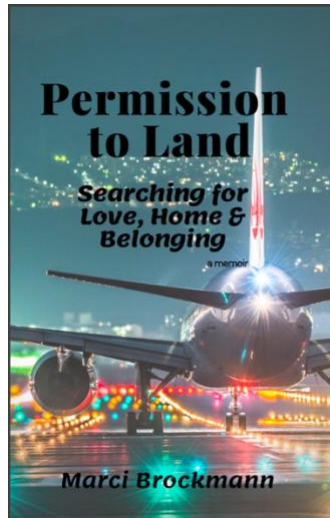


My Extraordinary Gift for Hope.



I love movies. There are few things I love more than the cinematic experience, theaters are great, but I even love if I'm on my couch. (I may actually love watching from my couch best.) For two hours I get transported into another world and get to walk around there awhile.

Movies are life and are therefore chock full of inspiration.

The quintessential movie about hope is *The Great Gatsby*, both versions, 1974 & 2013. Jay Gatsby never gave up his dream of Daisy. He worked hard to make his fortune so that he could have a better chance of winning her love, but no matter what happened, he never gave up. He focused on his dream, created a plan, and worked the plan. His “extraordinary gift of hope and romantic readiness” was the central core of the entire novel.

In 2006, I fell in love with the movie *Stranger Than Fiction*. No matter how weird Harold Crick's (the main character) life got, he never stopped looking for the answers. He had a boring life and decided, because he had hope that he could make it better, to ask out the girl he loved and he tracked down the novelist, Karen Eiffel, whose voice he kept hearing in his head, and who, as it wound up, was writing his life just as she was writing her novel. It sounds confusing, but it's charming and it's about hope. Hope to finish a novel. Hope to figure out the mystery. Hope to find love.

The Holiday (2006) gives us two broken hearted women, Amanda and Iris, never gave up, chose to try something new, found love and changed their whole lives.

Elizabeth Gilbert gave us her own story in 2010 with *Eat Pray Love*. She needed a revolutionary change in her life and despite being afraid, went on a global trip to get reacquainted with her soul. She found her deep and true self and her creativity. Turns out, it was hiding out in Bali with her hopefulness and love.



No matter what has happened in my life, (my mother's addiction, my parent's divorce, heart break, my own divorce, the death of loved ones, job loss), I always hoped things would get better. I was hopelessly hopeful. I had my eye on something better and continuously felt that the next thing or person might be the answer. Sure, I got smacked down. Sure, I was disappointed and discouraged temporarily. But the important part was that I didn't stay down for long. I got up, regrouped and tried again.

I've learned that if I want something badly enough that I have to devote my energy to it. Only then would it be possible that I could either make it happen or come close and learn something along the way to apply to a next time or another project.

It has never occurred to me to give up.

Of course, I'm afraid of failing, just like anyone else, but I'm more afraid of not trying and saying *what if* forever.

In 2010's, *Letters to Juliet*, the letter Sophie, as the secretary of Juliet wrote to Claire, was all about going for it and taking a chance. Sophie encouraged her to not get stuck wondering *what if* for the rest of one's life.

Dear Claire, "What" and "If" are two words as non-threatening as words can be. But put them together side-by-side and they have the power to haunt you for the rest of your life: What if? What if? What if? I don't know how your story ended but if what you felt then was true love, then it's never too late. If it was true then, why wouldn't it be true now? You need only the courage to follow your heart. I don't know what a love like Juliet's feels like - love to leave loved ones for, love to cross oceans for but I'd like to believe if I ever were to feel it, that I will have the courage to seize it. And, Claire, if you didn't, I hope one day that you will. All my love, Juliet" (Friedman, *Letters to Juliet*).

For Claire, it was *what if* Lorenzo loves her? What if he doesn't?

For me, it has been and could be lots of things.

What if I join a gym and try to get fit?

What if I build a website and try to sell my art?

What if I change my website concept and open an art gallery instead?

What if I have a child or two?

What if I go back to school?

What if I write an article and submit it to EJ?

What if I ask my boyfriend to marry me?

What if I talk to this kind looking stranger sitting next to me at the DMV?

What if I write a memoir?

If I failed at any of these my life would not be over, even the ones I really want to happen. The earth will not open and swallow me whole. The world will not stop spinning on its axis. People who love me will not stop loving me.

I will not stop loving me.

I know that I will feel strong, creative and brave if I try. I will be proud of myself for going for it. And the *wows* that I will get from everyone I tell about my new venture or

creative idea will also help fuel my enthusiasm and excitement. It's a circle of love and magic.

As Elizabeth Gilbert's metaphor for creative brainstorm is the gift of *Big Magic* (2015), I accept and welcome the magic of creative ideas into my life. I'm committing to them and when we make new commitments, we share the news of them with our friends and family.

Sharing gives us three things:

1. Support and encouragement
2. An audience
3. Accountability. If you tell people, their excitement and love for you will make them ask questions to find out how it's going which, in turn, will keep you talking about it and focusing on it to get it done.

So, don't be afraid to dream and dream big. What do you want? I know that you have the power to create whatever you want most in this world. Shout out loud to the Universe and state your intentions.

Repeat after me; "I, (state your name), welcome the creative magic into my life because I want to (insert your idea/ passion/ desire here) and I am committed to making it happen and sharing my enthusiasm with everyone I know."

All you have to do is be brave enough to try.
What if you succeed and all your wildest dreams come true?