

Introduction

“The gift that lies waiting for us is growth, is change.

It’s the possibility that something good can come from pain. And when the crisis hits,
and our world comes tumbling down,
when we are afraid,
will we have the strength and the wisdom
to embrace the gift that is there,
and welcome it with open arms?”

– From Being Erica

This book shares my journey of self-discovery through the many landscapes of painful experiences and challenges I have encountered in my life and how I overcame the effects of abuse and trauma through my connection with Nature. I thankfully found my way back home to myself, to my heart and to my original joy of living. After many years of having so many people who I shared my journey with tell me I should write a book, here it is.

My life is a testament to, and a reflection of, the power we all have to rise above adversity and how we can claim our power to overcome what holds us back, how we can grow beyond trauma patterns that keep us repeating beliefs and behaviours that limit our capacity for healing and authentic self-expression.

My book is also an ode to nature, revealing how connecting to nature as a way to self-reflect, to nourish and activate our innate creativity and resilience teaches and nourishes us in times of adversity and challenge. Nature's Resilience is an active force in all of us that grants us the capacity to meet challenges with confidence and affirmative action. Some confuse resilience with perseverance, where we just ‘push through’ with force and strength. When we only push through without really leaning in and growing our understanding and awareness through the challenges we are actually building stress in the body by burying over the emotions and pain that get ignored by only pushing through.

Though there is an element in resilience that exhibits perseverance, as I have come to understand, resilience is more about our capacity to creatively utilize challenges and adversity to our benefit. Where we become more than we were, that we could not have otherwise become,

because of the challenges, pains etc. that we encounter in life. Nature reveals to us that creative response in how it adapts and uses otherwise interrupting forces and influences for its support and growth. Nothing can stop Nature from growing and becoming. Like a tree I saw in Berlin that inspired this insight in me that grew its trunk around a wire fence flourishing beautifully in spite of the fences presence.

Resilience, I have learned, is about creativity, courage and commitment to grow no matter what. The willingness to use all that comes our way to grow and evolve us. Nature is the greatest teacher and example of this capacity that is an innate capacity in us as well. Nature has been my ultimate inspiration and teacher in knowing myself and healing from trauma.

This book is also about recognizing how we are all connected, how we are in the same boat together, struggling with the very same things every day that no one talks about. Here in this Introduction I am going to share some thoughts and observations that have the potential to open your mind and heart to new possibilities of living and perceiving life that can bring a new sense of empowerment, liberation and freedom. I share these as a way to invite you into my inner world and to prepare you for the story you are about to read so you can frame it in a way that makes sense and that what is shared can inspire you to know yourself and the magic and beauty that awaits every one of us when we show up to meet and heal ourselves.

There are many common threads that connect us all, all of Humanity, all of Nature. One of these threads is that we all experience adversarial forces. We encounter intense circumstances that challenge us to find and create new ways to survive and hopefully, also thrive. We also all experience pain, confusion, doubt, loss, suffering, fear, and moments of depression in the span of our life, where we ask, and sometimes cry out in anguish, “Why? Why me? Why is this happening? Why can’t I figure this out? Why, Why, Why?” We feel forsaken by ourselves, God/Love, the whole Universe.

This leads us to another common experience we all share ... the fear, confusion and discomfort of “not knowing”. To admit we do not know brings us into feeling vulnerable in life, a feeling we most often do our best to avoid and ignore. Because of this fear we develop a need to conclude everything we are feeling and experiencing into a singularity, so that we can convince ourselves that we know, interpreting life experiences and people in an extremely dualistic way, based on the belief systems we have grown up with and cultivated through life experiences. We cling to what we believe we know so strongly, as a way to feel safe in the

world, that we become inflexible to anything outside our comfort zone. This results in us feeling stuck and caught in such narrowness that it suffocates our capacity to grow and change. But Nature is all about change. Change is the only constant we can count on. So when we are afraid of change we are going against the natural flow and rhythms of life itself. Is it any wonder we feel depressed and uninspired? If we were a plant and refused to be affected by the ever shifting forces of Nature that give us life, we would die quite quickly. Why do we block the natural flow? Why does the 'unnatural' come to feel so natural to us? Safety is why.

Every one of our basic primal needs is to feel safe. That is the highest priority to our nervous system. Every room we walk into, every person we meet, every new situation, in the depth of our biology we are asking 'am I safe? am I safe? am I safe?' This need for safety has us construct beliefs and interpretations that act as a barrier in us to create a sense of safety. Our beliefs become our fortress of safety. For the most part they serve us well, we need beliefs to define and navigate the world, but when we have been traumatized we become even more narrow in our perceptions and leaving our comfort zone feels absolutely threatening, so we lock ourselves in deeper and deeper in our beliefs, afraid to let go of our story that it could endanger us opening and letting ourselves be vulnerable. In this state singular truths feel like our saving Grace, 'this is good, this is bad, this is right, this is wrong, I like, I don't like.' We lose the capacity to think and observe the more subtle and complex nature of life and ourselves, which requires an expanded mind to see and comprehend the complexity of our life and experiences with greater clarity and accuracy.

In my experience and in witnessing the lives around me, I see this as a main cause to our internal suffering. In reality, no truth is singular, trying to reduce everything to a single cause or single truth is what spins us in circles. It is impossible. Truth is always layered and often with many contrary truths that can co-exist simultaneously that are equally valid and true. When I attempt to reduce and conclude an experience, a person or result to a singular truth or interpretation I omit nuances and contexts that are vitally important to cultivating understanding of the world around me and of my experiences, particularly the painful ones. Once we get ensnared in our inner dogmas, which ultimately limit possibility versus embracing and opening to it, it then tends to send us into deeper chaos and confusion.

Through my life experiences I have learned that to truly see and gain knowledge so that I can heal I need to expand my view, not contract and reduce it. I need to be inclusive, allowing everything, every feeling, every thought, every experience its place and purpose.

Our limbic and nervous system however is hardwired to protect us when we have experienced trauma, so we reduce and exclude in order to simplify to survive, so to go against that survival program can be really challenging. Even though our brains are also hardwired to adapt and change as well, once the trauma response is activated we can easily get locked in to habits and beliefs created to keep us safe that do not serve our greater evolution of self and soul.

Opening to something new, coupled with the experience of not knowing are two of the most difficult experiences to navigate in life, even more so when something traumatic has taken place. It is generally hard for us to admit we don't know something. We are compelled to believe and feel this incessant need to know and understand everything immediately. If we don't, we suffer. We judge ourselves for not knowing. We judge life for being so "hard and cruel," for not making sense. We feel lost, alone, confused, and angry.

But what if there is another way of observing and perceiv- ing available to us? What if not knowing was something to actually celebrate and embrace? What if it was something to be excited about because it means we have the opportunity to go beyond what we currently know, to discover something new that can enrich our lives and relationships? What if our perception shifted in that direction and made it okay to tem- porarily not know? What if we can feel good about life and ourselves that something happened to shake our perceptions, to make us uncertain, because it opens us to new possibilities? What if?

These are the questions that arose in me from the traumas I experienced that propelled me to dive deep into my story in order to heal it, where I had to question my beliefs and uncover the ones that I had created to 'protect myself', that were actually sabotaging my healing and growth.

Hawaiian teachings is one branch of wisdom that brought a lot of goodness to my life and helped increase my capacity to shift my perceptions from feeling like a victim to being empowered and helped me open to new possibilities. I will share a little bit here.

In Hawaiian teachings, as I was taught, the principle of Kala means I am free. When I am free, there are no limits to prevent me from healing and creating the life of my dreams. It opens the world of possibilities. With Kala I understand that the world is how I perceive it, and that the world will always reflect my perceptions back to me. With Kala it is understood that all systems

and beliefs are actually arbitrary. They are merely formed and created by our mind making the best attempt to define reality, to define the mystery and ineffable nature of ourselves and life. It reveals that just because we choose to believe what we believe does not mean it is true or in alignment with Universal Laws and what is true.

What is the measure of truth? How do we measure if something is true? Most of us base our interpretations of truth on strong feelings and emotions. But how do we discern whether it is our wound or an inherited negative belief system activating our emotions, then directing our thoughts and perceptions, versus, our perceptions coming from clarity of presence in the moment, knowledge and insight?

My time in Hawaii helped me to learn and discern the difference with greater effectivity. The teachings I learned in Hawaii reflected so many wisdoms and truths, that I had already discovered and explored in Nature, into greater clarity and integration for me. The profound simplicity and depth of the life teachings they offer is life changing. It brought order to my scattered mind and emotions, and integration where my traumas had left me fragmented. One cannot remain a victim living by the principles they share, and I was looking to get out of the victim beliefs that still had a hold on me.

One of the other Hawaiian Principles that helped me become congruent within myself and the world is Pono. In Hawaii I was taught that every word and every wisdom has seven levels of depth and meaning. Some of the meanings of Pono are Truth, Genuineness and Honesty. The Principle Pono is a navigational awareness and tool that also translates as, 'effectiveness is the measure of truth', meaning that if the belief or action we are undertaking works in harmony with the laws of nature and life to sustain and uphold ourselves and life, to sustain good, and it helps us to do and be better, then it's considered true and effective. We come to see that our beliefs either evolve and lift us or they corrode and devolve us away from our higher nature.

As mentioned before, though arbitrary, beliefs and labels do serve a certain function that enables us to create definition in order to navigate the world, the beliefs we create and align with gives us a sense of safety, yet, when we become stuck in those beliefs and labels, when we create our own personal dogmas from them that then limit other possibilities from touching and affecting us in a way that can evolve us to new levels of understanding and wisdom, then there is a serious problem.

One of the hardest things to do when recovering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and open to a new way of perceiving and believing. It's hard because our personal stories and dogmas we created to cope and survive do keep us safe. We crave control of ourselves and our environment to feel safe. Our beliefs give us that safety, right, wrong, true or indifferent, they keep us safe, which is why we rarely question them. Hence the more traumatized we are, the less open we are to change. But being open to change and new thought is the only thing that can save us from our own self-made walls that may protect us in some ways, but they also block and keep the good stuff out, like love, fun, intimacy and healing. In my years of overcoming PTSD, I struggled a lot to open myself beyond my story. My mind had become quite focused on the traumas, rigid and closed in many ways, and if anyone challenged, without kindness, the beliefs that kept me safe, I would shut down towards them and isolate myself more from the world.

By the time I arrived to Hawaii in 2010 I had already healed, expanded and opened myself immensely, but I still got stuck sometimes and pulled into traumatic loops. Less often albeit, but it still happened. The teachings and healings I received in Hawaii helped me that next step I needed to go to restore my heart and trust in life fully. I was reborn.

Kala- I am free, there are no limits, all systems and beliefs are arbitrary... this really liberated me from debilitating beliefs that didn't serve me anymore. I explored and observed the difference between beliefs I inherited from family and society and the one's I created from my own experiences, what beliefs served me and what one's didn't. Realizing I can choose which beliefs heal and evolve me versus those that don't. I can choose beliefs that include diversity and change or not. It's up to me what I choose in every moment.

When we have trauma we have so many filters that dilute life and our own vitality. I know what it takes to stretch beyond the comfort zone to trust to let life in in its fullness after abuse and trauma. It is not an easy journey, but it is possible with love and kindness towards ourselves, which opens us to heal.

It's incredibly freeing to recognize the arbitrary nature of the beliefs and thoughts we choose to create and feed. It's also a tricky thought process to wrap our mind around. Since we can find validation for any thought and belief we choose, good or bad how do we discern what is right action or wrong action? We can't base it on belief alone. We need something like an inner compass to guide us. A compass that shows us what is effective in affirming life, enabling us to

love and care for ourselves and each other, a compass that brings us into harmony with the universal laws that govern all creation. That can bring us in alignment with our higher nature which is our connection to the God force in us and in all life. How can we find that inner compass? When I watch bugs and animals in nature they seem to have an inner compass that always leads them exactly where they need to be to attain the nourishment and environment that supports them to grow and thrive. All of Nature is well equipped, then so must we be. We need to look and dig deep into ourselves to find it. What if I open myself to the possibility that I must have the same kind of inner guidance system as nature that simply got blocked somehow, that I can connect to in times of pain and confusion.

Pause for a moment while reading this if you will, to explore and feel the possible freeing impact of that way of perceiving and navigating, if you knew beyond a doubt that you are wired to know what you need and where to go for it. That all you have to do is look for and activate that innate inner compass. What would it open in you to realize this and that there are other possibilities of perception that are equally valid as your current ones, that could even possibly expand and evolve you beyond where you currently are in your inner and outer worlds? Really feel in to it. Can you feel the simplicity and freedom it offers? Can you feel the space it creates for something new to come in and be inspired by? Like a fresh breeze. Can you feel the tension release in your body? Take a deep breath. If all systems and beliefs are arbitrary and are a matter of choice, and are our creation, what then blocks us from choosing a new, more life affirming definition or path, a path that increases our capacity to love, also, questioning ourselves and our beliefs that are feeding our suffering, anger and pain? I discovered that our innate inner compass will always direct us towards what is good and wholesome to support us to thrive when it is fully activated and intact, we just need clear the interference and tune in.

What stops so many of us from choosing a path that is inclusive of diversity and welcomes change? What if we choose a way of perceiving that is not based on a reductionist point of view but, rather an expansive and inclusive one that observes and validates the complexity and subtle nuances that allows two contrary truths to co-exist at the same time, as they often do, with equal validity.

What happens when we can allow the paradox of living to be what it is? Where we can drop the battle of who's right and who's wrong based on our beliefs and then create space to explore,

learn and understand new ways of being, feeling and perceiving, rather than fighting and competing all the time?

Exploring these questions and earnestly seeking the answers has been and is at the core of my life journey. When I was a little girl I remember always asking why people fought, it didn't make sense to me at all. My life has brought me many teachings and insights since then. I now understand what lies at the core of conflict; it is our pain and trauma. It is the defensive and protective mechanisms we create to feel safe that create so many misunderstandings in our relationships, both with ourselves and each other.

In all my years of studying myself, psychology, science, human nature and spirituality, Hawaiian teachings brought it all together for me and revealed to me, to my surprise, how I had already been governing my life with the same insight and understanding that they share. I was already living the same principles without knowing it my whole life. The teachings of Nature are indeed Universal!

What I have come to understand from Nature is that it will grow weeds and orchids equally. In the same way our focus and attention will feed, grow and validate our reality through our beliefs and perceptions. The God force in us, will amplify and grow whatever thoughts and beliefs we repeat and feed. This is the principle of Makia-Focus. Where my attention goes, energy flows and that is the reality that grows.

We live in a world of vibrational energy with Laws of Resonance, Attraction and Magnetism that take part in our daily lives and creations. To understand this gives us more creative control in directing our life. This is where my connection to Nature served me so well. Though I had never been to Hawaii before, I witnessed these same principles in Nature as a young girl, and it is these insights that brought me through so much pain and trauma that you will read about in this book.

So when in my late thirties, when I was just coming out of a lot of processing and rebuilding myself, I discovered Hawaii and started learning with my teachers there, you can imagine, I felt instantly at home. I felt completely found and met in every way. It is effortless for me to be me there.

As I have come to see it, due to our collective forgetting that we are a part of nature and that we are subject to the same rules and laws, we have basically created the mess we are in, both personally and globally. When we reconnect to the awareness that we are nature, and use that

understanding to guide us, hope and new possibilities are born, there is new direction and we can begin to co-create our lives with more harmony love, creativity and intention.

It is important to understand that for any change or metamorphosis to take place in Nature, there has to be an interruption or deviation from the original patterns that held it in its original form. Like the caterpillar. In the in-between state from being a caterpillar to becoming a butterfly, there is absolute chaos happening in the biology. Everything changes. The cells that once governed the systemic order lose their power in order to be transformed into a new order and function. I went through this transformative process many times in my life where absolutely everything fell apart and I was in the recreative process of chaos for quite some time before coming out the other end, renewed and more whole.

Every time we experience “adversarial forces” and experiences that challenge our perception and view of ourselves and life, it is an opportunity to explore and create ourselves anew. For me, what is absolutely certain, is that conflict and experiencing adversarial forces has been an essential key to my evolution, and is a key to all our evolution that we continually overlook and miss because we focus on the negative impact and therefore we focus on the battle of life. As much pain and trauma as I have experienced, what got me through was looking for the learning each time. What could I learn about myself and how to do, be and think differently, that will make me more whole and stronger, that I wouldn’t learn otherwise without whatever conflict or abuse I encountered. That way of perceiving worked to evolve me my whole life and still does.

What if you were to choose to explore and navigate all life challenges with that understanding and perception? How might your life change for the better? What if you choose to look to nature for what you need? What if you see how the intelligence, patterns and chaos of nature are a reflection of you? What if you embrace not knowing with curiosity and joy rather than fearing it? When did not knowing become something to fear in first place? To understand our fear it is useful to reflect beyond our current time to find the roots.

Reflecting on history, I see how the belief systems we have inherited from generations past have imprinted us with the feeling that not knowing is to be feared like death. We are afraid to admit we don’t know something, lest we be laughed at or perceived as inadequate. This was an important observation for me in overcoming my own limitations and fears. I saw how I blocked new information that had the potential to transform my life because I was afraid to acknowledge I didn’t know. To be receptive to new information I have to open

myself, which means I have to be vulnerable, and I have to acknowledge that maybe my way of being up until then wasn't the most effective way to navigate. We also use the statement "I Know" as a great deflector that blocks the new from touching us.

I am not the only one. I witness it repeatedly with my clients and people I meet all the time. Our sense of value has been greatly based on what we can declare we know. Through this obsession of mind knowledge as a way to show self-value and worth in the world -- to feel powerful and better than others -- we have disconnected with a much more innate and important knowledge that waits for every human being to connect to... the knowledge of nature and our intricate connectedness to all things and each other and the impact our beliefs and thoughts have on ourselves, each other and our environment. Even Quantum physics validates this fact.

This vibrational force of wisdom and intelligence is the core of everything in existence. That has never changed and will never change. It is a vibrational Truth, if you will, that exists, whether I exist or not to witness and define it. This Truth has been experienced, written about, and expressed since the beginning of humanity, in every culture and tradition. The awareness of these vibrational truths and wisdoms were at the beginning and core of every religion and faith.

A part of our healing is rewiring ourselves to remember and regain our innate relationship to this vibrational truth in Nature, our true nature. To awaken our inner compass. To connect to those forces of Nature within us, that we all have access to when we choose to, that have the power to catalyze shifts in our awareness that then bring about the lasting transformation and healing we all long for to live a more fulfilling and happy existence.

The ultimate power of Nature is its capacity to transmute, transform and refine in all living beings and things. It is also our ultimate power. We often fear that power though because real transformation can be a scary process where we have to temporarily let go of all the beliefs and stories that protect us in order to create a new 'order' within.

Unfortunately, because of our fears of change, the battle of who knows more, who can gain more power and who has the best definition and interpretation of the 'truth' of this vibrational force we call God became, and still is, more important than the connection to 'God' itself. Getting confused with the belief of 'needing to know' as a way to feel powerful, important and that we belong, is where I see we, as collective humanity, disconnected and lost sight of the unity of all life and energy, where we stopped knowing that every living being under the sun already does belong, we belong, we don't have to do or be anything special to belong, and due to that

disconnect we lost our capacity to connect to that energy to find our unique place and purpose in life. This belief also rippled down to how we engage each other and all our relationships. The prime directive for living and succeeding became power instead of connection. Which translates as competition rather than collaboration. If you look at all the issues we have in the world, personally and globally, the battle for power is at the core.

When that disconnection from Nature occurred, knowledge of the mind, based on arbitrary interpretations and definitions of the time, were given more power and authority than the innate presence of wisdom in everyone and every living thing and being. This separation has led to much harm and abuse in our world and in our relationships. Humanity and Nature has been suffering because of so much misinformation and misperceptions that have numbed us out of our interconnectedness.

However, in spite of anything that has happened to you in life and in your life, or anyone else, we all have within us the ability to connect to the inner resilience in nature within us to use the adversarial forces, the pain etc., in our life, to our benefit. We can leverage painful experiences toward healing, joy and empowerment.

All ancient cultures knew that as a fact, beyond a doubt, including Ancient Hawaiian's. How did they know that? Who told or showed them that you might ask?

Nature did.

“The truest reflection of our true Nature is Nature.” - Thoreau

Do you know you are loved? Do you know that you matter? Do you know that you are enough?

Nature is the reflection of just how much you are loved. There is nothing in the natural world that does not belong and is not connected to that powerful and resilient life force that nourishes and supports everything you see around you, including you to live. This flow of Love/Life Force is the one constant in life we can access and count on. It is the one constant that nourished me and guided me through my life to become who I am today; healed, whole and thriving against all odds like the flowers on the cover of this book.

We are all an aspect and expression of nature. We are all made of the same elements, just configured differently. So, why would you or anyone be exempt from that Love and support?

When we look to Nature and watch the rhythms and cycles, we see the unequivocal evidence of this incredible innate resilience that allows and causes life to persist, to bloom and grow, regardless of challenges and “adversarial” forces. I call that the force of Love.

A tree will grow through and around a fence. A blade of grass will push itself through a crack in the cement sidewalk, relentlessly determined to birth itself through to the light of day. After forest fires, trees grow that could not have grown without the fire activating the seeds. There are countless examples of this unlimited power of nature pushing through, determined to live and be what it is meant to be, no matter what. Nature is always creating and recreating itself in its full glory and beauty. We are designed to be supported, resilient and thrive in the same way. Nature saved my life. Literally. I would not be here today to write this book if not for my connection to Nature.

In Nature I found reflections of life and of myself that helped me make sense of it all, and ultimately heal my traumas. Nature helped me find my way back to my stolen and lost innocence. Being in Nature helped me connect to and understand that ineffable, invisible force we call God.

From a very early age, and throughout my entire life, Nature has been my Bible. My refuge. My source of Love, deep insight, and regeneration.

As a great teacher, Mikael Omraam Ivanov, once said, “The first Bible was never written. It exists in Nature as Nature. Whenever someone tries to convince me of a theory or philosophy, I check in nature if I cannot find an equal reflection of whatever is being claimed, I dismiss it immediately!”

When I read that in a book of his in my early twenties, I felt so affirmed. I hadn’t fully consciously grasped the profound-ness of Nature’s effect on me until my twenties. I always just knew that I felt more “me” in Nature. I felt alive in Nature. I felt revitalized and lovingly held by the oceans and lakes, by the earth, trees, and mountains.

It’s as if there is a non-verbal language that passes between our soul and Nature, but we have to still ourselves enough to consciously tune in and receive the “download” of love that Nature has for every one of us when we take the time to tune in. When I fully understood this I intentionally went to Nature more, particularly when I was distressed.

You may have also been supported by those loving invisible forces, whispering to your heart and soul, nourishing and guiding you to keep going without really realizing it.

How do you know if the trees, oceans, and Earth are supporting you? If you feel more yourself when you are in Nature. If going for a walk in Nature energizes you, inspires you to paint, dance, or write poetry then you are connecting and being nourished by the love of Nature. Imagine if you start intentionally engaging Nature, how deep those feelings may take you.

St Francis of Assisi, who inspired my life greatly in my late twenties and still does, also connected to Nature and saw God in all life, and saw nature as a direct path to connect to God. As I have been taught, the Native Hawaiian understanding of God is that there is no word that can be named that is sufficient. I completely agree. In Hawaiian teachings God is a verb, not a noun. God is known as the action force in all creation. It is the force that is always creating, transforming, supporting, growing, inspiring, and encouraging life, Nature, us, to reach our fullest expression. This “God” Force is constantly flowing and insists on growing and becoming more of itself, fulfilling its original design and blueprint to manifest every expression that is true to its real nature and purpose, which is Aloha, Love.

Ancient Mystery School teachings did not call God a creator, as most religions and some traditions do either; they called that force The Prime Mover. That is another reflection that what we call God is a creative and active force in motion.

You are also a creative and active force in motion. That God force is beating your heart and moving through you every moment of your existence. It is the force that ignites inspiration, love and hope. Feel it. Know it. You are designed and equipped to grow and be uniquely you.

Since we are Nature, separate in no way other than by our minds, perceptions, and beliefs, we are subject to its Laws and Rules. These include The Law of Resonance, The Laws of Magnetism and Attraction, as well as the Laws of Life and Death and Rebirth.

Recognizing and understanding this was and is so vital to my healing and evolution. It helps me realize that the choices I make activate a response in the world around me. Everything is energy. Again, Quantum Physics shows us that observation instantly changes what is being observed by the observer.

Instead of being successful creating my misery and suffering through my focus and attention on the “bad” in life, why not choose to be successful creating the opposite, using and magnifying the good in others and life to create a happier and more fulfilling life. We are the chooser in every moment. That choice needs to be made every moment. Knowing I have that choice gave me freedom from everything that had once pinned me down in darkness and depression.

Knowing that all of Nature is on my side and there to support and inspire me helped me create the changes in belief and perception I needed to in order to heal.

What if you were to choose to observe life differently, in a way that upholds the good in you and your life? How might that affect positive change? These were some questions I asked myself when I would find myself in a funk. I have learned that we have the power and ability to grow and create our lives to fulfill our deepest soul longings and dreams when we direct our attention and focus wholeheartedly towards bettering ourselves and Love.

In my life I have experienced validation after validation of this truth. The hard and painful things I have gone through, the abuses I have endured -- yet by some magical force, I have come through - healed and restored in my heart.

That magical force is the combination of Nature and me. My constant choice to connect to that love, to keep learning, keep growing, pushing through it all like that blade of grass is what brought me to the beautiful and fulfilling life I am living today.

Nature has the Power to heal us when we connect. The thing is, that unlike trees and plants and animals in the natural world, because we have consciousness and the facility of thinking, we need to direct our attention and focus to this resilient life force, Love, in order to set it in motion at times of struggle and illness, to help us learn and grow. There are actions we need to take to activate and strengthen that connection and flow in us so we can overcome the challenges and heal from trauma and abuse.

We have to show up. We have to open to be vulnerable in order to create our life. And when we show up and open up, God shows up and Grace flows. My life has been a constant search for understanding; it has brought me around the world on so many incredible and fun adventures, and obviously some very painful ones too, leading me to explore a multitude of Traditions, Religions, Shamanism, and Philosophies, that all touched my heart and helped me to connect to God/Love, getting me through experiences that left me temporarily deeply depressed, confused, lost, hurt, and on edge of wanting to check out of this life many a time.

Through immersing myself in, and observing Nature -- its cycles, rhythms and seasons -- I have gained so much insight into my life that has helped me reconcile and heal old wounds and traumas by looking at the bigger picture. As one of my elders used to say, looking at life from

the astronauts' perspective, rather than through a narrow scope. I am so grateful and thrilled to share my story with you. It is quite a journey!

This book covers a portion of my childhood and youth in the Prologue to give some essential background information, and then focuses on a four-year period of my life where my world was turned upside down, inside out. I was challenged to know myself in new ways and go beyond the interpretations and definitions that had previously defined my life. In every Chapter I share what insights helped me through each experience, my thought processes at the time of the experiences and what gave me strength to make it through. It was a very rich, difficult, Grace-filled and enlightening time in my life. Those four years had the potential to either completely break me or make me. Fortunately it's the latter.

It is my hope that my shared experiences will inspire you to connect to Nature, to yourself and to Life in a new and life affirming way that you can see and know your worth, your value, your power and capacity to transform your life and know that you are truly so loved. All of Life and Nature is cheering you on to rise and fulfill your unique destiny and purpose. May you be open to receive that love and support that is always available to you when you choose to connect.

It is also my hope that, on some level, through recognizing our shared experiences and commonalities as human beings; that we all have pain and trauma that causes us often to feel isolated alone and that we all need and want to feel we belong and that we are enough, that my story can inspire an inner and outer movement toward connecting in our unity and growing greater kindness and compassion with all life and each other. Kindness is the way to inner and outward peace, with ourselves and with others.

Enjoy!

“Every Holy Man has a past, And every Sinner has a future.” – unknown

My street name is Raisin, given to me the first night I hung out with the street kids and punks in downtown Toronto. I was given this name because I wore all purple: purple makeup, purple lipstick, and of course purple hair. My new street friends said they would have called me Grape, but that name was already taken by a female skinhead. I felt really cool; as if for the first time in

my life I belonged. This phase of my journey was one of the most honest in my life. I say this because my hurt and anger was out in the open for the first time; I was raw and looking to be heard and seen. In a way, I had also found a kind of family there with the street kids.

My father had enrolled me in modeling school. It's for this reason that at 14 years of age, I travelled to Toronto by myself. I was about halfway through the course when I kept meeting up with these two punky kids who spent most of their time on the street, Roland and Michelle. I thought they were really cool and I wanted to meet them, so I did. I went up to them one day when I saw them on the subway again and introduced myself. They received me. That is where my journey on the streets began. It was summer, I was out of school, so when they asked me to hang out with them and the other street kids, I thought that was great so I said okay. I got the first hint of my being really different when in the modeling school we were told to stand in front of the mirror and strike poses Vogue style as if in a photoshoot. While the others were doing all these glamor poses I was doing these wild body contortions, definitely very punk-like, alternative and wild. I thought it was great. However, the looks I got from the others was not so approving. I have to giggle out loud every time I remember that. I didn't yet have my purple hair and shaved sides, but when I look back now I could sure see it coming.

When I was nine-years-old, visiting my mom in Germany, we went to some big city where I saw my first punks. I absolutely loved them and I said to my mom, "That's what I'm going to be when I grow up," in quite a matter-of-fact way. A child's intuition I guess. She looked at me with a stern glare and said "Oh no, you're not!" I think it's the feeling of freedom and creativity that fascinated and drew me to them. They lived outside the box, and I liked that! Well, to my rebellious mind, my mother lived on the other side of the planet, so when it happened she had no say in the matter.

My mother separated from my father when I was seven. They fought a lot and, from how I understand it now, they were both simply too young when they got married. They tried to make it work but it couldn't -- for that and other various reasons that are not necessary to go into here. My mother had returned to Germany to visit her dying grandmother when I was eight. That's when she met this wonderful man, Rhienhold. She fell in love, got married to him after knowing him only five months. She fully moved to Germany when I was nine. That's when she flew me over for the wedding, and we went to the city where I saw the punks.

It was quite confusing how fast everything changed. I was going to a foreign country where they speak a different language that I knew nothing about and I would be meeting a man I had never met before who was going to be my step-father. In some ways though, it was exciting as well. I was going to be out of school and away from all the challenges in my life at home and school.

When I met Rheinhold I liked him instantly! He graciously took me in as his daughter without question and made me feel very welcome. He was a loving and fun-hearted man. We hit it off better than could have been imagined, which of course helped me adjust to the changes of being in a new country.

I slept a lot the first week, the time change had knocked me out and it all felt like a fantasy. When I woke up each day I had to orientate myself to where I was. Rheinhold had a really large family, so now, I suddenly had so many new cousins and aunts, etc. The wedding was beautiful, though I couldn't understand anything. My mother had made her dress and had mine made so they looked similar. I felt like a princess in it. After the wedding, I was able to connect with my new cousins and have some fun. They tried to speak English with the few words they knew and I used hand and body gestures. They received me nicely and were very curious. Aside from my mother, they had never met a Canadian before. After a very short time, I felt I had truer friends there than I did in Canada. No one teased me or bullied me, to them I was kind of like a celebrity. It felt nice.

I stayed in Germany for about three weeks. It was really beautiful. They lived directly by the Rhine river, which flowed through their back yard. I would visit that powerful river every day and marvel at its force and beauty. Because the wedding was so close to Christmas, there were also already outdoor Christmas markets happening and festivals in all the surrounding towns. Germans really know how to have a good time! It was hard for me to go back home after all that fun and good times.

After that trip I saw my mother once a year for 1 month except in my punk phase where there was almost a two-year gap. Her being so far away was hard, painful, and difficult to get used to in so many ways. I definitely suffered, feeling abandoned and left behind, which took years to heal. From my current understanding and perspective, when I look at the whole of my life and having healed my relationship with her now, I can see the definite blessings of all that happened.

One of the big blessings was that I developed sincere friendships with the kids I met in Germany every summer, something I didn't have back home. They liked and loved me. They couldn't wait to see me and wrote me letters pretty much weekly when I would go back home. This helped me get through the bullying I constantly experienced at school to which I had to return after each visit. At the same time though, it did create a split in me that created a lot of melancholy and sadness that affected all my relationships at home. But even that, too, had its blessings. Contrast creates a necessary friction that brings forth new life. It deepened my heart and soul and my search for understanding life.

The other big blessing was that her moving to Germany opened a whole new world for me in my later years -- a world that deeply resonated with my deepened soul. I was always drawn to philosophical explorations as far back as I can remember, again greatly stimulated by the traumas of my childhood. Germany has some of the best and deepest philosophers on the planet. It was pure nourishing soul food for me.

Yes, there is no happening without reason or possibility of growth, evolution and blessing. I could not have grown into who I am without all the life experiences my mother's leaving catalyzed and created in me. Her action of leaving actually liberated my soul.

There is a wisdom of Hawaii called Kina ole. As my Kahuna Elder and Teacher defines Kina Ole it means doing "The right thing, the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons, the first time."

To our western mind that sounds like a tall order that we have to work hard to fulfill. But what it actually means is that everything already is that, otherwise it would be different than what is or was. It's a deep understanding and acceptance that life is bigger than us and that all things have their reason, place and purpose. It's up to us to open our awareness to connect it all and harvest the hidden blessings and wisdoms.

My father worked a lot and usually came home after my sister and I were in bed and often left before we got up, so in my time on the streets I did one of two things: either I snuck out to catch the last train downtown or I lied and said I was staying at a friend's. He never checked. So later on when he found out that I had been hanging out on the streets, sleeping in stairwells and hotel

bathrooms or all-night clubs and was also panhandling on the street corners, it was really shocking for him. Understandably.

For me it was fun, spending time with the kids I met. I had finally found my clan after being an outcast all the years before. Fortunately the street scene back then in the 1980's wasn't as rough as it is today, there were only a handful of us and we ranged from freaks, Goths, Punks, and Skinheads, so everyone pretty much tolerated each other, looked out for each other, more or less. Fights only happened when someone did something, not just because of the differences.

I was also lucky that I knew the Skinhead leader. He had attended my school the year before and we had become friends, so I was protected. Nothing bad ever happened to me, thankfully. I was on the streets most of the summer. I sometimes stayed at my friend's Darius' house and a friend of mine, Dee Dee's, at her uncle's house. Nights when we stayed at the all-night club called the Twilight Zone, we also often snuck into a local hotel bathroom and plugged in our crimping irons, refreshing ourselves for the day, doing our makeup and such in the early hours of the morning.

A few times we did milk runs where we would take the bread and milk delivery from the hotel that was dropped off at the back door. We had fun together; though we each had our hurts and hardships, it all disappeared when we hung out. We had created our own little bubble to escape reality.

In the winter I frequented the street still, though not as much as in the summer. I skipped school so often that in the Fall when I was 15, the principal called me to his office and threatened to kick me out of school. I broke down and told him of my situation. He showed compassion and hooked me up with the guidance counselor of the high school. The counselor was a bit freaked out by my black wardrobe, (I had transitioned from purple to black) my Souzie and the Banshee makeup and curiosity of exploring witchcraft, or more accurately, the Wiccan tradition. His discomfort was palpable in the room each time. But nonetheless through our sessions, it came to light just how much anger there was in me toward my mother for leaving me. I discovered that I had successfully suppressed those feelings because of my need to receive her love. My mind was blown open to how we can have a different reality in our subconscious that we have no idea about until we see it. Also how those unknown factors wreak havoc in our life and relationships. I am very grateful for the principal of my school seeing my distress and supporting me through those sessions.

A boiling point came that Christmas, after yet another family fight and the loss of a small job I had maintained all that time. I attempted to take my life. I had just reached a limit and had so much pain that had been unearthed that a part of me didn't want to go on. I tried to reach out to the counselor but he didn't return my calls. I understand the altered reality one enters into when feeling suicidal, and I know how hard it is once it gets hold of you, to not give into it. I tried, by taking a handful of sleeping pills I had stolen from my father's sock drawer. At the time I was living in a basement suite with a friend in her family's home. She saw me and called an ambulance after I had locked myself in the bathroom to take the pills. I put them in my mouth, drank the water, and broke down into wailing tears while looking at myself in the mirror. Then I heard a voice saying "It doesn't have to be this way." Whether it was an angel, which I believe it was, or my own mind, that statement woke me out of the suicide trance I was in. I vomited the pills back up, unlocked the bathroom door, and curled up in a ball in the corner, and sobbed deeply until the ambulance and my father showed up. From that day, I went back home, started rebuilding myself, and stopped going to the streets.

You may be asking how did all this come to be? How did the 14-year-old girl I was have so much trauma that she ended up on the streets and nearly taking her life at 15? How did no one catch on, see what was happening?

There was a heavy cloud of trauma in my family that was never addressed or dealt with. That trauma led to some major numbness and dysfunction; pretty much every day there was fighting going on. My mother separated from my father when I was 7 as I mentioned, and my sister, Lorri, was 12. At that time, my mom's leaving was in itself, a devastation to all of us. Then, a few months later, Lorri had a near-fatal horseback riding accident when competing in a jumping competition. She was clinically dead for one minute, and when she came back she was in a coma for several months. My whole life changed. All of our lives changed. Again.

I remember I had been playing in the back of the stables where Lorri's competition was, looking for frogs with the other kids when I heard my friend Lisa, who came with us to watch Lori's jumping competition, calling me to hurry up and come, that my sister had fallen off her horse. I ran as fast as I could and pushed my way through the people and saw her lying there

motionless. I wanted to run to her but someone grabbed me and held me back until my father finally noticed and told them to let me come through. I ran to her in tears, sat by her side and saw the blood coming out of her ear. The ambulance finally came and I went home with Lisa.

A part of me died that day. Everything in me just collapsed. My soul retreated out of this world. It was all just too much for my little heart and mind to understand so much loss. First my mother, now Lorri.

When I remember the joy in my heart, the naturalness of me while playing with the kids chasing frogs, I realize that that had been the last time I had ever felt so free until much later in life. That is when my innocence was fully interrupted and my spirit was broken. There were already other family issues and traumatic experiences prior to that, so this just compounded everything. Until that moment there had been what I call a metaphorical inner elastic band I had that was flexible enough to help me bounce back from those other issues. After this though, losing my mother and sister within six months of each other, the elastic broke. From that day I was dissociated and lived in my own bubble. My cognitive abilities weakened and a false identity started being created as a way to cope. I became hidden, shy, started lying, and I created fantasy realities to escape into. I was in a state of absolute shock.

I stopped being creative and never did well in school after that. I was always zoning out and could never retain information. Nowadays if that were to happen the teachers and doctors would identify it as post-traumatic stress. They would pay more attention to all the signals indicating something was terribly wrong and give me support.

But back then in the 1970's, people didn't know. I was expected to carry on as if nothing happened. It was the era where things like this were swept under the rug, avoided, and glazed over. So instead of being helped to understand what was happening, I was treated as if I was stupid. My school even put me in special needs classes.

Since my mom lived in an apartment in Toronto, for a year and a half before she moved to Germany, and because my father was either at work or at the hospital with Lorri for close to a year, I was shuffled from neighbor to neighbor. This speaks highly for the level of community that existed then, but for me I had just lost everything I knew to be my life, and no one paid attention. I was an extra burden for each of these families, and I felt it. I was and felt very alone and lost. I became numb. I lost all the enthusiasm and joy I had known before. School became a nightmare; I was bullied and teased daily, being told I had a cripple for sister, cruel jokes about

her were spread through the school and all kinds of other nightmarish garbage. I wanted to disappear. One saving grace and joy was when my grandma sometimes would come and take care of me at the house, which was nice, because I could be at home.

It was quite a while before my parents would let me see Lorri in the hospital. For me it was as if she had just vanished, as if she had never existed. When I did see her for the first time since the accident she was skin and bones with black eyes and was being fed intravenously. It was a scary sight. She was in a coma for several months. When she finally started emerging from it, she was in a very violent and aggressive state. The first word she spoke to me was fuck you. She would repeatedly call me to her, I would run to her happy and hopeful to talk to her. She would tell me to come closer, then would scream at me, "Fuck you!" Again and again and again.

More confusion, more pain. I would run out of her room crying to my mother in the waiting room. My mother stayed with her at the hospital most of the time; she tried to tell me that Lorri didn't mean it, but it didn't take the effect away. Lorri always had a bit of a jealous and mean streak in her toward me since as far back as I could remember. She often brutally teased me with her friends, all the while laughing at me. So it was hard for me to believe my mom when she said Lorri didn't mean it. But I loved her and always wanted her approval of me in some way to feel she loved me, too.

I also always felt inferior to her. She had been an amazing artist, great at sports, had lots of friends, and was really smart in school. I felt intimidated to even attempt to do any of the things she excelled at for fear of not being good enough, not wanting to be compared. Because of those dynamics we were never really close but close enough that I cared for her and I was really sad about what had happened.

It was a long healing process for her. She had to learn to walk, talk, eat, write, everything like a child again. The doctors told her she would never walk again or be able to draw. She had been an amazing artist, when she drew animals she really caught their spirit, they looked alive and real. They also said she would never ride horses again, which had been her absolute passion.

Over the next two years she did prove the doctors wrong on many counts. She did everything they told her she wouldn't -- and completed college as well. Her mental health, however, was very fragile. When she finally came home she was completely different from before. She was always angry. Particularly with me. Though she always had a bit of a temper before, she was more aggressive and reacted to the smallest things. She would bang her head against the wall, try

to pull her hair out and had emotional attacks that were terrifying to watch. Once she actually almost strangled me; I was blue in the face when she finally let go. It didn't take much to set her off. Even if I peed too loud in the bathroom that was on the opposite side of her bedroom she would bang on the wall and yell at me to be quiet. It was hell living at home with her.

This is all natural behavior for someone who has gone through what she did with her head injuries, but I didn't understand it. All I felt was that she hated me and was always mean to me and I didn't understand why. It wasn't easy at all. She was a total stranger to me.

She went back to school where she encountered her own challenges of being rejected by her old friends because she now walked with a slight limp. This of course only compounded her already-fragile nervous system and it was all discharged on me. I was the scapegoat on which to vent her hurt and frustration. Of course as an adult now I know she couldn't help it, but to the little girl I was, her hostility left an imprint in me that caused a myriad of distortions and coping mechanisms to develop that set up the basic blueprint of my formed identity and my relationship to the world.

Somewhere, through all this, I adopted the belief that I must have done something really wrong or be really bad that Mom left and Lori was so mean to me. My psychology built itself around that foundational belief system. I created coping mechanisms and convinced myself that I understood them both and why they were as they were, when I really didn't. I had simply convinced myself of that as a way to avoid feeling the pain and loneliness. I just wanted to be loved and so I repressed the raw feelings of hurt, and took on the role of caregiver in many ways, putting other people's needs and feelings ahead of my own. I also needed to be the strong one, which blocked the natural expression of what I was feeling and going through. The following years were really hard, especially because our mother was gone, our Father was always at work and Lorri had to somehow take on the role of caregiver for me, her younger sister. It was a role she was in no way capable of and should not have been put in. She still needed to heal from so much and her emotional sensitivity actually was getting worse. How could it not, with the pressure of having to be a mom for me. So many layers.

It was at the age of 14 that I started really searching deeply, trying on different ways of expression, trying to understand basically everything about my life. I searched for God and tried to understand my family dynamics. My life felt like a mess, and there was a lot stirring in my

subconscious that needed to be expressed and released, hence my punk phase emerged, lifting the lid off the pressure cooker that had been boiling under the surface.

In spite of all the tumultuous emotions, anger and pain, I would always find temporary reprieve in Nature. We lived down the street from a small forest park and a beach on Lake Ontario. My heart connected to a set of rocks that were at the edge of the water. They became my temple. I would sometimes sit on them for hours, no matter the weather, even in the winter. I would question life and I would cry and let it all out. I was searching for something: God, Angels, Nature Spirits, to soothe and heal my heart. The existence of “other worldly” support was always a natural possibility and awareness for me.

The sound of the waves would almost hypnotize me. I felt at peace. My nervous system could unwind. Sunsets would warm my heart and put me in a state of awe and wonder at the beauty of life and nature. Sunsets stimulated hope in me. This was my first experience and realization of the healing power of Nature.

After I had gone home after my suicide attempt I spent a lot of time with my rocks, and I loved going on the swing at the park near the forest. It was soothing for me. I still don't have many memories of that following year, except reading a lot and going into Nature. It was just a year of readjustment, finding my way back into life.

At 17 I went to a personal-development oriented modeling school, John Casablancas. That really helped raise my confidence and get me back into life. I also met a girl there who became my best friend. We had so much fun together, as she loved Nature too. She was my sister “Sag,” because we were both Sagittarians. Though there was still so much buried in me, I came back to life. There was joy in me again. The ghosts of my past remained hidden until the time period I will be sharing following this chapter. I modeled for almost two years. I did more than 300 fashion shows in that time and was the house model for Joico Canada hair products in Toronto. It was a lot of fun, and was a great bridge for me back into life.

Meanwhile, my sister, after successfully graduating from college, tried working in a company for graphic design. Because of the accident she was still hyper sensitive and couldn't navigate both the stress of working in the company and the often nonsense gossip that happens at work places that she felt was going on behind her back. She always felt people were laughing at her because of her limp. There was still so much unresolved trauma and pain, which unfortunately opened the door for alcohol. She stepped out of living and isolated herself more and more. When

not healed, traumas grow and can become distorted when there is substance abuse, making it even harder to get to the true source of it all. When I think of her I see in my mind's eye an ancient beautiful castle that has massive thorny vines and bushes covering it, protecting and hiding it from the world. And it's like, though the initial creation of them was to protect, to create a safe space, they have become entangled even more with the unhealed wounds and the stories and distortions created by the influence of alcohol. It feels as if she is now trapped, but does not see she is trapped. She has cut out of her life her friends and family and is alone. But in the end who's to say? As with Kinaole, even though we cannot know why some people and things are as they are, what they are is clearly with purpose and reason, otherwise it would not be, and we have the option to trust the soul of life behind it all. Learning to let go and hold space around this has been a really hard challenge for me, that I am getting better at navigating ... but who am I to say she should live and be different? I hold a candle of light for her in my heart always.

In September, 1989, I flew to Germany to stay with my mom and my step father Rheinhold. I hadn't completed high school yet but I had a feeling to go. I ended up staying with her for only a month and went on to move to a neighboring town to do a practicum in a five-star hotel to be a restaurateur for almost a year. In that time I visited many beautiful places of Nature that opened my heart so much. Everything always felt better in Nature!

Behind our home there was a little mountain that also had a long trail that went deep into a valley. One day I walked for hours in the fog. It was so mystical and beautiful. I couldn't say why, but I felt transformed when I returned. Then I went to the Alps in Switzerland with my mom and Rheinhold. When I got to the top and saw the majesty and beauty I couldn't stop crying. I was in absolute awe. It touched my soul in an unknown place. Again I felt transformed. I felt deeply humbled and immensely grateful for life. I also felt a greater power up there, call it God/ Spirit, there was no doubt in me of there being a higher force governing all of creation.

Another beautiful place that affected me and woke up my soul was the Wutachschlucht. It's an area in the Black Forest, full of waterfalls, creeks, beautiful trees and hiking trails you can walk for hours. I felt childlike joy and playfulness awaken in me. My connection to Nature increased a thousand-fold. Where I lived in the hotel staff house, we were near a lake in the forest that I would walk and ride my bicycle around, often bringing a little picnic for myself. It's

such a beautiful place. I was in heaven! I feel that spending all that time in nature healed me in ways nothing else could.

I developed amazing friendships working in the Hotel. I had so much fun there. It was the ten years I should have had back home. I am eternally grateful for that time in my life. It strengthened me, and I see now how it prepared me for the trials to come.

During my time at that hotel I received a job offer in the Italian part of Switzerland. At the last minute I had joined a friend of mine when she drove there for a job interview. It was completely by chance that I went with her; I was supposed to be doing something else but my other friend cancelled, making me available to join her! Another serendipity that changed my life.

When we drove into Tessin my heart leaped and said “I want to live here!” It was so beautiful, the mountains, the lake, the palm trees and tropical flowers you would never imagine to be in Switzerland. The hotel was up this precariously narrow road up the mountain overlooking Lago Maggiore. Breathtaking! We pulled in and met the owners and they gave us a really nice suite for the two days we were staying. We had some fun adventures and ate so much delicious food. I felt so at home there and just wanted to stay.

A week after we returned to Germany she was told she got the job! We had been roommates until then, and I was sad to see her go, but very happy for her. Amazingly one month later they asked her to ask me if I would like to work there, too. That was a no-brainer! I gave notice and my friends had a massive farewell surprise party for me. I felt so loved and grateful for all my friends there. I would miss them but I was so excited for my new adventure! Off I went a few weeks later.

Living in Europe gave me a new lease on life. I still had buried residues of my childhood traumas and patterns that had governed my life until then, but I was happy and creating a new life for myself away from all the history. Away from everything and everyone that held me back. Everything happened like magic.

My first year in Switzerland working in the hotel in Brissago was quite an experience. When I went for a walk one day I found an abandoned church that was built on a cliff with a stream flowing under it. This became one of my sacred Nature places to retreat to and commune with nature, God/Spirit. I started exploring writers like Hermann Hesse, Goethe, Plato, Socrates,

going deep into self-discovery. Also spiritual books on earth-based religions, meditation etc., All of that, unbeknownst to me, was also preparing me for the turbulence of the years to come.

There is an expression you may have also heard before, “Be Careful What you Pray For or Ask For.” I was praying with all my might to heal, understand, and grow. I got what I asked for, just differently from what I anticipated. This is where my story of the four-year marathon of trying to survive the many knocks, twists and turns begins. Here we go....