of us experiences and names that Higher Power in our own way.

The name I use is God.

If another name speaks more deeply to you, I hope you'll simply read the pages that follow with an open heart.

This book is not an attempt to convince anyone what to believe.

It is simply the story of what happened to me.

My hope is that, whatever your own path may be, something within these pages reminds you to trust your own journey.

Welcome.

PART I: BEFORE I AWAKENED

CH 1 — LIGHT

I've spent much of my life wondering why I experienced the world a little differently than the people around me.

Looking back now, I can see the signs were always there.

Back then, I was simply Jill.

Or, as some of my family lovingly called me...

JillyBird.

I still smile when I hear that name. Long before birds became one of the ways I felt connected to nature and wonder, they were already part of my story, through the people who loved me most.

Of course, I didn't know that then.

I was just trying to figure life out.

By my early twenties, I was out on my own with my first real job and my own health insurance. There was just one problem.

I could not wake up in the morning.

No matter how many alarms I set, I slept through them. I'd been late to high school, late to the job before this one, and now late to this one too. It wasn't that I didn't care — I cared a lot, I wanted to succeed — I just couldn't understand why something that seemed effortless for everyone else felt impossible for me.

Finally I went to my doctor and asked her straight out:

“Why is it I can’t wake up in the morning?”

She was a real sweetheart, and she’s actually the one who first noticed my asthma. She ordered a sleep study, which is how I ended up spending a night in the strangest room I’ve ever slept in — if you could call it sleeping. No ceiling, glass walls all the way around, wired up head to toe, and out in the larger room beyond the glass, a man sitting at a panel of computers, staring at me all night like I was the show.

I’m still not sure how a person is supposed to sleep well like that.

In the morning he told me I didn’t have a sleep disorder.

I just had a weird brain wave.

That was it. No explanation. My doctor never brought it up again, and I was young enough — and internet-less enough — that I didn’t think to ask for the report. So I let it go and went on my way.

Looking back now, I wonder if that was one of the first little hints that my mind simply worked differently. At the time, though, I wasn’t searching for anything spiritual.

I was just trying to get to work on time.

I was living in an apartment with yellow-stained walls from years of cigarette smoke. I had already quit smoking, and my boyfriend of four years was kind enough to smoke outside. Around that same time, my doctor diagnosed me with asthma. Suddenly it made sense why I had always felt like something wasn’t quite right whenever I pushed myself too hard at the gym.

When I first moved into that apartment, it felt safe enough. Over time, though, something began to change. The neighborhood no longer felt the way it once had. Strange things started happening. The man who lived directly above us exposed himself through the window to my best friend more than once when she came to visit. Then one day my boyfriend heard a loud crash as glass shattered. The maintenance man — a genuinely kind man — went upstairs to investigate, only to be stabbed by a tenant who was high on drugs.

Looking back, I can see there were signs that it was time to leave.

Around that same time, another part of my life was quietly ending. I’d been with my boyfriend for four years, and there wasn’t one dramatic blowup — we had simply grown apart and were headed in different directions. I was spending my time at the gym, trying to build a healthier life. He was headed down a different path.

Once I knew it was time, I did what I always do when life becomes uncertain.

I made a plan.

I’m a planner, an organizer, a list-maker. I went through every closet, every cupboard, even the garage, sorting and packing so moving day would go as smoothly as possible. I didn’t want him to know I was leaving because if he cried, I knew I’d cry too — and I was afraid I’d stay.

So instead of telling him in person, I wrote him a long letter.

When the day came, my Mom, my stepdad, and my girlfriends showed up, and together we moved me out in record time.

One chapter had closed.

Another was already waiting, though I had no idea what was about to unfold.

I landed in a lovely loft at a friend's home, right by the airport — close enough that the planes rattled the windows.

I was half-asleep with the radio on the morning of September 11th when the voices started talking about the Twin Towers. Still drifting, not all the way back in my body yet, I figured they were talking about something from the past. By the time I finally roused myself — late again, of course — a note from my roommates was waiting, telling me to turn on the news. The second tower falling just as I turned on the TV.

I rushed to work and found the airport shut down, every flight in the country grounded. That night, fighter jets came roaring overhead and about made us all jump out of our beds.

Not long after, I lost my job — laid off with most of the newer staff when the airlines started cutting deep. I flew to Texas on my last flight benefits and stayed with my Mom through the end of the year.

At the time, it felt like one more thing falling apart.

Looking back now, it was another doorway.

One of the perks of working for an airline was flying standby in first class whenever there were open seats. On New Year's Eve — my very last day of flight benefits — the cabin was almost empty. There were only three of us up front.

A middle-aged man with curly brown hair asked if he could sit beside me. I said sure. I like to chat, and it turned out, so did he.

He told me he was a psychologist. For the entire flight, he asked me question after question about my life, my goals, and what I wanted for my future. It wasn't a therapy session, yet somehow it felt as though someone was gently helping me see a door I hadn't noticed was standing open.

I still don't know if he was simply a kind man who enjoyed talking to people, or one of life's unexpected angels.

What I do know is this: the very next day, I signed up for college for the third time.

What I remember most about that flight isn't even what he said. It's the feeling in the cabin. Have you ever sensed that something was different before you understood why? That's how it felt that night.

I've always thought of him as my guardian angel.

Not long after, I enrolled at a wonderful community college. My roommate's boyfriend, who still worked for the airline as a mechanic, suggested I apply for airport security. Because so

many airline employees had been laid off after 9/11, they were giving preference to applicants with airline experience.

I was hired almost immediately.

On my second day, I met the man who would become my first husband.

We worked together at the international checkpoint, where our schedule was four ten-hour shifts each week. Occasionally we'd work eleven or twelve hours when flights were delayed, but those three-day weekends were something I never forgot. Looking back, I think that's where my belief that we all need more time with the people we love first began to take shape.

We didn't waste any time. I'd always wanted children, and he was a genuinely good man from a genuinely good family. We had our son first — a beautiful, bright-eyed little boy — and were married soon afterward. We planned for our second child, and after a little trouble getting pregnant, our daughter arrived, already determined to take on the world.

There is a kind of love that only appears the moment you hold your own child. It stretches your heart into a shape it never knew before. Even during my most uncertain seasons, my children were my constant — bringing joy, hope, and a love that asked for nothing in return.

Around that same time, I started chasing down a different mystery: my own body.

Digestion issues had started in my twenties, and I'd been trying to fix them ever since, mostly by trying every diet under the sun. At one point I decided the problem must be meat, so I became a vegetarian for a year.

It was, it turned out, exactly the wrong move.

I didn't know it yet, but cutting out meat was quietly wrecking my digestion in a different way — by the time I figured out the connection, I had acid reflux bad enough that I needed a pill twice a day just to get through it. That one mistake, and the years it took me to untangle it, planted something in me that never really left: a fascination with food, and with how what we eat can either heal us or wreck us.

We ate a lot of beans in those days, which is probably why my son's first compound word was "bean burrito" — took me forever to figure out what he was saying. He was a sharp little guy, reading and writing early, obsessed with the alphabet, the kind of kid a doctor tells you should be in a special program. We kept him in a regular school. He grew into a smart, grounded young man who's headed to college now.

Looking back, I can see that my search didn't start with anything spiritual.

It started with healing. I just didn't know yet how many forms healing could take.

My husband was restless in his job, so we made a plan: pay off our debt, have another baby, and move to Texas so we could both go back to school full time. We packed up our son and our two-month-old daughter and started over.

I leaned toward becoming a dietitian — food, and how it moves through the body, was the one subject that had ever come easily to me. With my ADHD, I'd always struggled to retain what I

read, except when it came to books about nutrition and wellness. Those were the only books I could read, retain, and truly comprehend.

In the end, I chose the family business instead and finished a degree in Human Resources at a small college on the military base — smaller classes, a schedule that actually fit around babies and daycare, and finally, a school where I thrived. I graduated with honors.

At the time, it felt like I was simply building a life. A career. A marriage. A family.

Looking back now, I can see I was also quietly becoming the woman who would one day ask an entirely different set of questions.

Going to school full-time while working part-time and raising two small kids was exhausting in ways I hadn't expected — the daycare runs, the homework, the middle-of-the-night wake-ups. But it also meant family dinners and bedtime stories and more smiles than I could count.

My babies were a blessing, through every bit of it.

CH 2 — CROSSROADS

Soon after we moved to Texas, we took a family trip with my Mom — Arizona first, to stay with my Aunt and Uncle, who watched the babies while we went to the NASCAR races. Then on to Vegas to meet up with my kids' grandma and aunts. A great trip, start to finish.

On the way back, we stopped at my Aunt's again. My Mom and husband flew home ahead of me, and I stayed a couple extra days before driving back with the kids. That's when it started — I felt like I was leaning, standing at a slant, though I didn't tell anyone. Vertigo, I guess. The day I was supposed to drive home, I still felt strange, but I knew I could make it. Two little babies in the back seat, and we'd be fine.

We were.

But the vertigo didn't leave when I got home. It got worse — the only thing that helped was lying flat. Blood work came back with nothing. I'd never felt anything like it, and neither could anyone explain it.

Felt Like I Was Having a Heart Attack

Anxiety and panic attacks followed close behind. I lost count of how many times I ended up at the doctor's office, hooked up to a heart monitor, certain I was dying.

One of those nights, while we were in Minneapolis visiting family, I'd canceled plans with my Bestie Sunshine because I felt another one coming on, and my husband took me to Urgent Care instead. That same night, the bridge collapsed.

Sunshine called the second she heard. "Holy cow, thank God you weren't feeling well," she said — because one of us would have been on that bridge at exactly that time. I agreed with her completely. For once, I was grateful to not be feeling well.

The panic attacks kept coming, along with two car accidents where I blacked out for an instant while backing up — once into a pole, once into a car. For a short stretch during all of this, I actually started drinking at home, a whole bottle of wine some nights just to fall asleep — which wasn't like me at all. My whole life, I'd been a social drinker, never a drink-alone-at-home kind of person. But anxiety does strange things to a body, and that was mine for a little while. Eventually I went on medication for a few months, and it worked well enough that I actually sat still on the couch — which, if you knew me, tells you everything.

I decided to take the summer off school to breathe and be with the babies. On the very first morning of that break, I was on the floor fixing a leg on the toddler table, pressing down

hard, when my neck jolted. I knew immediately something was wrong. I drove myself to the chiropractor — I still can't believe I did that — and then to the doctor for pain pills. My husband had to physically lift my head off the couch with his hand under my neck. I lost a week to sleeping off the pain pills, and it took a month before my neck stopped fighting me.

Realizing I Wasn't Married to the Right Guy

Somewhere inside all that anxiety was an answer I didn't want yet: I wasn't with the right man, and I wanted out.

School was ending and we treated ourselves to a trip to Hawaii. I was terrified of that flight — all that ocean below us — and the fear went back further than the flight itself. As a kid, I'd had a dream, more of a nightmare really, that had stuck with me for years, and ever since then, flying over open water had set off something in me I couldn't quite talk myself out of.

So I packed a couple little bottles of spiced rum, hoping a drink or two would settle my nerves. I wasn't much of a drinker back then, and I didn't have any tolerance built up — and on a plane, it hits you faster anyway. It didn't take much before I was properly drunk. I got sick, and slept through most of the flight.

Underneath all of it, if I'm honest, I already knew the marriage was over. Turns out I hadn't needed to be nervous about the flight itself — I missed almost the whole thing.

Not long after we came home, I became a single mom. I moved in with my Mom for the better part of a year, saving up while I figured out what came next, until I bought my first house.

That house was the first place I'd ever actually wanted to decorate. Every apartment before it had just been somewhere to sleep — this one, I ripped the carpet out myself and put in tile right away. I am a creator. An organizer. A problem solver. That house was proof.

Six months later, the divorce was final.

Met the Man who Changed My Life

Six months after that, everything changed at my sister's birthday dinner — a pizza place I almost didn't go to, since there'd been some tension with her husband. I went anyway, ate beforehand since pizza wasn't on my list, and made the effort.

After dinner, there was a small get-together at her house. My sister's best friend got fed up with some of the other girls there and wanted out, so the two of us took off to a bar instead. I'd barely walked in the door before some guy offered to buy me a drink, and we headed straight to the dance floor. When I came back, my sister's friend was over by the bar with a group of younger people, and I found myself half-listening to their conversation, thinking, *why am I wasting my time on these kids?*

I turned around.

Standing right behind me was this beautiful man.

I said hi. He said hi.

It was love at first sight — or close enough that by the end of the weekend, we were in love. It felt like we'd already known each other for years. We both felt something settle. He was stationed in another town, which didn't stop a thing.

San Francisco

By then I'd graduated college and was working full-time for the family business. My Mom, my brother, and I flew to San Francisco for a work convention — my first time in the city. It was cold, and we walked everywhere, including all the way up one absurdly steep hill. We met colleagues for dinner and somehow ended up with five people trying to squeeze into one cab, my six-foot-four brother sitting on our friend's husband's lap in the front seat while the three of us ladies piled into the back, laughing until it hurt. I still laugh about it now.

While we were there, we took a small bus tour through Sonoma and Napa. We sampled wonderful wines, enjoyed the beautiful countryside, and, if I'm being honest, were probably a little tipsy before noon. It was one of those carefree days that still makes me smile.

Even so, I was on edge throughout the trip. I'd recently undergone testing for a suspicious spot in my breast, and I was waiting for the results. Djed called to check on me, genuinely concerned, and his support meant more than he probably realized.

One evening, my brother and I were sitting at a bar when we struck up a conversation with the gentleman beside us. Something about him felt strangely familiar.

It was the same man from the airplane.

My guardian angel.

A few weeks later, I saw him again at the community college, walking through the cafeteria with that same curly brown hair and a satchel slung over his shoulder. He smiled, said "hi," and even called me by name. I couldn't place him in that moment, and by the time I turned to look again, he had already disappeared into the crowd.

The news finally came while I was still in San Francisco.

The area of concern was nothing.

My breast was just fine.

Work Trip

Not long after, I flew out for another work trip — two weeks of training, the longest I'd ever been away from my babies. I landed in New York, rented a car, and drove into Connecticut. My first day of training was freezing; I swear they had the thermostat set in the sixties. After class, I went straight to the mall for long underwear, but stopped first at a Buffalo Wild Wings for a drink, TVs on every wall.

That's how I found out. Every screen in that restaurant was showing the same thing.

It was the day of the Boston Marathon bombing. I was barely an hour away, alone, and they hadn't caught the men responsible yet.

It was a scary feeling — one more reminder that the world could shift under your feet with no warning at all.

PART II: THE SEARCH

CH 3 — VORTEX

By the time I got to my last stretch of college, my body had started sending me signals I couldn't ignore. One sinus infection after another, right on top of my asthma — as soon as the antibiotics wore off, another one showed up. My digestion was even worse. I actually had to leave my sister's wedding early because I was so constipated I couldn't stand it.

Was this happening due to the old buildings at the school which back in the day were used as horse stables? Or the mold I found in my apartment, or the food I was buying from the grocery store?

Date with a Doctor

Not long after becoming a single mom, I decided to try dating again, and got set up with a doctor — a bit older than I would've picked myself, but he was a *doctor*, so I said yes. He turned out to look about ten years older than he claimed, but we had a genuinely nice conversation over a fabulous cabernet. My son's allergies came up, and he mentioned something called the Blood Type Diet.

I didn't realize it in that moment, but that conversation over that glass of wine changed my life. I'm still grateful for it — and for him.

Finding Our Blood Types

Turns out that an incredible number of people don't know their own blood type. My Mom didn't know mine, neither did my general doctor. I finally got mine from my OBGYN: O positive. My daughter's birth chart hospital records recorded the same type as mine. My son's chart had nothing on file, so I bought a finger -prick testing kit and got my answer that way — also O. Pricking a young child's finger was, unsurprisingly, the hardest part of the whole project.

My son had already spent half his early life not feeling well — ear infection after ear infection, asthma, allergies, pneumonia, four ear surgeries. An allergist eventually found his immunity to strep was practically nonexistent, and a booster vaccine made a real difference for him. I'm not certain how I feel about vaccines in general, but I know that one helped my son, and I'm grateful for it.

The Blood Type Diet

The book that started it all, *Live Right 4 Your Type*, sorted foods into three categories: Beneficial, Neutral, and Avoid — beneficial like medicine, avoids like poison. For my blood type, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and cucumbers were all on the avoid list, which wasn't much of a sacrifice since I'd never liked any of them anyway.

Years earlier, I'd tried becoming a vegetarian and developed acid reflux so severe I was taking the purple pills twice a day. It wasn't until I read this book that everything clicked. Type O's naturally produce more stomach acid to digest meat. No meat meant nowhere for that acid to go. It was one of those *aha* moments that completely changed how I understood my own body.

Around this same time, a gastroenterologist found inflammation in my intestine and handed me a prescription instead of an answer. When I asked him to check for celiac disease while he was already there, he biopsied the wrong part of my digestive tract — or at least that's what I came to believe after doing my own research. At that point, I wasn't willing to start eating wheat again just to be retested. Even one bite could leave me dealing with digestive issues for nearly two weeks.

An allergist also discovered I was allergic to gold — likely from a bottle of liqueur with gold flakes in it that I'd enjoyed far too much when I was much too young to be drinking.

It made me stop and wonder.

If something as seemingly harmless as edible gold could trigger a reaction in my body, what else had I been putting on — or in — my body without ever questioning it?

I followed the Blood Type Diet faithfully, and for the most part, I still do. Eliminating wheat was by far the biggest adjustment. It's in nearly everything. I learned to shop the outer aisles of the grocery store — produce, meat, and fresh foods — and spend as little time as possible in the middle aisles where most of the processed foods live.

Later, I discovered I was also a non-secretor, which changed a few things. Spelt became an avoid, avocado thankfully moved onto my beneficial list, and my bread options shrank to exactly one: Ezekiel bread. It still contains wheat, but because it's made from sprouted grains, my body seems to tolerate it well.

For me, sugar turned out to be one of the biggest troublemakers. It seems to fuel inflammation throughout my entire body.

For years, I'd joked that sugar was the devil. So when I discovered Bobby Parrish on YouTube saying the very same thing, I couldn't help but smile. I told my son he had to watch the video.

"I ain't watching a video about food from a guy named Parrish," he replied.

I busted out laughing.

I love that kid.

Like many people trying to improve their health, I wasn't perfect. Every once in a while, I'd convince myself one meal with wheat couldn't possibly matter. Every single time, my body reminded me otherwise. One day I gave in and bought a fast-food burger. Curious, I later checked my bank statement to see exactly when I'd eaten it.

It took thirteen days before my digestion finally returned to normal.

That was the last time I knowingly ate wheat.

About seven years after adopting the Blood Type Diet, I decided to go one step further. I mailed hair samples from myself and both of my children for a food intolerance test.

The results confirmed much of what our bodies had already been trying to tell us.

Before the test, my daughter had already stopped eating beef because she said it made her stomach hurt. Sure enough, the report confirmed she was intolerant to beef.

My son had struggled with digestive issues for years and already knew foods like ice cream didn't agree with him. While the results didn't dramatically change his eating habits, they helped explain why certain foods had always made him feel worse. Both of my children turned out to have even longer lists of food intolerances than I did, especially to preservatives.

That became another turning point for me.

I started reading every ingredient label, buying organic and non-GMO foods whenever I could, drinking alkaline water, and avoiding packaged foods as much as possible. Along the way, I also replaced many of my household cleaning products with healthier alternatives in hopes of creating a better environment for my lungs.

My search for better health was no longer just about treating symptoms.

It had become a way of life.

The Wake-Up Call

My daughter was in grade school when her teacher called us in — not for grades, but to say she saw all the signs of ADHD. I was stunned to hear it out loud, even though some part of me had already suspected it. I told my daughter right then: no more wheat, no more sugar for you. When that same teacher later told her the diet was a waste of time, I pulled her out of that class and into a different one. I'm grateful to every teacher who's ever cared enough to say the hard thing.

Because if she had it, I knew I probably did too. So over the next several years, I became the one getting poked and prodded by doctors instead of her — sleep specialists, psychiatrists — until I found Dr. William Dodson online, a leading ADHD expert whose description of sleep problems matched mine almost word for word. Reading that felt like finally being understood.

Traveling to See Dr. Dodson

I put off making the appointment for over a year — money, mostly, and if I'm honest, no one in my family really believed I needed to go. ADHD isn't a hyperactive kid bouncing off the walls; it's a brain disorder, and it runs in my family whether anyone wants to say so out loud.

While I was researching natural approaches to ADHD ahead of the appointment, one cannabis strain kept coming up near the top of every list: Harlequin. I got specific about it — mapped out which dispensaries in Colorado carried it before a trip out there.

The day before my appointment, I drove by his office so I wouldn't get lost the next morning. As I pulled into the parking lot, I looked up and froze.

Harlequin Plaza.

I just sat there for a second and laughed. Of all the names.

Maybe it was just a coincidence.

Maybe not.

Either way, it made me smile the rest of the day.

Dr. Dodson confirmed the ADHD, told me I was “superhuman” — that ADHD brains work harder and can do anything once they find the right flow — and pointed out that my daughter and I share both a high IQ and left-handedness, while my son got the high IQ without the ADHD.

Looking Back at My First Sleep Study

After meeting with Dr. Dodson, I found myself thinking about the sleep study I'd undergone in my twenties. I remembered being told I didn't have a sleep disorder — just a “weird brain wave” — and then never hearing another word about it.

Curious, I requested a copy of the original report.

To my surprise, it confirmed that I had no episodes of sleep apnea. Instead, one sentence near the bottom of the report caught my attention:

“Of significance, alpha wave intrusions are present in all stages of sleep, which could cause non-restorative sleep.”

I just sat there staring at it.

For years I'd struggled to wake up in the morning. Even after a full night's sleep, I rarely felt rested. Once I finally woke up, I often spent much of the day fighting through a mental fog.

Why hadn't anyone explained this to me?

I started researching alpha wave intrusions, but there wasn't much information available at the time. Years later, as more research emerged about ADHD and sleep, I began to

understand the connection more clearly. Many people with ADHD don't simply struggle to fall asleep — they struggle to achieve truly restorative sleep.

Looking back, it explained so much.

My biggest sleep challenge was never falling asleep.

It was waking up.

I could fall into an incredibly deep sleep and be almost impossible to wake. Even after getting out of bed, it often felt like my brain hadn't fully arrived yet.

Years later, another sleep study suggested I had mild sleep apnea, although I was never convinced that was the whole story. My sleep had always been fragmented, and I often wondered whether repeatedly waking during the night affected the results. Either way, improving my sleep became another important part of my healing journey.

Looking back now, I realize my body had been leaving clues for years.

I just didn't know how to read them yet.

Reactions to Alcohol

Somewhere in all of this, my body started rejecting alcohol outright, which was new. At my friend's wedding, I drank mimosas all morning, left the reception around four a.m., slept four hours, and woke up feeling like I'd gotten the best sleep of my life — hungover, but somehow deeply rested. I remember telling a friend, only half joking: please don't tell me I have to drink myself into the ground to sleep that well.

The strangest moment came at dinner one night with my Mom and brother. He and I both ordered tequila, sipped it before the meal, and at the exact same instant, we both felt something in our heads just... clear. We looked at each other and knew we'd felt the same thing, at the same second. When I later looked up what tequila is actually made from, I about laughed out loud — agave, the one sweetener allowed on my entire Blood Type Diet. These days, when I do drink, it's tequila or wine. Nothing else.

A few months later, my high school Bestie Butterfly came to visit, and on our last morning together I woke up feeling truly wrong — worse than any hangover I'd had. It was a two-hour drive home, and I wasn't sure I could manage it. We stopped halfway to walk around and eat something. By the time I finally found an antihistamine that evening, I felt better within fifteen minutes, and I understood: my body wasn't handling alcohol the way it used to.

CH 4 — PASSPORT

Djed — the man I'd come to believe, wrongly, was my Twin Flame — called from somewhere overseas. I wouldn't understand for years yet what kind of connection we actually had. I don't even remember which country. He invited me to come visit him in the Dominican Republic once he got back, and told me, more than once, to get the kids' passports ready. It was good just to hear his voice; he sounded well.

Construction

Late February 2018, I got the construction permit, and work finally began on my house.

I'd been sitting on this vision for the place for eight years by then. The people before me had enclosed the covered patio with four huge sliding glass doors, and every time it rained, the sunroom flooded — so we'd never really used it, and it sat there as an eyesore. I had it torn out completely, opened up the back of the house, and added four hundred square feet. Once the old tree with the roots tearing up the yard came out, along with those poorly tinted sliding doors and an old bay window, I noticed something I'd somehow missed for eight years: the house sat right on the one hill on that side of town, with a view for miles, while most of the neighborhood stared at a rock wall.

I'd just been diagnosed with ADHD and was experimenting with medication, which meant I got an enormous amount done — and ate almost nothing until I was starving by night, usually a salad with salmon at my regular spot. I lost muscle and got weak. On top of everything, I'd decided — foolishly — to act as my own general contractor.

Do not do that. Just hire it out.

I skipped the lake that whole summer. The renovation wrapped up just before it, except the kitchen, which I left for last because I genuinely didn't know yet what I was doing with the house — sell it, rent it, or build the business I kept dreaming up in my head: an outdoor yoga studio, water features, plants and pergolas everywhere, something that could keep me healthy for the rest of my life.

The Passport Ordeal

Getting the kids' dad to sign off on the passport paperwork was the easy part. Everything after that turned into a small comedy of errors — one appointment where I didn't realize the kids needed to be there in person, a second appointment at a post office that had no record of us, and a third where I discovered, mid-paperwork, that I'd somehow lost the photos we'd had taken. That last location, thank goodness, took photos on -site. We finally walked out with passports in hand.

Ducky

Around then I was sleeping with a mask for sleep apnea, and my daughter decided I looked and sounded exactly like a duck in it. So she nicknamed me Ducky, and — being the creative kid she is — built and painted me a little box to go with it. I already had a few nicknames from her, Gigi and Mama Bear among them, but Ducky is the one that stuck. That box became my Gratitude Box, where I started keeping little notes and reminders of things I was grateful for.

The Statue by the Waterfall

My first house had come with a broken waterfall in the backyard, and sitting near it, a ceramic rabbit and a small statue I couldn't place. I searched online until I found it: a Wounded Warrior. That search led me to a blog post by a massage therapist named Suzanna Kennedy, who described healing her own back injury through Reiki and wrote about the journey from what she called the Wounded Female Warrior — worn down from years of protecting and

providing for everyone else — into what she called the Goddess: healed, radiant, at peace with herself. She wrote about masculine and feminine energy too, one assertive and action-driven, the other receptive and intuitive, and how healing means learning to hold both.

I didn't know it yet, but that little statue, and that stranger's blog post, were an early nudge toward everything that was about to open up in me.

The Butterfly Book

I took the kids to Barnes & Noble for a book, and while I was in there, it felt like an invisible hand had taken mine and was leading me toward a particular one. It had a butterfly on the cover. I bought it without even reading the back: *The Book of Secrets*, by Deepak Chopra. I still haven't read it. I keep meaning to.

Butterflies had already found their way onto my skin around the same time — I'd had a photo saved for ages of two butterflies I wanted tattooed together, and I finally stopped just thinking about it and got them done. I was starting to actually do the things I'd only ever talked about.

Connecting with Nature

My daughter had always been deeply afraid of bugs — even flies. Then one day in the backyard she found a snail, and instead of running from it, she got curious. She pulled on a purple disposable glove and held it in her palm, studying it with this look of total wonder. Watching her connect with something she used to fear like that was beautiful.

Selling the House

The construction kept throwing up little obstacles — the sprinkler hub needed to move and I couldn't figure out where, the sink I'd bought wouldn't fit. One day I stopped at an estate sale near the house and found a couch I loved the shape of, though not the fabric. A woman there, loud and friendly with long gray hair, told me she knew someone on the Army base with a furniture store, so I invited her to lunch and drove her over to check it out. Every single gate onto the base was closed except the one closest to my own house, and by the time we reached it, I had to turn around — company was coming. We never made it to the furniture store.

Between that and everything else going sideways, I took it as a sign. I was supposed to sell the house.

Awakening Acknowledged

I told my Djed about the strange run of construction problems, and about the yoga studio I kept envisioning. He said it sounded like I was starting to wake up.

I had no idea what that meant. He gave me a few names — people with YouTube channels I should look into — told me not to be scared, and said he had to go.

I've always been an empath, feeling other people's energy, their physical and emotional pain, without ever having a word for it. I didn't understand any of that a few years ago. I'm still learning, but I've come to believe there is more to being human than most of us were ever told.

That same year, in the middle of the construction project, I basically walked away from my life. I cut out the noise — movies, music, most of my friends, the news, even my phone most days — and went through my house room by room, holding each thing and asking whether it brought me joy. Looking back, I can see now: I was in the middle of a spiritual awakening.

I spent long stretches in silence during that sabbatical. Being around people, or music, or a television felt like too much, like static messing with something I'd only just found quiet enough to hear. Electronics kept malfunctioning around me — my phone was the one thing that still worked. Somehow, living with teenagers, I still found the space I needed to connect with nature, with my higher self, with God.

I walked away from my career. I went through what people call the dark night of the soul — and if you're in the middle of one right now, I love you, and I promise there's something on the other side of it. I asked God to show me myself, healed. What I saw was stunning, and strange: a pandemic, and a racial tragedy, playing out before either one had happened.

I understood, somehow, that being healed wasn't going to be handed to me. I'd have to do the work. So I did. My quarantine started long before the world's did. I worked through childhood wounds, ancestral ones, fears I'd forgotten I even had. I did shadow work and found pieces of myself that had never surfaced before. It was exhausting, and it was also beautiful — dragonflies showed up again and again during that stretch, in a way that felt like more than coincidence. There were moments of real peace and connection, and moments where peace still felt like something out ahead of me, a goal instead of a place I was standing in.

By the end of all that inner work, I'd found what I now think of as my healing gift — and I've spent the time since figuring out how to use it to help other people heal too.

Some of my family and friends were there for me the whole time, in their own way, even with almost no contact between us. I noticed signs I saw coming from them in the silence. Some things you must do alone. I went within, and what I found there was self-love, and forgiveness — for myself, and for everyone else, for everything.

CH 5 — SOLITUDE

I didn't have a real definition for spirituality back then, only a feeling — that there was something bigger than me, something more to being human than just the five senses. I've since learned people nurture that feeling in all kinds of ways: through prayer, through art, through gratitude, through quiet time alone or time in nature, through noticing the signs the Universe puts in front of you. None of it requires being a vegetarian, a minimalist, or particularly happy all the time.

Connecting with the Birds

With the new view in the backyard and a little patio right outside my bedroom window, I started spending hours out there just sitting. Meditating, I suppose, though I didn't call it that yet. The birds felt like they were putting on shows for me. One day I watched two of them flying side by side, one all black, one all white. It was beautiful, and it felt like more than just birds.

The Lake

My awakening kicked off for real, I think, after my breast reduction. I went back to a lake I loved and hadn't visited in years — I'd genuinely thought it had dried up. It hadn't. I started tent camping there with my kids and my friend, a fellow northern transplant with jet skis and all the gear, who was the first person to ever tell me I should write a book.

The tent became a travel trailer the next summer, after one too many run-ins with the four o'clock storm — my daughter got clipped by a flying EZ-up, and I nearly lost a finger in one of them. We had unforgettable summers out there: campfires, fireworks, wake surfing, hot air balloons, more than a few bruises. I learned to back a trailer down to the water as good as most of the men out there, which more than one of them made a point of telling me.

In town, working the counter at our family business, a regular who looked a bit like Santa Claus started coming in — twice a day sometimes, always friendly. We got to talking about diets and my digestion, and he suggested I look into Reiki. He sent me a recipe for natural weed killer over email, which delighted me more than it probably should have. A year went by before I saw him again, and he asked if I'd looked into it yet. I hadn't. Life kept getting in the way.

That particular summer wore my body down — the camper, the boat, hours of wake surfing chasing some idea I had about getting into the best shape of my life before I got old. By November, my leg and shoulder were both furious with me. Physical therapy helped the leg. The shoulder took longer, and the pain ran straight down my arm. Finally I Googled Reiki myself and realized it is natural healing. I am all about natural healing, found a practitioner whose website spoke to me, and went to her house.

She told me she felt like she knew me from another life. She mentioned her mother had passed, and when I said I was sorry, she said, "No worries — we didn't have a good relationship." I sat with that, thinking about the tension between my own mother and me at the time, and how much I didn't want to carry regret like that if I ran out of time to fix it.

Whatever she did that day, the pain in my arm was gone by the time I left. My shoulder was still healing, I could tell, but the pain itself had simply left the building.

I signed up for my first Reiki attunement not long after — a Sunday, a new moon, a room full of women learning something new together. Driving home afterward on an empty freeway, one car stayed just ahead of me for miles, close enough that I could read the plate: LOKAHI. I looked it up later and found a wellness retreat in Hawaii by that name. It fit exactly where I felt like I was headed.

Lake Friends

I was on my way home from a trip to Colorado when I stopped at the lake. I didn't recognize anyone at the beach when I arrived, so I called a friend who liked the lake so much he'd bought a retirement house there. He invited me over.

When it came time to sleep, he offered me his bed and said he'd take the camper. I said no. He offered me the camper instead. I still said no. I have a sleep disorder, and in a strange place, I

don't sleep at all — my truck was the only real option, and I knew it, even if he didn't quite understand why I was so sure.

That night, sitting in my truck looking up at the stars — always spectacular out there — something happened that I still don't fully have words for. It felt like a portal, or a wormhole, opened up right in front of me, and I fell through it. What I saw looked something like a tunnel, except it was full of color, more vivid than anything I'd seen with my eyes open. I didn't think much of it at the time — it just seemed like one more strange thing happening to me that summer. Looking back now, I think it was one of the truest doors I walked through on this whole journey. Something in me opened that night that never fully closed back up.

What Was Actually Happening to Me

I didn't have the words for it yet, but I was in the middle of a spiritual awakening. If you're reading this because you think you might be somewhere in the middle of your own, here's how I've come to understand the shape of it, in plain terms — no jargon, just what actually happened to me, stage by stage:

The wake-up call. Something jolts you — a breakup, a diagnosis, a near-miss, a death, sometimes just a feeling that won't leave you alone. This is where the dark night of the soul usually starts: confusion, disconnection, a sense that something's wrong even though you can't name it. You feel like you're searching for something you can't describe yet. This part is genuinely hard. It was for me.

Bliss. Once you're through the worst of the dark part, there's often a stretch that feels like the opposite — full of wonder, dragonflies, a sense of oneness with something bigger. I loved this stage. It felt like my heart cracking open in the best way.

The journey of discovery. This is the long middle — reading everything, asking every question, having your perspective shift again and again as new understanding lands.

The void. Eventually the searching itself runs dry. Life goes quiet. It can feel like no-man's-land, like you're resting between two worlds, waiting for the next thing without knowing what it is.

Groundedness. Slowly, things settle. You start developing whatever gifts came out of all that inner work, and you feel steadier — spiritually and emotionally — ready to step back into the world instead of away from it.

Purpose. Eventually it becomes less about the awakening itself and more about what you do with it — owning your gifts, growing, giving back. As you keep reading, you'll see me land here.

Along the way, a few things tend to show up no matter who you are: your dreams get more vivid, synchronicities start piling up faster than you can track them, you crave solitude in a way you never used to, small talk starts to feel unbearable, and you find yourself wanting to purge anything — belongings, obligations, people — that doesn't feel true anymore. You might feel more sensitive, more emotional, more aware of how unhappy people around you actually are. None of that means something's wrong with you. It usually means the opposite.

Dark Night of the Soul

During the house construction, I felt like I was dying. Like I was drowning, some days, for no reason I could point to. A strange bruise showed up on my hip months after a jet ski fall that somehow hadn't bruised at the time. My body, already thin from the ADHD medication and a kitchen I couldn't cook in, kept finding new ways to hurt — my knee at a Thanksgiving parade felt like the muscle was tearing off the bone, my shoulders burned in a straight line down the center, and once I dropped something on my bare foot and felt pain go straight to bone in a way I never had before.

One night on the porch, coughing hard enough to scare myself, my son looked up from his phone call and said, "Mom, stop dying." He meant the coughing. I took it as more than that.

Looking back now, I often wonder what those years were like through my daughter's eyes.

She was still so young, yet somehow she always seemed to know exactly what I needed.

Through it all, there was one person who never stopped believing in me — my daughter. She walked beside me through the most confusing years of my life. She didn't fully understand what I was experiencing, yet she never stopped loving me.

Whenever sadness settled over me, she'd put on "Copperhead Road" because she knew it was the one line dance I knew. More times than I can count, I'd start dancing with tears streaming down my face. Before long, we'd both be laughing, dancing around the living room, and for a little while, the heaviness would disappear.

Looking back, I realize she wasn't just my daughter during those years — she was one of my greatest teachers. Her quiet strength, compassion, and unwavering love carried me farther than she'll probably ever know.

She reminded me that healing doesn't always arrive through profound conversations or life-changing revelations.

Sometimes, it arrives through the unconditional love of a child who simply refuses to give up on you.

I truly don't know if I would have made it through those years without her.

Dragonflies

Djed had told me it sounded like I was starting to wake up, and not long after, he stopped responding altogether — told me he couldn't watch me suffer, and then he was gone. I understood, eventually, that some of this was always going to be mine to walk through alone.

One afternoon, early in all of this, I went to take out the trash and a swarm of something came flying straight at me. You don't see swarms like that in the desert, ever. I ran inside, then remembered what I'd been told about not being scared, and went and sat on the other side of the house instead.

They found me anyway.

A cloud of them, hovering right above my head, and when I finally looked up I realized they were baby dragonflies — shedding their wings all over me as I sat there. My phone was right there on the table. I never once reached for it. I couldn't look away long enough to film it.

Choking at Walmart

I'd cut most of the noise out of my life by then, which wasn't hard since I never watched much TV anyway. But I cut deeper — even my mother, who was also my business partner, for a full month. The tension between us had gotten that thick.

Then, on my son's first day back at school, we all went to Walmart together for supplies, happy, chatting about his day, and my phone rang. My mother. Within thirty seconds of that call, I felt something close around my throat — like actual hands. I told her I had to go, hung up, and knew in that instant: the house was going up for sale, and it was time to leave.

The renovations finished up that fall — new countertops, custom cabinets, a fancy faucet — and by November I listed the house myself. It sold on the second day. We sold almost everything else, kept only what would fit in the travel trailer, and moved into a campground a couple miles from the house I'd just let go of. Christmas came and went; I genuinely don't remember it. My mother was near panic, watching me get ready to bolt for good. I wasn't entirely sure where I was headed either.

But some part of me knew.

The DR

Djed had told me, before he disappeared, about the Dominican Republic — how affordable it was, how the fruit grew organic year-round, and where the air wasn't filled with pollution. I looked into it and felt pulled to go see it myself.

The night before I left, my friend Flower and I met for a drink — the first I'd had in months. I booked a flight to Santo Domingo with an overnight layover in Atlanta. On the plane, my Dominican Republic guidebook sat open on my lap, and the man next to me asked if that's where I was headed. He'd lived there six months, and told me to skip the big resorts and find where the locals actually vacationed. It sounded perfect.

I rented a car, went the wrong way down a one-way street directly in front of a police officer who didn't seem to care, and drove into the mountains — trees and plants I'd never seen, motorcycles weaving past, horses on the roadside, absolutely beautiful. By the time I reached the coast, the sun was setting over a hand-painted sign with a wave on it, and I pulled over just to take it in.

Then everything got hard. My GPS kept routing me to a gated resort instead of the hotel I'd called ahead to book, and after driving in circles through racing traffic and mopeds, I broke down crying in my rental car, begging God for help. A young man in a white van walked up to my window — no English, my Spanish barely functional — and without a word, reached in and wiped my tears. We got a translation app going on my phone long enough for him to understand I needed a hotel, and he led me there himself.

The room was perfect. The next day, at the concierge desk, I met a man from Texas — instant kinship — who invited me to meet his partner next door. The three of us, plus the concierge, spent the evening at a beachside restaurant, and they offered me a room in their condo for less than I was paying at the hotel. I felt strangely safe with all of them.

The concierge suggested I download a messenger app so we could stay in touch. I did — and found Djed on it. I hadn't heard from him in months. I messaged him, and he called me that same night, while I sat on the beach in the exact town where he stays whenever he's there.

I didn't plan that. The Universe did.

I had one more evening there — dinner, a walk with my new friends and their dog along the beach — before I left before sunrise the next morning to beat the traffic back to Santo Domingo. Getting home wasn't simple; at the gate they pulled several of us aside for a missing stamp on our tickets, right at boarding time, and it took a genuine scramble to fix it before the flight closed. But I made it.

Coming Home

I knew what came next. I found a campground in east Texas my mother had stayed at before, booked a spot starting February 1st, sold the travel trailer on Craigslist, and upgraded to a fifth wheel my aunt helped me haggle down to a good price.

I left that small west Texas town with my “live simply” sign in the window and my daughter riding shotgun on what I still call the Holy Shit Express. My daughter is the best daughter in the universe — I might be a little biased — and I'm endlessly grateful for how unconditionally she loved me through all of it. Both my kids are exceptional souls. Being their mom has been the throughline of everything else.

We lived humbly during that stretch — barely enough for what we needed, and deeply grateful for every bit of it. Thank you, Mom, for helping me find myself, even while you were terrified of losing me to it.

PART III: AWAKENING

CH 6 — SPIRIT

Vacationing in My Youth

Every summer as a kid, we vacationed at a sandy-beached lake up north, camping in tents alongside cousins while my dad pulled us on skis and tubes behind the boat, and at night we fished with Grandma and dug our own worms.

For a few of those summers, friends from home joined us — including a man my dad worked with and his wife, who'd adopted two kids, Hope and Chance. Hope and I were buds — chasing frogs, sticking our tongues to the freezer together, whoever's idea that was. Chance and Hope moved away right around junior high, and we lost touch not long after.

Years later, with the internet making everything findable, I finally tracked down a number — their parents' house. Hope's mom answered, and told me her husband wasn't doing well. I called back the next day, mostly hoping to reach Chance, because of an old photo I'd found: the four of us kids lined up on the side of a road, me maybe four or five years old, laughing, my elbow hooked over Chance's shoulder. Looking at it as an adult, I thought — that might have been my very first soulmate, and I never even knew it.

Chance and I talked. I told him I'd been doing some soul -searching, trying to understand why I'd always been drawn to Black men. Growing up in a town with maybe five families of color total, nobody had ever made me feel like that was unusual — my brother and I were even nicknamed Chief and Squaw as kids, since we ran darker than most of the other kids around us.

In my youth, my nickname was "Squaw." To me, it was simply a loving nickname, and I had no awareness of the word's complicated history. I later learned that the word originally meant "woman" in several Indigenous Algonquian languages, but over time it was distorted and used in demeaning and derogatory ways. It wasn't until much later that I understood why many Indigenous people now consider it offensive.

That same call, I learned Chance had never married. A few days later I spoke to their dad — good to hear his voice, though I had no idea how sick he really was. He passed not long after. Chance messaged me the news, and I told him it was a strange time for us to have reconnected. He agreed. I was in the middle of selling my house by then, and we lost touch again.

Chance and Hope hold a real place in my heart, and I believe they're a big part of why I've always felt so drawn to Black people.

Experiencing Spirit

One of my first real brushes with something beyond the physical happened at my grandparents' house, while the whole family had gathered because Grandma was losing her fight with lung cancer. I called my dad and told him we needed to go — that she was waiting for us. About an hour after we arrived, she passed.

A day or two later, my aunt suggested I look through Grandma's dresser for jewelry. Tucked inside the drawer, I found something I didn't immediately recognize as a vibrator. Before I could process the discovery, I heard it.

Shhh.

No one else was in that part of the house.

Shhh.

Again.

I slammed the drawer shut and ran out of the room. I'm sorry, Grandma, for telling that story — I think now you were probably just asking me to get rid of the thing. But that moment changed how I understood the afterlife. It's the first time I really believed something continues after we go.

Where I Came From

I grew up in the Midwest, in a subdivision full of kids, riding bikes and dirt bikes and sledding through every season. I was the middle child in a family of five, thirteen and a half months younger than my older brother — close enough in age that people used to ask if we were twins. Mom and Dad, if you weren't exactly celebrating when you found out I was coming, I forgive you. When my own son was born, the first thing out of my mouth was asking when we could do it again. I just meant that feeling, locking eyes with him for the first time. I couldn't look away.

We traveled a lot as a family, and I also grew up around more death than most kids probably do — an uncle's sudden heart attack, another uncle's fall, my grandpa's strokes, my mom camping out in our motorhome in a hospital parking lot during his final days.

My aunt Nina lost both breasts to cancer when I was young, and I remember seeing her that way more than once — hooked to oxygen, having seizures, in and out of hospital gowns. Between watching what she went through and hearing my own mom talk about being scared of the same thing, I grew up genuinely wishing I could stay flat-chested forever.

I did not stay flat-chested. My chest got large, then extra-large, then — once my milk came in after my son was born — enormous. Whoever told me breastfeeding shrinks you back down lied through their teeth. I'd wanted a reduction for years and finally got one once I was done having children, and it's one of the better decisions I've ever made for myself. I love my body now — every asymmetrical, scarred-up, perfectly imperfect inch of it. I half-considered titling this whole book *Woke by Her Tits*, honestly, because that surgery is genuinely part of what cracked me open. I hadn't realized how much quietly hating my own body for thirty years had cost me until it finally stopped.

Right around that same time, two different people — a friend, then my sister — gave me nearly identical bracelets for my birthday that year, without knowing about each other: one with a lotus flower charm, one with a tree of life. I didn't know it yet, but the lotus is a symbol of purity and rebirth, and the tree of life represents the way we keep growing and strengthening through whatever life throws at us. I wore both constantly, long before I understood why they'd landed in my hands at exactly the same time.

I also seem to have hit my head a truly alarming number of times as a kid — a swing to the chin at a softball field, a fall off the top of a metal slide, tumbling out of a van door on a fishing trip with my dad, a two-by-four to the eyebrow at the dog races, and a blackout after banging my head on a cement bench during a locker room scuffle.

I was also gifted a genuinely terrifying book around that age that gave me nightmares for years — which might be part of why I never became much of a reader.

I hit puberty right around when Aunt Nina passed, at forty-five. I sit here now, writing this book, at forty-five myself. She never really got to live much of a life — never drove, never dated, as far as I know never had sex. My family didn't talk about hard things back then, so I did what I always did with anything that embarrassed or scared me: shoved it down and replayed it in my head a hundred times instead.

Years later, a different aunt was going on about something political and said, completely seriously, “we are not messing around — we are woke.” I assumed she meant spiritually woke, like me, and it took me a second to realize we were talking about two entirely different kinds of awake. There’s more than one way to wake up, I guess. Me, I’m woke as fuck.

Sleep Disorder — Teenage Years

High school was rough on the sleep front. Friends used to come bang on my window before school just to get me moving. My mom got so tired of writing excuse notes that she

eventually filled an entire notebook with them. First period chemistry basically didn’t happen for me — my teacher liked me anyway, since we were both left-handed, and told me I’d do great if I could just show up. Once I made it to school without a bra on, which back then, painfully self-conscious about my chest, felt like the worst thing that could happen to a person. I have no idea how I passed junior year. School itself was never hard for me — showing up was the whole problem.

First Move to Texas

Junior year I smoked weed for the first time, got busted underage drinking again, and landed on probation. That same summer my parents divorced, and my mom, desperate to get me back on track before senior year, had me drug tested, which came out negative, and eventually got me a prescription for depression. I took exactly one pill and slept for twenty-four straight hours. Never touched them again.

I left for Texas that fall with my twin cousins, trading off the wheel on the long drive, one of them literally punching the other awake at some point to keep us on the road.

First College Attempt

I tried college right out of high school, building my schedule around our family’s new business — early classes, then evening ones. My math professor warned me one more missed class would get me dropped. I already knew myself well enough to guess how that would go, and between the sleep disorder and being genuinely afraid to walk to my car after dark, I dropped out mid-semester.

One of My Soulmates

My stepdad had one of the biggest hearts I’ve ever known — sheltering homeless folks, running toy drives on his Harley, always the guy who showed up. We were close, both Aries, which meant we butted heads plenty, but our connection ran deeper than that. He fixed my car more than once, moved me back home when a relationship fell apart, and handed me twenty dollars every single Friday, calling it “friendship dues.” He drank every day, loud and full of life, the center of every room.

After I moved up north, he and my mom visited and got snowed in one Christmas. We all smoked back then — I quit the day a doctor told me I had asthma, mostly because I caught a whiff of my own hair and couldn’t stand the smell anymore.

One time I visited them, my asthma flared up from a fire he'd lit in the fireplace, and when I said something to him about it, he chest-bumped me — hard, right in my face. It was so out of character it knocked our whole relationship sideways, and we were never quite the same after. I understand now he was probably pushing me away on purpose, so his death wouldn't hit me as hard.

It hit me hard anyway. Less than a year later, he called my mom to tell her to say goodbye to us kids. She went out looking for him. My phone rang at four in the morning, and I already knew before I answered. He'd wrecked his motorcycle near a stretch of big rocks

on the freeway, drunk, on his birthday. He'd told me more than once he wasn't going to live a long life, and once described holding a gun to his head and only stopping because his son's face flashed through his mind. He'd also said that whenever he did go, he'd make sure no one could ever be certain if it was an accident.

I volunteered to be the one who called his mother. I told her he'd taken his own life, not fully considering, at the time, that it might genuinely have been an accident. I carried that guilt for a long time.

My soul-sister and my stepdad used to butt heads constantly while he was alive. After he died, she told me she heard him screaming in her ear — telling her, over and over, that he hadn't done it on purpose.

PART IV: LEARNING TO LIVE AWAKE

CH 7 — SHADOW

Reiki II

17 February 2019. Soon after moving to east Texas, I signed up for my level-two Reiki attunement. This one attuned both palms instead of just my right, which felt fitting since I'm left-handed. Afterward I went through a rough detox — huge zits on my face, both times, like something was working its way out through my skin.

Life at the Campground

The RV park we landed in was beautiful — paved paths, mature trees, plenty of full-timers and weekenders. The camper names scattered through the place read like chapter titles: Vortex, Alpha, Journey, Light, Transcend. A few of them, you'll notice, actually became chapter titles.

My daughter was afraid of the bugs and barely came outside those first months. I walked, sat outside, meditated — I was essentially quarantined a year and a half before Corona made that normal for everyone else. TV, radio, most of the internet, most people, sometimes food — all of it fell away.

One quiet afternoon in the hot tub, a man nearby started tossing small batons around — devil sticks, he told me, when I asked. My daughter was teaching me sign language in the water at

the same time, and I noticed, mid-lesson, that I was signing with my right hand despite being very much left-handed.

Once school let out and my daughter went to her dad's for the summer, I started easing into the two friend groups that gathered most evenings for happy hour. That's how Daisy and I found each other — over cigarettes I didn't even like, at a table she waved me over to more than once before I finally said yes.

ADHD, Weed, and the Choice

I found a local doctor to refill my ADHD prescription, and when the intake form asked about drug use, I wrote down cannabis. He seemed unbothered, told me to call it hemp instead, even encouraged me to advocate for it — until my next refill, when he acted shocked to learn I actually used THC. I never did figure out what he thought I meant the first time.

So I had a choice: pills, or weed. I chose weed. Not to get high — just small doses through the day, enough to unlock something in my brain that otherwise stayed locked. And for the record, marijuana was never what caused my sleep problems. I went years without touching either weed or alcohol, and that's when my memory and sleep were at their absolute worst. My ex-husband used to leave for work without me some mornings because he simply couldn't get me up, and told me once that if he could change one thing about me, it'd be my memory.

I cried to my daughter one day about how embarrassing it is, needing someone to wake me up just to take my own medicine. I told her I feel like Drew Barrymore in *50 First Dates*. She said, "So do I." I told her nobody understands. She said, "I know." When I finally do wake up, it's like surfacing from somewhere else entirely — sometimes hours before I feel human again.

Letting Everything Go

I kept feeling pulled to release things — purging, physically and otherwise. I gave away almost every piece of black clothing I owned. There's a line in *Walk the Line* where someone asks Johnny Cash if he's dressed for a funeral, and he says, "Maybe I am." That's about how it felt.

My Guardian Angel at the Campground

The first night we stayed there, a security guard stopped my daughter and me on an evening walk. He turned out to be a retired counselor, and we became real friends — I started calling him my guardian angel, only half joking. After I told him about the tension with my mother and everything I'd been carrying, he helped me see it plainly: I wasn't broken. I was just decompressing from a hard story, and needed the limbo more than I needed a fix.

My Soul-Sister and The Secret

My soul-sister, my best friend since high school, has always been the more spiritually vocal of the two of us, even back when we were just wild kids getting into trouble together. She's the one who pointed me toward *The Secret* — ask, believe, receive — and I started actually practicing it: naming what I wanted and needed instead of just hoping for it.

The Summer with Daisy

Daisy and I spent that whole summer together — coffee some days, happy hour most others. I had a few sips of wine the first time, then stuck to water every time after that. I noticed, much later, that the day I met her, I'd also passed a road sign that said DETOUR. It was, in every sense, a necessary one.

Whatever was happening between our energy — mine casting a shadow onto her, or her pulling from mine, I still can't fully explain it — I knew my soul needed to stay unattached to keep from losing myself in someone else's story again. When Daisy and I hit a rough patch and pulled apart for a while, I felt something come back to me almost immediately — a pull that felt like my Twin's energy returning to fill the space.

I spent that season paying close attention to masculine and feminine energy in the people around me, mostly just watching, mostly in silence. My dad called now and then. Almost no one else did. Daisy was doing her own awakening in parallel with mine, and we talked often about healing — hers and mine both. I recognized, watching her, that she was deep in her own dark night of the soul, right as I was finally coming out of mine.

Energy

One night, running on half an hour of sleep, I did a short power-nap meditation — genuinely one of the best tricks I've found for exhaustion — and felt something physically enter my chest mid-session, a ball of energy that hooked itself right around my heart. I texted Djed to describe it. Within twenty minutes I told him I felt drunk. He asked if I actually was. I don't usually drink any more, maybe once every blue moon, I told him. No.

One beer, it turns out, can lower your vibration for ten days. I don't know the science. I know how it felt.

The Clairs

I started learning the language for gifts I'd apparently had all along, without a name for any of them:

Claircognizance — clear knowing, a gut feeling you trust without needing proof. Clairvoyance — clear seeing, psychic images that vary person to person. Clairaudience — clear hearing, messages that arrive louder than they should. Clairsentience — clear feeling, information that lands in your whole body at once. Clairscents and clairgustance — smelling or tasting something with no physical source. Clairempathy — feeling someone else's emotional state as if it were your own, tuning into the tone underneath a person, a place, even an animal.

I'm an empath — I feel other people's pain almost as easily as my own, sometimes even through a television screen. I'm also what's called a channel, someone whose body can act as a conduit for healing energy meant for someone else. And somewhere along the way, I became a healer — of people, places, animals, whatever needs it.

Doing the shadow work that came with all this meant sitting with other people's lowest energy too, not just my own. I've seen things I'm not going to put in this book — either you wouldn't believe me, or it would make someone look bad, or, honestly, I've just forgotten.

At a holiday craft fair at the RV park, I set up a small Reiki and jewelry booth between a woman who made scarves and an older author with a laptop the same model as mine — he warned me his first one burned out from a blanket underneath it, which, guilty. Later, the same guy from the hot tub showed up to help his girlfriend run the jewelry booth next to mine. It was a slow day everywhere, until right after they packed up and left — and then, almost on cue, I got my one customer of the day: a Reiki session, paid for by her husband alongside a necklace.

ADHD, Again

I kept Googling ADHD specialists, still hoping to get my daughter officially diagnosed, dragging my feet the way I do when a decision matters enough to overthink. Eventually I found a specialist who tested her properly and confirmed it.

Soul Family

Remember the vision I described — asking God to show me myself healed, and seeing a pandemic before it happened? I watched it actually arrive: everyone masked, watching case counts, Djed telling me to get cash before the stimulus checks went out, people hoarding toilet paper all over again. Not long after came the unrest around how unfairly Black communities were being treated by police in parts of the country. People were fed up, and rightly so.

I used to think the virus itself would be the thing that finally pushed Djed and me together. It wasn't. It was everything that came after — the reckoning underneath it. I believe God made us for each other on purpose: Black and white, yin and yang, positive and negative, proof that we're all made by the same Creator regardless of skin color or religion. Love is the only thing that actually matters.

Around that time, I started noticing what felt like Divine Masculine energy showing up through the people around me — my daughter, neighbors, a man I'd just met — like pieces of the same signal arriving through different channels.

The White Witch and the Shaman

A friend brought me to visit a White Witch and a Shaman she knew, out at a house in the middle of nowhere. It should have felt strange. It didn't — it felt like one of the best nights I'd had in ages. At dinner beforehand, a stranger stopped by our table just to tell us how good our energy felt. Back at their place, they each told me, separately, exactly what they were. The Shaman joked that we were all queens and kings in that room. His partner, the White Witch, doesn't usually connect easily with other women, but she and I hit it off immediately. We ended up staying the night, and she offered to do facials — hers made with real gold, which would've been a problem, except I already knew, from an allergy test years earlier, exactly why I needed to ask for the charcoal one instead.

The Universe Handed Me My Fears

Around this stretch, my fears kept showing up in front of me on purpose, it seemed — spiders, one small snake, and then a sailboat, which stopped me cold. I'd forgotten I had a fear of sailing at all, until I remembered watching one capsize on a lake as a little girl. Cancer came up the same way — a fear I'd buried so deep I'd forgotten I was even still carrying it, straight back to Aunt Nina, and straight back to the breast reduction that started cracking all of this open in the first place.

My Shadow

I knew, somewhere in all this, that I'd cast my own shadow onto Daisy. She showed me things about myself I didn't want to see — not because she was doing anything wrong, but because her pain and mine were the same pain. She struggled to eat, same as I did; we both had to force down one more bite some days. She dropped to under a hundred pounds, and I was terrified I was headed in the same direction, having already lost real muscle from months of barely eating. She's one of the most caring people I know, and she tried to help me the whole time she was struggling herself.

I came to believe the Universe uses whoever's standing closest to you to show you what you need to see — a lot of it ancestral, older than either of you.

Fluoride

When my daughter's dentist tried to talk me into fluoride treatments for her, I said no. I've believed for a long time that fluoride calcifies the pineal gland — the same gland that regulates sleep and sits right at the center of the brain — and I wasn't going to sign off on that for her, whatever the science says either way.

Reiki Master

14 August 2020. I completed my final course and became a Reiki Master. What comes next is in God's hands. When I channel Reiki now, I don't put a clock on it — I just follow the energy until it tells me it's done.

The Stroke

One afternoon a friend called, panicked — her mom had just had a stroke. I walked over calmly, thinking mostly about how I could help with her girls while she went to the ER. The moment I saw her mother, I knew that wasn't why I'd been called there.

I asked if I could give her Reiki. She was slumped in her chair, unresponsive but aware. I stood behind her, hands above her head, and felt the energy build — a kind of pressure that eventually curls forward like a wave breaking. The instant it curled, she sat up and said, "I feel better. I think I am better." Her daughter, still on the phone with 911, reached out to stop her from standing. She stood anyway, and said it again: "I feel better."

That was the first time I witnessed healing that immediate, that undeniable.

Later she needed surgery following complications from the stroke. I sat in the waiting room with her daughter, felt something rise in me, and told my friend I was going to send her mom Reiki right then. Moments after I finished, the doctor came out. It was too soon for the surgery to be completed — there'd been trouble early in the surgery, and they'd spent fifteen minutes reviving her. I cried the whole drive home, hit by how close it had actually been, and how I wouldn't always be there to catch it in time.

I feel, in some way I can't fully explain, like that woman and I are connected on another level entirely — her and her daughter almost standing in for me and mine.

Signs

I'm sensitive to violence and darkness in a way that's stayed with me since childhood — I couldn't even sit through *The Wizard of Oz* as a kid. Comedies, though, I love without reservation. My daughter and I watched *Grey's Anatomy* together for years — I cried through nearly every episode and loved every minute anyway — and *Gilmore Girls* on repeat, which has spiritual messages buried in it. She tells me I'm a little bit Miranda and a lot Lorelai. She's me, on steroids.

The signs kept coming, small and strange: a stranger in a hot tub mentioning a campground in L.A. that turned out to be named Reunion. A radio ad for the “best company to work for,” hiring only on a street called Lovers Lane. None of it means anything on its own. All of it, together, felt like a hand on my back the whole way through.

The Trip to the Beach

In the middle of June, my daughter and I drove to the ocean — partly for her, partly because I'd decided it was time to let go of one more fear I'd been carrying my whole life: the ocean itself. Beautiful, powerful, and more than a little terrifying, all at once.

We couldn't afford much, so we packed our own food and booked the cheapest hotel we could find, which turned out to be even worse than the photos — a fourth floor that reeked, an elevator that smelled worse. My daughter fell in love with the water instantly. I could feel it too, that particular calm the ocean gives her.

Back at the hotel, she started feeling sick — turned out to be a mix of secondhand smoke on our floor and industrial cleaner smell everywhere else, on top of my own tongue tingling from the moment we checked in. The front desk couldn't refund us, but the woman working that day — whose own son has asthma — walked the floor with us, confirmed it wasn't normal, and moved us to their nicer sister property across the street, air conditioning problems and all.

My daughter, meanwhile, was on a mission to surf. She sold her GoPro to help fund a board, nearly bought a trick board completely wrong for a beginner, and we ended up instead at a real surf shop where the guy talked us both out of buying anything and set us up with an instructor instead.

The night before our lesson, a fire alarm went off in the hallway at some godawful hour — no actual fire, just a malfunction the hotel staff seemed weirdly unbothered by — and I

never got back to sleep. I asked God for small waves the next day, since the ones that afternoon had looked rough.

I got them. Driving into the park for our lesson, our instructor pointed out a huge statue of Jesus overlooking the water, and something in me just settled. The waves were gentle. My daughter popped up on her board almost immediately. I spent most of my lesson getting splashed in the face and laughing about it, managing a few rides on my knees before we ran out of time. I was grateful for every second of it — the baby waves, the statue, all of it.

I felt pulled to go back to that same spot before we left. I sat by the statue a while, looking up into that impossibly bright sky. As we were leaving, I noticed a small sign near the entrance:

Thank you for visiting the Chapel by the Sea.

I knew, right there, standing in the parking lot. That was the name of this book.

We left a day early. I hadn't slept the entire trip — partly the alarm, partly a quiet voice I kept hearing in my head telling me to leave, and partly because I'd left my weed at home on purpose, curious how I'd feel without it.

I found out. I didn't sleep at all.

CH 8 — NORTH POINT

Twins

Not a biological twin. A Twin Flame — a term I'd never even heard before, meaning, as I came to understand it, the other half of your soul, the one divine counterpart God made specifically for you. When two Twins meet, it's supposed to trigger deep healing in both people, which sounds lovely and is, in practice, not always fun. We felt the connection the moment we met — like we'd already known each other for years. I had no idea, yet what that actually meant.

I found an article on the Twin Flame journey that put into words something I couldn't have described myself: that this kind of connection isn't just romantic, it's an ego -crumbling experience meant to move you through real emotional pain on purpose — and if it doesn't, it isn't actually a Twin Flame connection at all. That it prepares you to be of service to others, using whatever gifts you're given. I read that and felt, somehow, entirely seen.

The journey itself was far from easy. I leaned on tarot readers and Twin Flame healers more than once, trying to understand what was actually happening with my man. I'll admit I was scared going in — cards had only ever been read for me once, as a teenager, when I was told I'd become an accountant at a large company (true) and that I'd have two marriages. Tarot, I've come to believe, is just one more way the Universe tries to talk to us — not scary, just another path, and all paths lead to God. Watching Twin Flame readings online, the synchronicities sometimes felt so exact it was like the reading was written for me specifically.

Around the same time, I lost my crystal ball and was left holding only two crystals — love, and healing. I'd been noticing “three becoming two” everywhere for weeks before I understood what it meant.

I want to be honest here: I'm not an expert in any of this. I didn't do deep academic research. I was led to what I needed to know by paying close attention to what came into my life once I'd cut almost everything else out. Figuring it out as I went was part of the point.

There are healers and readers and psychics of every kind, and Djed is the one who first pushed me to start digging into all of it. I found guidance in some unexpected corners of the internet — teachers talking about how energy moves in and out of the body through what one called the “seven highways to the soul”: the eyes, ears, mouth, nostrils, all of it. I also spent time learning about divine feminine and divine masculine energy, and how every person carries both, regardless of gender — I've spent most of my life leaning hard into my masculine side, running households, running businesses, being the boss. It takes a strong man to match that.

Djed

Djed told me once, a long time ago, that his favorite movie is *The Ten Commandments*. Not long after, at a financial seminar with my mom and some friends, we all ended up at the bar afterward, where a woman we call Full-Gear stood there re-enacting the parting of the Red Sea with a wine glass in each hand — arms out, then slammed down as the water rushed back in. A glass shattered. We got kicked out. It was one of the best moments of that whole year, and I don't think it was random.

Did I mention Djed is also a metaphysician? Of course he is.

I'll warn you now: not everyone reading this is going to be comfortable with everything I'm about to say. There's a black and white to everything.

I'm forever grateful to Djed, who helped me understand what I was actually living through when I felt like I was dying in every possible way — physically, emotionally, spiritually. He was the light at the end of that tunnel, a gift from God as far as I'm concerned. He told me not to be scared. He told me not to be chicken about the tarot cards, which genuinely surprised me coming from him. He told me that whatever you go after will be there waiting — maybe my ADHD diagnosis never happens if I don't go looking for it. “Everything happens for a reason,” he said. And, eventually: “I can't watch you suffer.”

He was going through his own version of hell at the same time. He retired from a high position in the military after more than thirty years of service, and he saw things over there that never fully left him. I send love and healing to every service member carrying PTSD right now — my first Reiki teacher actually had a standing contract giving Reiki sessions to soldiers for exactly that reason.

We went quiet for a while after that. I found yoga in the meantime. When we finally talked again, he told me yoga and meditation had saved him too. We both had our own healing to do, separately, before we could do any of it together.

I want to pause here and name something plainly, because it's part of this pain too: somewhere in the middle of all this suffering — physically breaking down, starving, alone for months, feeling like I had nothing left — my parents had me committed to a psych ward. That sentence

deserves more room than I'm giving it here, and I'd like your input on how much of that story belongs on the page and where.

Through all of it, I kept telling myself one thing: *I am healing*. I've come to think of that whole stretch as something like God school.

Figuring Out Our Energy

In a vision that played out over months, I told Djed I believed I was Jesus, or Yeshua, and that he was Mary Magdalene, the two of us reincarnated in opposite forms, mirrored across time. He didn't say much back. He'd already told me before that I was special, in a spiritual sense. He's spent his whole life curious about this kind of thing — astral travel, what happens after the body dies, the architecture of religion and creation — his knowledge is close to encyclopedic. We were, as he put it, aiming for union.

Who tells the man she loves that he's Mary Magdalene? Apparently, I do. I'm that woman. All I could think to ask God was whether it was finally time to end suffering for everyone, not just me.

I've come to believe this meeting was part of something much bigger than either of us — that we're meant to help make the world better together, in a way that goes past an ordinary relationship. He told me once we were supposed to sleep together the very first time we met, and that not doing so sent our whole journey down a different path than it might have taken. He explained it in language pulled straight from scripture. Whatever the truth of that is, I do believe an orgasm is one of the most sacred things two people can share — that when you connect with someone sexually, you're connecting with the whole of their energy field, their whole aura, not just their body.

Eleven years the Universe kept nudging me toward this man. When we met, the pull was immediate — energized, loving, and unmistakable. Then life kept getting in the way: natural disasters, epidemics, distance, timing. Every time I lost faith even for a moment, he'd resurface somehow, like the Universe refused to let the thread drop. I believed he was the man God made specifically for me — the other half of my soul, a connection going back further than either of us can trace. He told me once that he knew exactly who I was and refused to tell me. It felt like solving a puzzle with half the pieces missing on purpose.

Whenever I got fed up with feeling like I came second to everything else in his life, the Universe would fan out more signs, right on cue, like it couldn't stand to let me stay discouraged for long. God set the bar impossibly high the day He put this man in my path at, of all places, the local meat market. His love for me scared him, he told me once — it felt that strong to him too. Yin and yang. Black and white. Positive and negative. I don't think that's a coincidence either.

Waking Up to My Own Power

I woke up to something in myself I didn't fully understand yet — an energy other people could apparently feel just standing near me. Spiritual healers seemed genuinely happy to be around me. Someone bowed to me once, and I just stood there thinking, what on earth is happening right now.

Who am I? What am I?

I think I'd been living somewhere just below the line where heaven meets hell — and I've come to believe that line runs straight through each of us, not somewhere out in the world. My particular hell was built entirely out of fear.

I still don't fully understand the energy I woke up to. It's powerful, and I'm still figuring it out as I go. What I do know is that for the first time in longer than I can remember, I feel something like security — real security, the kind I haven't had since I first left home. We're infinite beings, I've come to believe, just having a very human experience for a while. Your body is your temple. Treat it, and yourself, accordingly.

Not My Twin Flame

I need to go back and say something plainly, because I loved him enough that I spent a long time not wanting to see it clearly: Djed was never my Twin Flame. He's real — a teacher, my friend, at times my lover, a man I wanted so badly to be that other half of my soul that I talked myself into believing it for longer than I should have. What he actually is, I've come to understand, is my karmic partner — sent to teach me things I needed to learn the hard way, in a teaching style that was, frankly, not always kind. I believe he's an Ascended Master in his own right, maybe further along than I am, and that however roughly he did it, he was here to help wake me up. He knows more about the body, the mind, the soul, the emotions, and the actual mechanics of this world than almost anyone I've ever met. That doesn't make him my Twin Flame. It makes him something else — no less important, just not what I originally hoped.

My actual Twin — the one I was shown, the one arriving with everything else in that avalanche of abundance, on God's timing and not mine — is still ahead of me. Djed was never standing in that spot. He was standing beside it, pointing.

CH 9 — REFLECTION

The Spiritual Awakening Is Over (Haha are they really ever over?)

It felt like my mind had wiped the vision I saw during the construction project — until it started playing out in real life in front of me. The first real clue was Corona. When it started ramping up in the U.S., I asked a friend, "Didn't this just happen?" She said no. I told her I swore we'd already been through a viral scare like this, that I remembered charting the numbers. In my vision, the government sent stimulus checks and then sent another one once it was supposedly over. It just didn't feel, in the vision, like it would drag on this long.

I'd noticed, all through this journey, how alive full moons made people feel — more dressed up, more themselves. I've come to think of light and dark as two halves of the same whole, and that most of us only ever want to claim the light half.

The Vision Comes True

Reliving that construction-era vision now, watching it actually happen, has meant a lot of "aha" moments — some things landing exactly as I remembered them, some slightly different, most close enough to recognize. I'd envisioned the pandemic two years before it arrived, numbers and all, and alongside it, a racial tragedy in the shape of what actually became George Floyd's

death. I told Djed at the time that Corona was the Universe's way of finally pushing us together. When George Floyd happened, that's what truly convinced me the vision was real and playing out in real time — not the virus alone.

I believe, plainly, that God made a Black man for a white woman, and that some of what we're here to do is heal and unite what's been kept apart.

A friend once called me a pioneer woman. I believe I can do just about anything I set my mind to, and what I've learned through all of this has less to do with religion specifically and more to do with creation and taking care of the body God gave us.

Not long after awakening I bought a wedding dress off Amazon for about a hundred dollars — genuinely felt like my own Cinderella moment — and had it altered, blue butterflies added down the front. At the seamstress's house, her four-year-old son, zoned into the TV, walked straight up to me and reached out to touch me, unprompted. His mother said he never does that. I told her it's probably because I'm a healer, and he could feel it. I still have that dress. I know weddings are a very 3D thing to care about, but I've said for years that my Twin and I will be married the moment our eyes finally meet in person — the joining of Yin and Yang, however that ends up looking.

Ascended Masters

I eventually ran out of people to talk to about any of this — it started to feel like my own spiritual understanding had outpaced what a priest or minister could offer me, if that makes sense. Then I heard a term in my head I'd never encountered before: Ascended Master. I went looking online and found Eckhart Tolle, whose calendar I now own — a dragonfly on the cover, which felt like no accident. I haven't read *The Power of Now* yet, though I own it and mean to. Something he said stuck with me completely: that the mind spends its whole life trying to figure everything out, while the soul already knows.

I read once that there can only be a limited number of Ascended Masters on the planet at any given time — Jesus among them, and I believe Eckhart Tolle too. During a call with Djed, he mentioned the fifth dimension, and something in me said I'd been well beyond that. Then I heard, just as clearly, the number twelve.

During My Enlightenment

My grandpa used to talk badly about certain religions, about teachers, about Black people. I hated it, every time. He told me once I was fat — I was breastfeeding an infant at the time, so it didn't land the way it might have otherwise, but body-shaming anyone, in either direction, is genuinely hurtful.

During this whole stretch, I forgave almost everyone for almost everything. The hardest thing to forgive was the Church. Taking a child's innocence is, to me, the worst thing a person can do, and after watching a couple of movies about the scale of abuse covered up across churches worldwide — boys molested in town after town, the problem just relocated instead of stopped whenever someone found the courage to speak up — it's hard for me to write those things off as isolated. One of those films also followed a woman who'd given herself entirely to the Church, fasting and denying herself any physical intimacy at all, right alongside every other

woman who'd done the same for God in that story. God gave us brains. God gave us free will. I don't believe God wants hell on earth for anyone.

Even so, I don't hate the Church. Jesus himself, from the cross, asked forgiveness for the people who put him there. If he could manage that, I figured I could work on forgiving my own family for things that hurt far less.

I've thought a lot about the passage where Jesus says a person can't follow him without being willing to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, even their own life. I took that as license to give up everything that was holding me back — and I'll admit, there was a stretch where I did genuinely hate my father, my mother, and my own life. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I love you. Thank you. I know now that on the other side of the "Holy Shit Express," there's real peace waiting. Jesus was right about that part too.

I Am a Disciple

Now I'm going to talk about abortion, because I said I would tell you my whole story, and this is part of it.

My feeling on the topic, plainly: everyone needs to mind their own business.

I went for an abortion at seventeen. They ran tests, including an ultrasound, and put me through counseling first. I was sitting alone in a small waiting room near the back of the clinic when a song came on the radio that I recognized instantly from a church retreat I'd attended years earlier with friends — loud, and I was the only one in the room to hear it. That song had always meant something to me, and hearing it right then, I knew it wasn't random. I knew God had my back. I'd always wanted children, just not with him, and not yet — I later heard he went on to have three kids with three different women. I told exactly two people: the young man involved, and an older cousin who helped me pay for the procedure.

They called me back right after the song ended. The nurse asked why I thought I was pregnant. I told her, because you all said I was, and because I'd missed my period by a couple of months. She told me I wasn't pregnant. I went home and spent hours doubled over in pain, crying. God let me miscarry instead of letting me go through with an abortion I don't think I could have carried afterward. That experience taught me, more than almost anything else in my life, that the Universe is paying attention, and that God has my back — even, and maybe especially, in the middle of an impossible choice.

I wouldn't have caught that sign without having grown up around the Church. I'm grateful for that much, at least.

I know this is a charged topic, and I'm tired of not being able to talk honestly about anything anymore because everyone's picked a side and dug in. I'm not saying abortion is something to take lightly, and I'm not saying it should be treated as routine birth control. I am saying that the emotional weight of that decision is already enormous on its own, without anyone else piling more judgment on top of it from the outside. If it's not your body and not your situation, I'd ask you to sit with some compassion instead of an opinion. There are many women and families that can't even afford food today.

If you've been through something like this yourself and never fully let it go, I believe that unprocessed pain can sit in the body for years and eventually show up as something physical. Whatever it is you're carrying — take a breath and let some of it go. Tell yourself: I am healing. Ask God to show you yourself, healed, and mean it.

Free Fall

Right as Corona hit, my camper's warranty was running out and things started breaking — the microwave blew, and I taught my daughter how to live without one for months, toaster quesadillas and all, ha-ha. One day, standing near a new toaster oven I'd finally bought, I zoned out and came back to find myself staring straight at the warning label on the back: cancer and reproductive harm. I'd never noticed a label like that on a kitchen appliance before.

I dropped the camper off for repairs with no idea how long it would take, right as I'd sent my daughter back to her dads for some steady parenting, and right as my brother and sister-in-law came down with Corona, which ruled out staying with them. My dad offered his place. I stayed in a hotel a couple of nights first, trying to think.

During a visit to my dad's, with my aunt and uncle also there, I was distraught — financially scared, genuinely anxious — and told the room I had four options I was weighing. I don't remember all four. The last one was maybe this life isn't worth it.

I want to be clear about what that actually was: I was overwhelmed financially and hadn't even looked for a job yet, not actively planning anything, and a psychic had told me years earlier I'd live to ninety something, which I chose to believe. I'd hated the idea of suicide since high school, ever since a quiet kid who'd stopped by my house one evening with some other friends went home that same night and took his own life.

From that point on I believed God gives you exactly one life, and that ending it early was never something I could understand. Which I learned a whole lot more about the Soul and this Life during my awakening.

Separately, I had told Djed — who was always encouraging me to read more — that after years of trying to explain how difficult it is for my ADHD brain to process books, being told once again to “just read something” felt unbearable. In that moment, the pressure felt so intense that I compared it to being told to do something drastic to myself. I named a couple of dark examples, but I wasn't saying I wanted to die. I was trying to explain how painful and overwhelming that kind of pressure felt around a struggle I had already tried so hard to make understood. I later repeated that story to my soul-sister and maybe one or two other people, not thinking much of it at the time.

My mom happened to be in east Texas that week, deeply anxious about Corona, and offered me her house to stay in while she was out of town. On my last night before heading there, instead of another hotel, I let myself into the lot where my camper was being repaired and slept in my own bed for the night — badly, in the heat. I gave up around dawn, drove out toward the edge of town, and pulled into a rest stop to catch a little sleep before traffic picked up.

By the time I reached my mom's house I was exhausted and desperate for a shower. I unloaded just enough to get cleaned up, packed a bowl — my first of the day, after driving all day — and there was a knock at the door.

Yeah, I know how it sounds — “10 days in a psych ward.” Let me tell you what really happened.

My family had called a wellness check on me, which turned into something closer to an ambush. The police showed up thinking I was going to take my life — but that thought wasn't even in my mind. I was simply exhausted, hadn't slept in a couple of days, and told them I was going to make myself some nighty-night tea and take a nap.

They took that the wrong way immediately and decided to take me in. Clearly, they'd never shopped at Whole Foods. For those of you unaware it is an Herbal Tea to help you sleep you can buy at the grocery store.

I understand their intentions. But this is exactly how quickly a situation can escalate off of one misinterpretation.

They wouldn't let me shower. They put me in the back of a patrol car and took me to the ER, where I waited for hours before an ambulance took me across town to a behavioral health facility. I didn't get up to my actual unit until four in the morning.

I was scared. The unit was filthy. My roommate slept constantly, and I lay there wondering if she was dangerous, wondering how I was supposed to rest at all. By seven a.m. I was in front of a psychiatrist who spent maybe five minutes with me — after two days without real sleep — and told me I was bipolar. I didn't believe it, and a psychiatrist I'd worked with extensively before, who'd actually taken the time to get to know me, had already explained exactly why ADHD can look like bipolar disorder to someone glancing at it quickly.

That night, when the nurse came around with medication, I asked if we could hold off on the bipolar medication until the weed, I'd been smoking cleared my system, so we could actually see what was left underneath it. She agreed, said we'd talk to the doctor in the morning — then wrote in my chart that I'd refused my meds, which I later learned is how a lot of things get recorded in there regardless of context.

I knew from talking to other patients that I wasn't leaving until I took something. I backed against the wall and sat down and cried before I finally took the pill — furious at my family for choosing this over simply calling someone for me to talk to.

Here's the part that says it all: they kept me for ten days because I had insurance. Everyone without insurance left in three days. The frequent guests there — the ones who knew exactly how the place ran — filled me in on that themselves.

The day before I was released, my ex-husband called to warn me papers were coming — he'd filed a restraining order, unsure what state I'd be in when I got out. I told him they should have sent flowers instead and just asked if I was okay. On my actual release day, I sat there for what felt like forever waiting on a sheriff to physically deliver it to me.

Inside, they'd handed me a notebook with a marker, and on the first page I wrote: *Why am I here?* One of my roommates, genuinely funny even in that place, wrote her own answer for me:

To meet me. She turned out to be a Reiki practitioner herself, taught when young, originally to help her sick mother. We traded Reiki with each other, and it was one of the better parts of an otherwise miserable stretch.

I braided another roommate's hair and gave her a pair of my own scrubs and underwear because nothing there fit her and it was her time of the month. She followed me everywhere afterward. She was sweet, high-energy, funny, and clearly overwhelmed by whatever she was in there for — I gave her Reiki too, and it visibly calmed her down.

Other things I witnessed there were harder: women pacing and arguing with themselves, a fight that ended in real bleeding, near-constant supervision on the more volatile patients. One group meditation session actually surprised me — a genuine, open conversation about energy, the third eye, balancing emotion, awakening, led by another patient who clearly knew what he was talking about.

The food was the worst part, honestly, until they found me gluten-free bread. My digestion fell apart in there regardless.

They forced me, against my will, to take pills. When that wasn't enough for them, they injected me with two months' worth of medication as a condition of my release. Everything the Divine had shown me during my awakening — wiped clean. I was left numb.

But here's what they didn't count on: the world can never actually silence truth.

With one simple word spoken to me, "*Twin Flames* — everything came rushing back. I remembered.

Somewhere in all of it, I read something that reframed the whole experience for me: that a lot of what gets labeled a disorder might actually be closer to a gift wearing an inconvenient face. People with depression often see the world more clearly than average. People with ADHD are disproportionately likely to start their own businesses and thrive in chaos. People with OCD tend to have excellent memories and real determination. People with bipolar disorder often show remarkable creative range. People with anxiety tend to

carry real empathy and sharp intuition. None of that makes any of it easy. It just means the story doesn't have to end at "disorder."

I stayed in a hotel a couple of days afterward to rest. My ex let me see the kids. Then I went back to east Texas and stayed in my mom's camper for a month before finally taking my dad up on his offer to stay with him and my stepmom while my camper finished its repairs. I'm deeply grateful to both of them for that.

Music

The Universe has always talked to me through song lyrics — I feel it, every time. My Twin lights me up the same way live music does; I've told him more than once he's my lighthouse. He can take my energy to real extremes, in both directions, which is part of why we both needed our own healing before we could ever really come together. He understood that long before I did.

There's a long list of musicians who feel like they wrote songs specifically for me — Brett Young, Mary J. Blige, India Arie, Stevie Nicks, Post Malone, Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper's "Shallow," Bruno Mars, Frank Sinatra, John Legend, Taylor Swift, Ziggy Marley, and plenty more I'll never manage to name completely. I kept a running playlist through the hardest stretches, using it to keep my energy from sinking too far. My daughter used to put on "Copperhead Road" whenever I got real sad, and I'd dance it out — the only line dance I actually know. She's a special kid. My new favorite, these days, is "Rise Up" by Andra Day.

PART V: BECOMING

CH 10 — PHOENIX

Family

I grew up in a house where we didn't talk about God, didn't pray, and I've still never read the whole Bible in this lifetime — the only books my ADHD brain ever let me absorb were the ones about food and the body. Lately, though, messages from scripture keep showing up that fit my journey almost too well.

When I finally told my mom and dad what I'd been experiencing, neither of them said a word back, even after I said it more than once, anxious, repeating myself. My aunt, who's genuinely religious, called to talk it through with me and landed on something close to "born-again Christian" as her best translation of what I was describing.

My Connection to Jesus

I've felt connected to Jesus since I was a kid, for reasons I can't fully explain. I never liked my own name — people misheard it constantly, I tried shortening it, none of it ever stuck the way a name does when people meet you fresh. During the awakening, Djed told me names are chosen before we're even born, that they're sacred. I looked into what Jill

Christine actually means and was astonished — it made what I'd felt as a kid feel suddenly a lot more significant, when I found myself wanting to reduce my name down to my initials, JC. Healing people brings me real joy, whatever name is on it.

Through the Gate

I didn't realize I was following Jesus until I was nearly at the end of my own awakening — what I've been calling the Holy Shit Express. On a trip to cleanse myself in salt water and let go of my fear of the ocean, we pulled into the park and saw that huge statue overlooking the water, and my fear just left. I'm sorry I missed time with my son to get through that gate, and I love him, and I believe good things are still coming because of it.

I used to compare myself to a saint and feel like I came up short. Now I think I barely dipped a toe into anything dark — maybe a fallen angel at worst. My body made its feelings about alcohol clear the very first time I drank, though tequila, made from the same plant as the one

sweetener on my Blood Type Diet, seems to be the exception. I'll keep my gluten sensitivity too — I don't want food in my body that blocks my connection to my Creator.

We're born awake, I've come to believe. The connection just fades as life piles blockages on top of it.

Modern Medicine, Ancient Roots

My own healing has come from food, Reiki, herbs, essential oils, intention, positivity and faith — with modern medicine as the backup, not the first stop. I'm deeply grateful for doctors, nurses, researchers, EMTs, firefighters, cops, and every first responder who keeps showing up. Healing naturally and getting to the actual root of a problem should come first when it can; medicine should be there behind it when it's needed.

Vision

Certain jobs and certain lives just aren't built for a brain like mine, and realizing that was a big part of why I walked away from my career. What I created in my mind instead, after that vision of God showing me myself healed, started as a yoga studio behind my old house — that view over the hill, the cypress trees moving in the wind — and grew into a whole imagined wellness center: three stories, open-air, on stilts over water, with a restaurant serving food built entirely around what actually heals a body, labeled by blood type. Someone once asked, half-joking, if the restaurant would serve food “we” could eat too — meaning people who weren't me. I nearly laughed. Of course it would. It would just also be honest about what's actually in it.

Then Corona hit — the Great Pause, I call it — and I understood the open-air part of my vision differently after that. During the shutdown, I built a website, 4Gratitude.com, and eventually this book, which turned out to be the real wellness center all along: virtual, reaching further than any physical building ever could. I didn't write it chasing a title or any kind of fame. I was guided to write it, the same way I was guided to everything else in this story.

I never wanted to charge for Reiki. It felt wrong to charge for God's work. Although I didn't have enough money for food, so I tried charging for Reiki. I published this book, and the healing video that came with it, are the same offering — twenty minutes meant to slow you down and connect you to something bigger, for your own sake and, I hope, for the planet's.

Connecting the Dots

Looking back now, so many pieces line up that I can't call it all coincidence:

- My fear of cancer, traced straight back to Aunt Nina, led to the breast reduction that led to finally loving my own body — which is where all of this actually started.
- Two different friends, unconnected, both told me at different times that I should be a writer.
- The bridge collapse, the Boston bombing — both felt, in hindsight, like the Universe flagging that I was on the wrong road entirely.

- My ex-husband and I had exactly one real fight over our daughter's ADHD, and in the middle of it he called me "Queen of Sheba" — a name neither of us had ever used before, and one he couldn't explain reaching for.
- Changing my diet resolved my asthma, my allergies, my digestion, my fatigue, nearly everything, all at once.
- I learned that when I'm deep in my masculine energy, I stop taking care of myself physically.
- I learned that hiring a specialist beats DIYing almost every time — a lesson the general-contractor summer taught me the hard way.

I also think about the Twin Towers themselves — the actual towers — falling right as my own life was collapsing and rebuilding at the same time, and I later learned the Tower card in tarot means almost exactly that: an unforeseen disaster that knocks arrogance down, sometimes clearing the way for something better underneath. I think the Universe drops these tower moments in front of us on purpose, and paying attention to them is most of the journey.

Aha Moments

Right after the worst of my awakening, wanting to reconnect with people again, I started watching Russell Brand's channel and left a comment about abortion — and then remembered I'd left that exact comment once before, in the preview version of my vision, months before any of this happened in real time.

The hardest one came after the hospital. We had a custody hearing, and my daughter's dad was given custody, with visitation for me. I couldn't stop crying — she's my mini-me, we're two peas in a pod, my person, and losing that felt like being punished for something I didn't do. Then I remembered: I'd seen this exact moment in the vision, long before it happened. She had to go stay with her dad. And right alongside that memory came another one — that my Twin and I are going away together, eventually, for a while.

My daughter and I have bonded fiercely over the years, which wasn't always true — I bonded instantly with my son at birth, but it took her getting seriously sick and hospitalized as a toddler before that same bond really took hold with her. I understand now that some of that early distance was ancestral — girls weren't always valued the way boys were in my family line, going back generations, and that's something that needed healing in its own right, separate from anything about her specifically.

Family, Roots, and What I Grew Up With

My grandpa said things over the years that were genuinely hard to hear — about religion, about race — and I hated it every time. I've come to wonder, though, whether some of what he said was less about hate and more about being a rough teacher for people around him to push against and grow past.

I grew up in a house that welcomed everyone regardless of color or who they loved, genuinely and without much comment — my own family is a real mix of backgrounds, gay and straight,

more ethnicities than I can list. My DNA test even turned up a small trace of Nigerian ancestry I never expected, on top of the British and Irish I already knew about. As a kid we all thought we were part Native American — my dad said Blackfoot, my own nickname was Squaw, my brother's was Chief — and whether that turned out to be exactly accurate or not, it shaped how I saw myself and who I was drawn to for a long time.

We did go to church regularly when I was young — I was baptized alongside my brother and sister, at my own request — until my dad pulled us out in our early teens, uneasy about how close the youth director seemed to get with the boys. He was protecting my brother. Looking back, I think growing up a little sheltered from organized religion left me more open, later, to whatever this has turned into.

The Green Mile

There's a character in *The Green Mile* who heals people and struggles to make anyone believe or understand him, and I've felt kinship with him more than once — the exhaustion healing takes out of a body, the constant absorption of other people's pain until you learn to set it back down. I curse more than people expect from someone doing this kind of work, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise; it's part of me, especially when anxiety flares. I have, more than once, pulled a headache straight out of my daughter's skull with nothing but my palm pressed to the spot — she asks for my hand now before she asks for ibuprofen, and her headaches have all but stopped.

Coming Back Awake

The months I spent at my dad and stepmom's, I mostly forgot everything I'd learned spiritually — until Djed sent me a video about Twin Flames that woke me right back up, mid-conversation, about the Divine Masculine finally being ready even with a few kinks still left to work out between us. Our whole story, honestly, has been one long comedy of miscommunication. I sat at my dad's for months, capable of working on this book, and it just didn't feel like it mattered yet.

Creation

As a kid I understood creation as something God did once, in the beginning, and then somehow handed off entirely to us. Now I believe God is still creating people — my Twin included, made for me specifically, our story written in the stars.

Everything I'd suggest, if you're looking for one thread to pull from all of this: balance your diet, balance your energy, and go within — daily if you can manage it, but even occasionally helps. Everyone's path looks different. The only non-negotiable is love.

Where I Actually Am

I know I'm not standing in my full power yet. I'm still financially tied to my mother in ways that remind me of Emily Gilmore, and God's kept me with just enough to get by and not a dollar more — humbling, on purpose, I think. Not having enough for food some weeks is genuinely hard. I need to get my daughter back. I may be figuring out how to be some kind of healer for the whole earth, but underneath that, I'm still just her mother, and that part doesn't get to wait.

I'm grateful — for love, for myself, for my Twin, for our future children, for anyone who's given me their time on this journey. I know that stepping fully into whatever this power actually is means cutting the tangled energetic cord between my mother and me, so she can just be my mom again instead of something more complicated. And I know it means eventually being together with my Twin in the actual physical world, not just in energy.

I Wouldn't Have Written This Without Marijuana

It unlocks something in my brain that lets the ideas actually land. Here's one, free of charge: someone should build a hair-sample lab, the same kind that tests food intolerances, to match people with the right cannabis strain for their body. Steal the idea. I've got plenty more.

I want to say something plainly here, because I've shared a lot of stories in this book about alcohol, ADHD medication, and weed, and I don't want any of it read the wrong way.

I spent much of my life surrounded by functioning alcoholics — good people, people I loved, who just happened to drink like it was air. I think some part of me was always trying to keep up with tolerances that were never really mine to keep up with. Looking back, I don't think alcohol is good for humans at all. It clouds judgment, it costs people their health, and it cost me more than one decision I wish I could take back. It's also the one substance in this entire story that's legal, glorified, and sold on every corner.

ADHD medication is a different thing entirely. It genuinely helped me focus, and get things done, in ways I'm grateful for. But if I'm honest, it also felt like it drained something out of me — some part of my spark I didn't get back until I stopped.

And weed, for me, started out as something I used to get high when I was younger, before I understood what it actually was. Now I use the lowest dose I can, as medicine — I believe it's something God gave us, plain and simple, and it's been handed a reputation it never earned, especially next to alcohol, which does far more damage and somehow gets none of the blame.

I'm not telling anyone what to do with their own body. I'm just telling you what I've lived, and what I now believe, after living it. We have cannabinoid receptors all throughout our body for a reason. Thankfully, they've finally begun doing more research.

My Apologies

I'm genuinely sorry for the insensitive things that have come out of my mouth along the way — for not always seeing or hearing the people around me the way I should have, for my own lack of awareness at times, and for being the other woman in someone else's marriage at a point in my life. I'm sorry for everything else I should probably be naming here and haven't. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I love you. Thank you.

I believe everything happens for a reason, and I know I've said some of this loudly. Going forward, I'll try to bring the volume down a little. I think God just wanted everyone's attention for a minute.

Every day is a new beginning. I'm beautiful. I live in abundance. I respect myself. I am beloved. And whatever's changing right now is changing for the better.

CH 11 — ALPHA

Tribute to Lefties

My son's AP Physics teacher wrote him a scholarship recommendation letter that stopped me in my tracks — calling him one of the brightest students at the school, someone whose intellect lights the way for the people around him, with the drive to match the mind. Coming from a teacher who runs one of the hardest classes in the building, that meant everything. I'm proud of both my kids beyond words. My daughter carries her own kind of brilliance — funnier, more creative, a genuinely beautiful voice, and, like me, a lefty.

There's something real about left-handedness that I don't think gets enough credit. Left-handed people have been pushed to conform for most of history — forced to write right-handed, hands tied down as kids, living in a world built almost entirely for right-handed bodies and left-brained minds. My daughter tested in the top 4% of the country for being extremely right-brained, on top of being left-handed, which might be the most “her” combination of facts I've ever heard. Eight of our forty-five presidents have been left-handed — nearly 18%, in a population where lefties make up roughly 10%. Left-handed people also test higher, on average, for creativity, imagination, and intuition. Einstein, Tesla, Michelangelo, Mozart, Marie Curie, Da Vinci, Oprah — the list of left-handed people who've shaped the world is long enough that I don't think it's nothing.

Magdalene Mysteries

I should say plainly here, in case it wasn't already obvious: I changed names and places throughout this book to protect the privacy of my family, friends, and soulmates.

Somewhere near the end of writing this, I came across a book called *Magdalene Mysteries: The Left-Hand Path of the Feminine Christ*, and the first few pages nearly knocked me over. It talks about a female prophetess and a male prophet needing to work together as the deepest secret of all — about sacred feminine blood, which Djed and I had already discussed more than once, strange as that sounds. It describes a figure emerging for a new era who can carry the fully awakened feminine, someone remembered in older, less orthodox gospels as Jesus's closest disciple and true inheritor of his teaching. It talks about the union between the two of them as something that creates an anointed teacher of love itself.

The book also touches on sacred anatomy and sacred sexuality more directly than I expected, in ways that connected straight back to conversations Djed and I had already had, long before I found this book. It even gets into the amygdala — the brain's intuitive, feeling center — as a kind of portal into deeper awareness, which sounded to me exactly like the pineal gland conversation I'd already been having with my dentist years earlier. Left and right, in the book's framing, map onto feminine and masculine, moon and sun, night and day — two halves that only work as a whole. Reading it felt less like discovering something new and more like finding a map of a road I'd already walked.

Bigger Than Religion

I've listened to teachers online — Max Igan among them — talk about how organized religion has often asked people to wait for salvation instead of doing the work themselves, and about the moment we're in as a real opportunity for people to remember who they actually are. I didn't grow up waiting for anyone to save me. I was sheltered from religion almost entirely, and looking at how much corruption, violence, and abuse religious institutions have carried over centuries, I've come to feel grateful for that instead of deprived by it. I'm not saying faith itself is the problem. I just don't know enough about any one religion to speak for it, and I'm no longer scared of not knowing.

I found an old exercise somewhere along this journey — I've lost track of where — built around three simple practices: communion, appreciating someone who doesn't know you feel that way, being kind to someone who's ignored you; awareness, sitting quietly with your own body until you understand what's underneath an irritation instead of just the irritation itself; and acceptance, spending five real minutes finding the best in someone you genuinely dislike. I still come back to all three.

Near the very end of finishing this book, I went looking through other books on my shelf for ideas on structuring the front and back matter, and found a passage in the Blood Type Diet book that stopped me cold — about how spirit isn't diminished by being divided among people, the way a torn sheet of paper is still made of the same whole even split into a hundred pieces. I hadn't expected an old diet book to hand me a definition of the soul, but there it was.

A moth showed up on my bathroom curtain right as I was finishing this manuscript. I looked up what moths are supposed to represent and found: transformation, hidden knowledge, intuition, shadow work — messengers nudging you toward whatever true self you haven't fully met yet.

My daughter got me watching a football drama with her, and even there the signs kept showing up — a whole episode about how labels rarely tell you the full truth about a person, how a struggle never really belongs to just one or two people, it belongs to everyone standing near it. I don't agree with everything a show like that puts forward, but that particular message landed.

If you know someone who struggles to read, I'd ask you to offer to read this book to them, out loud, and talk about it together afterward. That would mean more to me than almost anything else this book could do.

Hallelujah

God showed me a few different paths along the way, and I kept throwing my hands up and saying no to all of them. What I've built, through all of this, is a life where I can stay spiritually and energetically balanced while still living here, on the ground, in an actual body. The most important thing, still, underneath all of it, is love. Djed told me recently that our time apart actually protected what we have. I agreed with him completely.

I know who I am now. I know who Djed is too — not my Twin Flame, but someone real, someone who helped me get here anyway, and I don't love him any less for it.

I believe it's all coming — not slowly, but the way an avalanche comes, many things landing at once. I thought it would all arrive the moment I finished the website. Instead, I understand now it was always going to be this book. I finished it on 9/11/2021 — maybe that's a confession of some kind, or maybe I made the whole thing up. I don't think I did.

I can see it already: the book, the identity, health, wealth, love, and eventually, real union with my Twin — all arriving. Beyond even that, I believe we're meant to help raise the vibration of the whole world once we're finally together.

If you take one thing from all of this: help heal the world by bringing your own masculine and feminine energy into balance first. Everything else follows from there.

Mission

To have a better life than just surviving. To show people their intuition exists for a reason. To be my best self, and help other people find theirs. To be loved, and to love. To help make the world a little better than I found it. To give up good, in favor of great.

I am blessed.

Thank You

We are united. Thank you for love, for wishes, for smiles, for trust, for kisses. I'm grateful for you, for us, for me. Thank you to every tarot reader, healer, and psychic who helped me along the way, and for the whole strange, unrepeatable journey itself. Thank you for faith, for hope, for laughter, for music. Thank you, God.

To the two boys who said something to my son at school about my faith — you're right, I'm not exactly a traditional Christian. Believe it or not, I think there's Christ in more of us than anyone's told you. I suspect the future holds even more people waking up to that than there are right now.

What I Actually Learned About Taking Care of Myself

When I said I learned more about how to take care of my own body than I ever learned about religion, I meant that literally, right down to the underwear drawer — women didn't even wear any until the 19th century, and going without at night, at minimum, seems to genuinely lower the risk of certain infections. My grandma told me that exact thing decades ago. I believe her more now than I did then.

Gratitude

Thank you to God, the Universe, Jesus, Mary Magdalene, my guardian angels, both my grandmas, Aunt Nina, my aunt and uncle who helped me with my RV, my whole family, and

every healer, reader, and teacher whose work found its way to me along this road — some named in this book, plenty more I never wrote down properly and am still grateful for regardless. Thank you to the internet, to YouTube, to every song and every artist that got me through a hard stretch, and to every doctor, teacher, and stranger who showed up exactly when I needed them to.

A Bonus Recipe

A friend of mine — I'll just call him the Science Guy — was diagnosed with cancer and decided against radiation, choosing instead to work with a naturopathic doctor on diet and lifestyle alone. I gave him Reiki a few times along the way. He's cancer-free now, healed the route he chose. He passed along a carrot salad recipe I make often enough that it felt wrong not to end this book with it:

Carrot Salad

2 cups chopped organic carrots, 1 oz chopped walnuts, 1 oz chopped almonds, 2 oz finely chopped pineapple, 2 oz blueberries, 2 oz any other berry, 2 oz pomegranate, ¼ cup dried cranberries, 1 tbsp chia or flax seeds, 1 tbsp finely chopped cilantro, 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar, juice of 1 lime, 1 tsp true cinnamon, and love.

Thank you for that salad, and for everything else, my friend.

Following the Breadcrumbs

As a child, I was terrified of *The Wizard of Oz*. I remember being taken out of the room because it frightened me so much.

Years later, I found myself working at the airport, where we walked through the hangar by following a yellow line painted on the floor. At the time, it was simply a safety rule.

Looking back now, I can't help but smile at the symbolism.

For much of my life, I was following a path long before I realized I was searching for one.

The breadcrumbs were always there.

I just didn't know they were leading me home.

Words That Walked Beside Me

From the Bible

"Be still, and know that I am God." — Psalm 46:10

"The kingdom of God is within you." — Luke 17:21

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." — Luke 23:34

"Enter through the narrow gate..." — Matthew 7:13 – 14

"As you start to walk on the way, the way appears."

Rumi

"If you want to find the secrets of the Universe think in terms of Energy, Frequency and Vibration"

"If your hate could be turned into electricity, it would light up the whole WORLD"

Nikola Tesla

“Imagination is everything, it is the preview of life's coming attractions”

“Coincidence is GOD 's way of remaining anonymous.”

“There is only LIGHT & SOUND”

Albert Einstein

Reflections from My Journey

Healing begins the moment we become willing to see.

Fear keeps us surviving. Love teaches us to live.

We are here to remember who we are.

Healing ourselves helps heal the world.

Heaven on Earth isn't a dream. It's a decision.

What part of you is ready to shine more brightly?

Sometimes the greatest miracle isn't what happens around us. It's what changes within us.

Looking back, I can now see the breadcrumbs were always there.

Every chapter of my life was preparing me for the next one.

MAY YOUR OWN BREADCRUMBS LEAD YOU HOME.

May you remember who you truly are.

The journey inward is the greatest journey of all.

The breadcrumbs are already there.

Trust yourself enough to follow them.