

# **PART 1:**

## **THE BABE YOU WERE ...**

### **THE DIRT**

Pre-Gabriel my body was mine.

I knew it, I loved it, we worked. My time was mine. I could say “no,” I had boundaries, I had time for me, and I was spontaneous!

My identity was mine. I was great at my job, I knew who I was, I knew what turned him on. I even felt turned on by me!

My life was mine. Then I became grumpy. Sleepless nights. No sex drive. No weekends off, ever.

Was I out of my mind?

All of this stirred up my “keep it together, look good, and feel in control” with life. It was as if every insecurity was churned up from the dark depths of my inner dungeon. I felt completely unprepared to be a mother, and I was insecure, questioning myself internally, yet I got fiercely defensive when I was questioned!

With the help of my coach, I discovered that my main insecurity seemed to have stemmed from an incident when I was about four-years-old, and had stolen The Flintstones

vitamins from the cabinet and hidden with my sister in the closet to eat them all (because they were so yummy.)

My parents found out and told me I could have killed my sister. They were talking about taking us to the hospital to have our stomachs pumped. I was screaming in terror.

- a. Because I was afraid for my sister's life, and
- b. Because I needed them to know I wasn't evil!

They were so mad that I decided I *must* be inherently evil and could never trust myself again. I *must* be insane, I thought, because my good intentions had caused harm.

I've spent the rest of my life trying to be nice and stay one step ahead of everyone so as to cut off any chances of harming another.

I've paid the price of losing my authentic self-expression. It has cost me trusting myself as a woman and a mother, and disconnecting from my intuition. It has led me to believe the world is a scary place where I'm bound to hurt everyone eventually. It has cost me peace. It has cost me intimacy with myself and others, and with God. I'm beginning to laugh as I write this because I just couldn't face God and say I made a mistake with The Flintstones. What I think really did was make a mistake with me! (Yet I didn't want to hurt God's feelings either!)

The truth is this, illusion or belief has CREATED experiences for me to write about it all my life. I was stuck in trying to be the perfect mom until I let this one go.

The truth is I'm a good person.

The truth is I can trust myself.

The truth is my intuition is very clear and I'm ready to birth the WHOLE me. The AUTHENTIC me, PEACEFUL, CONFIDENT, DELICIOUS me, in a whole new way as a mother, lover, woman, and friend.

Thus it's time to write the missing handbook to motherhood, the one I wish I had, and the one I trust you'll enjoy.

Because it's basically a Universal Law that **When Mama's Happy, Everybody's Happy.**

### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

What do you have to forgive yourself for so that you can be happy, and peaceful?

Where do you need to put down the stick you're beating yourself up with?

Where do you need to wipe the slate clean, knowing you've ALWAYS done your best?

Where can you say THANK YOU to whoever pissed you off, hurt you, or betrayed you?

It's time to start fresh. Your kids and family deserve unconditional love and it starts with unconditionally loving YOU, beautiful.

## **SINGLE, YUMMY MOMMYHOOD**

So as most of you know, I got pregnant the week after my mom died.

At first, I thought I was mourning, then I blamed the hormones, then he convinced me I was sleep deprived.

No. No. And No.

It was the relationship.

As a single, motherless mom. The biggest lessons I learned were that being a martyr was really overrated, and that when I love and forgive myself, I can do anything.

Without child support or alimony, I had to face the truth that hiding in the house, draining my savings, and using my

son's tooth fairy money to go out for burgers wasn't going to cut it.

Single motherhood taught me that I couldn't run a kingdom unless I was a queen.

I asked for help. We moved into a tiny rental, and I learned about debt consolidation and generating cash flow.

While I hid at first, thinking I was only respected as a success if I could do it all on my own, I did begin to ask for help.

I went to church every Sunday, asked friends to babysit, and mentors for business guidance.

I learned boundaries like, "You can't come into Mommy's room until 'seven zero zero' because she's looking for patience and kindness." I learned to fill myself up with pleasure, friends, and yoga when my son was at his dad's, versus complaining as a lonely victim.

Gabriel and I focused on the good by blowing out candles after dinner making wishes for "painting with mommy" or "peace and miracles." We said "thank you's" every night at bedtime, expressing gratitude for our Mother Earth, strawberries, and even the bully because we learned to use our words, not our hands.

Being a single mom made me savor and cultivate morsels of joy. It gifted me with the courage and strength to surrender. It invited me to focus on what my ex-husband provided, rather than complain about what he didn't.

Most of all it made me leak what Gabe calls "happy tears"... being moved by the simple moments of extraordinary gratitude for being a mother.

## **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

Where is your life the perfect laboratory for your greatest growth, and expansion?

How has every challenge perfectly molded, trained, and sculpted you into your best self?

What precious quality has been birthed in you because of your unique journey?

What strengths and super powers do you now exude because of your chosen path?

How can you love yourself MORE exactly as you are and exactly as you aren't?

## **MY JOURNEY**

While the accent's basically gone, I am a small town Canadian girl who grew up loving guys with big trucks, Crispy Crunch chocolate bars, and walks in the woods. Who am I kidding? I still love guys in big trucks, chocolate, and walks in the woods. I was raised by a teacher mother and pharmacist father. While I enjoyed summers at the lake, most of my school years were spent feeling misunderstood for my expression, my enthusiasm, for feeling too much.

While my parents were divorcing, I looked to my grandmothers for encouragement and found the courage at nineteen years old to hop on my Uncle Phil's semi heading south to live my dream in Hollywood. While I was brave enough and talented enough—I sound like Stuart Small from Saturday Night Live ... Ha! — I didn't have a work visa so the only job I could find was working in Japan.

I arrived there with forty dollars and lived in a cockroach-infested place I shared with fourteen other foreigners. Unwilling to turn back and have my family say, "I told you so," I became a successful model, dancer, and spokesperson

on TV, magazine covers, runways, billboards, movies, and music videos. By year four, I was making more money than my parents combined. It was there I met my first husband: a tall, dark, and handsome multimillionaire. I followed him to NYC where we married. I graduated cum laude from Columbia University and worked for CNN, yet I was dying inside. While I loved him, in hindsight I don't really think I knew what love was and I was afraid to pass up a great guy and a picture-perfect life.

*What if no one will ever love me again? What if no one this rich ever loves me again?* (Embarrassing but true.)

As I felt this fear, I became a deeper, more sensual, and empowered woman. I was no longer a fit for the relationship and we divorced.

A few years later I had moved to LA, bought my own condo, was working as a life coach, and dating this argumentative, yet charismatic guy, when I found out my mom had cancer. She was sixty and had just retired. It all happened so fast. After an initial operation to “get it all,” in ten days she was gone. The next weekend at my sister's wedding I got pregnant. Since I couldn't save my mom, I tried to save the relationship. This too quickly ended in divorce. I was a single, motherless mom and I hit rock bottom.

The journey to regain my confidence, self-trust, and self-love resulted in an unexpected by-product: sensuality. It was as if I'd attracted my niche as the “sexy mom expert” and walked into a seminar one weekend and met the (next) man of my dreams.

We were blessed to co-parent my amazing toddler, Gabriel, with my less annoying and ever charismatic ex-husband. I became a regular on Leeza Gibbon's national radio show and I had my own radio show “How Mama Got Her Groove Back.” I loved being a Sexy Mom Expert so much that I even

got up at 4 a.m. to get in line to audition for the “Hottest Mom in America” reality show. The title and identity truly served its purpose to help ignite my passion, seeing my body as art, expand my capacity for pleasure, and see it as a way to fuel my patience and playfulness as a mother.

The bottom line was that by taking the time to listen to my truth, taking good care of myself, and taking the perspective that at my core who I truly am is a sensual woman and nobody and nothing can take this God-given birthright away from me. I began to relax because I saw that it's impossible to make a mistake. We learn so much from each experience ... so why NOT ooze into my succulent, juicy, radiant self ... and since then I've tasted a peace that I knew was there intellectually, but had never felt in my body ... and now I wish for you to know this peace and this is why I'm writing this book, you glorious mom!

Here is how my understanding of femininity began ...

Pink tights, black leotards, hair in an immaculate bun. In hindsight, ballet class was an extremely confining way to move my body. Oh, how I wanted to be the Sugar Plum Fairy! I remember getting her autograph behind stage one Christmas and noticing her bleeding toes, her caked makeup, so thin and angular, void of warmth, and she wouldn't look me in the eyes. This was why I was so confused.

I remember once when I wanted to quit the Royal Conservatory of Music piano lessons, mom took me to a jazz band pianist. He asked me to play something ... I went into a memorized Fugue, and he stopped me.

“NO! Make something up right now.” I couldn't. I could only think in the confines of the past memorized classics. There was a void. I had no idea how the notes worked together organically. I couldn't play a thing. I ran out of there crying. I

felt busted. I was so ashamed. There was nothing at my core. I had no idea who I was.

Not until my late twenties did I step foot in a free movement dance class. I hid in the corner and closed my eyes, terrified to be seen, terrified to witness others free, to witness others struggling like me. Only recently have I had the courage to face the narcissistic arrogance that I project when all I'm concerned with is how I stack up to others, how I'm looking.

Am I safe? Will I survive? Observing the truth of the craziness inside my head took a lot of courage, for it brought up waves of shame, guilt, and fear. Once through that, it brought forth forgiveness, tenderness, and compassion towards myself as I felt the degree of self-loathing that was going on. Only past the shame and past the forgiveness came the peace ... the witnessing of the depth and radiance within me. It's within all of us.

This taught me that stuck feelings and stuck energy need to get moving so I've learned that dance is essential to keep my life working. I dance frequently, even swaying when I meditate, rocking my hips as I set the table for dinner. I've learned to open my chest and breathe through my heart when I connect with those I love. I've finally let go of the permanent kegel in my vagina. I allow my body to respond with stirs and warmth, or shrinking and a stomach ache. It's all guidance to direct my truth. It's been in my body all along. The answers, the joy, the peace, it's all there. I had no idea.

I had to acknowledge that I was absolutely terrified of connecting with others purely. I remember as a five-year-old girl, I would put on "Jesus Christ Superstar" and dance all around the house with my sister. I guess I hadn't heard my dad say "quiet down" for I gleefully turned the corner to go down the hall when BANG! He had punched a hole through

the wall and he looked at me like I was next. I was frightened and decided in that moment that I was scared.

Scared of men, scared of life.

As an adult looking back I know he was drunk and stoned. As a little girl, all I knew was that I felt bad and unsafe, and I decided I should always be on alert. I learned to disconnect, protect, not let my guard down. I learned to become a people pleaser, to stay three steps ahead of him and everyone, to be on high alert to avoid being blindsided, and to always seek approval. I thought this approach would keep me safe. I was so in my head, spinning so quickly that it became a way of life through elementary school and high school. I didn't even know how inauthentic I was, that I hadn't exhaled, that I had this perma-smile on my face, a perma-kegel in my vagina and a perma-closure of my heart.

However, one weekend at the lake during the summer I was sixteen years old I was shown that as hard as I tried to be fast enough to outrun pain, it would eventually catch up with me.

My two friends were scheduled to arrive for a weekend visit. The first ran down the stairs, grabbed me and said, "James is dead."

I thought she was joking. Then I saw her solemn parents approach behind her. This was real. NO! As I ran up onto the highway, cars screeching as I literally ran down the yellow line looking to the tree tops of the thick pine forest begging nature to say it wasn't so, screaming,

"NO!!!!!!!"

Again, disconnect, protect, don't let your guard down. Don't ever set yourself up to hurt like this again.

I've heard it said that, "Belief produces the acceptance of existence." I believed the world could hurt me and that it wasn't safe to relax. And lo and behold, I proved myself right,

again. I was all snuggled up on the couch with my then live-in boyfriend and he told me he was moving out. Stunned, he continued, "And I've made my mind up." I said, "Stop, NO ..." and proceeded to run upstairs, slamming doors, screaming "NO," jumping in the shower, bawling, hysterical, pounding the walls, screaming "NO"... until I became like an observer and saw myself reacting very similarly to the way I reacted twenty years prior when James died ... knowing that what we resist persists, I gave myself permission to fully feel these feelings that I had never fully felt. I let go of concern of what my boyfriend thought, what the neighbors must be thinking, and most of all, I let go of the shame of being a hysterical wreck. I faced my demons. I faced the underlying terror that I went through life with every day. I didn't intellectually theorize about it. I felt it and WAS it. I faced it, I didn't judge it, and it dissolved.

I felt the relief of being busted. Busted that I had wanted him to save me and used him as an excuse to not move forward in my life while waiting for his to get going. I felt a rush of energy for my own career to ignite and a mature woman to step forth who knows she can more than take care of herself. That next night we made love and I think it was the first time I'd ever made LOVE. I was vulnerable, busted, real, not hiding, not pretending, not trying to get him to want me, approve of me, save me ... I was simply me. It was divine.

The beauty of this challenging process of facing my fears I'd stuffed away, is that it showed me that holding onto feelings creates behaviors that push away the very thing I wanted to manifest. Feeling my feelings allowed them to dissolve and created the space for energy and life and success to flow through me again. I am beginning to master the process of alchemizing wounds into magic over and over, never getting anywhere, simply experiencing the rhythmic cycles of sorrow

and bliss for their own sake. I choose life as a journey, ritually celebrating triumphs and tragedies.

It showed me that looking on the outside for approval or to be saved, also kept me away from the very love that lives inside of me. It showed me that there's nothing to do and nowhere to go and nothing to get, to feel better, happy, safe.

Love, joy, and peace live inside of me.

Believe that, be that, and only then can they be mirrored outside of me.

My experience of “how” to move my energy and my body, “how” to connect with my truth, with other women and men, is through asking.

- Asking for help with the kids.
- Asking for monthly gatherings with my mom friends.
- Asking for the perfect book to drop in my lap.
- Asking for a sacred home and community.
- Asking for the key to fitting exercise into my schedule.
- Asking for guidance from wise aunties and mentors.
- Asking for like-minded souls to grace my path.
- Asking for a deep, impeccably present life partner who's committed to my radiance and full expression of love.
- Asking for the courage to be grateful and open and deserving of my dream before it's manifested.

I had to be willing to ask and risk being disappointed. And I had to learn patience and trust that it might look different than what I wanted. I learned to ask and be open to something beyond my dreams. I learned to ask when I was afraid to hear the truth. I learned to ask when I was so despondent that I didn't know how to go on. I learned to ask my mom in heaven and not worry about bothering her. I learned to ask God, my Lady, the Universe, all that is. I learned to feel connected, guided, full of faith, grateful, and in awe of this miraculous experience of life.

And in this I learned to be a better mom.

Move.

Connect.

Ask.

Trust that you'll know when to reach out your hand, hold someone's hand, let go, and be still.

This undulating rhythm is inside us all.

Women, we are masters at it. Mothers truly master it. Embrace your beauty, radiate love, bestow your grace, experience the universe within you.

It follows that to be a sensual woman, a sexy mama, a radiant mother, there is nothing to do, nothing to perform, nothing to get right, or be in competition about. It's about unveiling your core nature, who you truly are naturally and organically, and stopping all the behaviors that take you out of this knowing, out of your body.

Somebody or something along the way convinced me that just being me was not enough.

That's BS.

Being produces the acceptance of existence.

Believe you are sensual. Be sensual. Move from there. Act from there. Choose from there and watch motherhood become easier, more elegant, more humbling.

We GET to be moms.

Choose to ask for help with the kids.

Choose to gather monthly with your positive, optimistic friends.

Choose for the perfect dance workshop to fit into your schedule.

Choose like-minded souls to grace your path.

Choose a deep, impeccably present partner who's committed to your radiance and full expression of love.

Choose the courage to be grateful, open, and deserving of your dream even before it's manifested.

Choose knowing you may be disappointed.

Choose knowing it may hurt to know the truth.

Choose knowing it will always be the unknown.

Choose and let go.

When I did, I found that beneath all the survival strategies, our natural state of being is connection, peace, faith, love, and sensuality. And I've become an amazing mother—human and imperfect—but amazing mother, as a result.

Embrace your beauty, radiate love, bestow your grace, take the time to experience the universe within you.

You are more than sensual, you ARE sensuality itself. You are more than a mother, you are motherhood itself. Wisdom itself. Power itself. Peace itself.

### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

What are three areas in your life in which you are going to ask for support or help?

1.

2.

3.

What are three areas of your life where you're going to stop a draining behavior?

1.

2.

3.

What nourishing behaviors will you adopt instead to replace them?

1.

2.

3.

WHY are you going to ask for help and nourish yourself? Why is it worth it even if it's challenging? Physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, vocationally, financially, socially, family wise, romantically, and sexually?

When you tell a NEW story and feel a NEW vibration, watch how a NEW life begins to unfold. I believe in you.

## LITTLE WHITE MINTS

I remember we thought it was hepatitis.

In line with her upbeat outlook on life, Mom wore yellow outfits to complement her jaundice. We celebrated her sixtieth birthday, all washing our hands after hugging her ... insane now. It was cancer.

I remember not so much being freaked out that she would die, but rather becoming Healer with a capital H, and learning all the alternative treatments while my doctor sister handled getting Mom a slot on the operating table in Alberta because the medical system in British Columbia was too backed up to save our mom's life. Mom had a grueling fourteen-hour operation where they rewired her entire digestive system and the stitches went clear cross her body. They 'said' they got it all.

I spent the first part of mom's recovery with her in Alberta at my sister's house. I felt quite unwilling to deal with her dying at all. As far as I was concerned, she was going to be fine and stop whatever behavior or thought patterns had gotten her in this mess. I wasn't that tender, nor was I the best listener. She was going to heal God dammit and that was the end of it. Mom was remembering how her father died of cancer by the time he was fifty-four. She spoke of the anger she still held about my alcoholic father whom she'd divorced, about her mother who had disowned her. Bottled up feelings were surfacing and I began to soften up as we took slow walks in between bandage changes and sipping tea.

After a month, we headed back to Mom's home in British Columbia, and set up a "room of her own." We bought a new couch and strung Christmas lights, and she nestled into listen to healing meditation CDs. Mom dealt with her current, well-intentioned, but alcoholic boyfriend. We created a bright poster for the fridge titled "Priorities: music, travel, adventure, and laughter." She dealt with her fears of

the cancer coming back. She accepted an invitation to Spain with a male friend and even took a bus tour of Amsterdam on her layover. She really started glowing. She was alive and living and the most stunning I had ever known her to be. We talked a lot. I would read her the guided meditations over the phone from LA and she'd softly repeat the affirmations.

She was on an Alaskan cruise for the May long weekend when the pain started. Afraid this was it, she cashed in her bonds and asked me to book the alternative clinic in Mexico. My sister was dead against us going. I booked the flights and rooms but got a call from Mom. She was trying to tell me she was tired. Her sister was there but she wanted me and my sister to come. She said she didn't want to fight anymore. I reamed her out, told her to keep fighting, that I would be there tomorrow morning, to hang on, that I needed her, that she wasn't allowed to die. I arrived the next morning to find her body limp. She was strung out on liquid morphine she'd been taking every two to three hours, and she couldn't lift herself out of bed, or sip water. She was burning up. My aunt was on Lord knows what number bottle of wine in the living room. I lay at the foot of my mother's bed all that night attending to her and changing cool cloths. By dawn I called the ambulance.

In the ambulance, I was asked all these specific questions. Somehow in her fog, Mom piped in with all the answers. Her blood pressure was so low that they had to administer a drug that would stabilize her at the price of taking away the pain-killing morphine. In the ER and she was moaning, screaming, and shaking with pain. I held her close and gently whispered to her to breathe with the ocean, see the calming waves, know that with every breath the pain subsides, be one with the waves, Mom, just lose yourself in the waves ... I held her tight for close to thirty minutes until her body stabilized.

My sister flew in from Calgary that evening and we shared day and night shifts. Sometimes mom was sleepy and we talked with friends and family who came to visit. Sometimes mom was hysterically funny, out of nowhere yelling across the ER ward if “those damn Americans” won the hockey game. Sometimes she would get energy from God knows where and sit up in bed and ask how WE were! On the night we finally finagled her a private room, we had a lovely view of the Vancouver mountains and we three girls—me, my sister, and my mother—reminisced about our life together. As my mother tired we told her that we loved her, that we’d miss her but not to worry. We’d be just fine.

I don’t know how close you’ve been to someone dying. They stop eating obviously, don’t pee, don’t talk, the nurses wash them, they have bed sores, and dry skin. I brought aromatherapy oils to rub her with and make the room smell nice. I remember once I was massaging her beautiful hands with the oil and out of nowhere she said, “No more herbs.” By the end she didn’t even have an IV. No more ice cubes, just a sponge to wet her lips, and bags upon bags of morphine alongside morphine boosters for nightmarish pain attacks.

I seemed to win the prize of always being there alone when crisis struck. The first painful episode upon admittance, another one when I ran up and down the halls screaming for morphine NOW as my mom was writhing in pain, but they had to order it because they can only keep so much f\*&%ing morphine in the ward for security purposes. So again, I breathed every single painful breath with her until the damn stuff came.

Once when we were alone talking, she said very matter of factly, “How do I die?” I said I thought the angels came when you’re ready and you go with them. She said, “Well, how do I get there? Let’s make a plan. We have to figure it out. Where do we go?”

Then all of a sudden she was up, out of bed and off—morphine IV, catheter, willowy body—to go die. Trying to hold her back, she screamed at me with this high-pitched possessed voice and then bit my hand, through the skin immediately—messing with bones, veins, arteries—deep and she wasn't letting go. I was screaming, she was screaming, nurses came running and calmed her down, and now I was evil. She didn't want to ever see me again. Didn't know who I was. I was a spy sent to take her money and keep her from dying.

Holy crap! And NO ONE was sympathetic. All they could say was, "Don't be upset, she didn't mean it." *No shit, Sherlock, but it was so terrifying that I could use a little empathy here.* One aunt took me to the ER for a tetanus shot because with Mom's liver cancer, she was loaded with bacteria. To the admitting nurse, "Yes, my dying mother bit me." How humiliating, how hysterically funny in hindsight, how dearly I coveted my wound, how sad I was when the scabs fell away.

I was alone with Mom when she died. I was reading the last chapter in Joan Borysenko's *A Woman's Book of Life*. It had broken up a woman's life into seven year increments and although mom was only sixty, I was reading the last chapter when Borysenko was talking about watching her own mom die, that she saw the light in her lift and leave toward the heavens. There was a prayer at the end that I read to Mom, saying that I no longer resisted her leaving. That I was sorry it took me a little longer to accept it, but I knew she would be with me forever and that I loved her with all my heart. I put in ear plugs because she breathed like this—uuuhuuuhhuuh—and would stop for up to a minute at a time and then start again. Then at 5 a.m. on a beautiful, clear blue Sunday morning, the male nurse, with the same name as her father who'd died—Dave, gently woke me to say she was gone. Irritated and deaf I barked, "WHAT?" taking out my earplugs. Shit! She was gone. I missed it. The BIG moment.

*Did she reach out, say something, smile, did the light float up? I'd missed it!* On autopilot I called my sister and aunt at home. "She's gone." The nurse covered her head and I asked them to take the bloody sheet off, afraid to touch her at first. Then I breathed, smoothed her hair, touched her, she was already cool. I looked at her beautiful hands, her soft skin. My Mom. Laying there. Dead. Clearly she wasn't there really, just her body, but it was the body that gave birth to me, that held me, that bit me.

Family arrived and the nurse reappeared. Check out is at 9 a.m. Will she be donating her organs? Yes, yes. She wanted to do that. Whispering, we gathered all the cards. Why are we whispering? Yes, give the flowers to other people on the ward. We collected toiletries, food, and music. We were by her, leaning over her, cleaning up, and she was dead. DEAD. Then we were done. Everyone was fidgeting. I boldly gathered everyone at the end of her bed for a prayer. Then we left. We left my mother's body there. We just left. We took the same elevator down for the last time, and drove out the parking lot for the last time.

Relieved, grief-stricken, and numb we walked into the 70s décor mortuary. Is it okay to cremate her in a plywood box? Do we want something more snazzy? What style urn would we like? Would you like that shipped to LA or will my sister pick it up? Anesthetized but functioning, we found the will, planned the funeral, called everyone, changed the answering machine message, and oh, yes, drove back to Alberta in two days for my sister's wedding.

My sister and I drove alone in silence, then laughter, then streaming tears. The wedding was bittersweet. We decided to pretend mom was on vacation. My sister was courageous, bold, and vulnerable. Then we drove back to British Columbia and pulled up to our dead mother's condo. We hosted over 100 people to a beautiful afternoon tea in our mother's honor

at the Botanical Gardens. Over the next few weeks we drank a lot, ate up all the food in her fridge as we packed up her life and put her condo on the market.

Packing up was wild. She had little white mints in nearly all her pockets. She kept EVERY letter and card I ever sent her in a Rice Krispies box. And she had more sex toys than I'm comfortable mentioning. Oh, and they took her eyes. Funny thing though because mom had laser surgery and they corrected one eye for bifocals and one eye for long distance.

Oh, and I was pregnant. It happened at my sister's wedding before the funeral.

### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

How are you with death?

Have you lost a parent? Both? Neither?

How are you with feeling your feelings?

Embracing your fears?

Being tender with yourself when you're afraid?

Asking for support when you need it?

Take this time to journal the truth about losing your parents. If one or both are gone, journal a letter to them as if you're really talking to them, for I believe they can hear. See if by the end you can taste the truth of what I believe, which is we never die, just change forms. And that we chose our parents for the very best environment from which we could lose ourselves, and then find ourselves and soar into our most authentic selves.

Next, after you've journaled to your parents ... I want to share with you the first short story I ever published in an anthology called *Thank God I*.

*"Thank God I'm a Single, Motherless Mom"*

*A decrepit, rotting witch, crazy gray hair astray, pointed her bony finger at me. "You weak waste of life!" Desperate, I pleaded my case. "But I have an infant. I can't sleep. My mom just died. I'm not working. I'm supporting my unemployed husband on her inheritance ... and you want me to leave?" Hunched over, she turned away, chuckling, "Your son knows you're a wimp. A loser."*

*Infuriated, I felt a dormant power deep within me rise up, and I screamed, "Fine! I'll jump off the cliff! Not another day will pass letting my son see his mother void of power and grace!" The witch turned, cunningly smiled, and transformed before my eyes into Xena, Warrior Princess. "I was worried you'd never come around, sister. We've got work to do. Know I am a part of you. Kick him out. Now."*

*Talk about a powerful meditation! I barely slept that night, rigid and boiling, beside the man to whom I'd given away all my power. The next morning I fed my son, stormed downstairs, blared Gypsy Kings, and screamed at the top of my lungs, "You're going down. Get out now!"*

*No more believing his accusations that I was crazy. No more paying his way. No more putting up with his manipulations, threats, pushing me, then calling the cops to say I attacked him. No more insanity. No more hiding my power. No more buying into this victim story that drained my energy, withholding joy, grace, and radiance from my son.*

*Why had I stayed so long? Why did I feel so powerless? My inner warrior had only just begun to awaken when my mom had died.*

*Now not only was she my angel, so was Xena the Warrior Princess! It was time for healing and action. I forgave myself (multiple times daily, at first). I put affirmation sticky notes around the house, asked for help with financial issues, told the truth of how scared I was, got coaching on my career, dressed confidently, and exercised. I danced a few nights a week by candlelight, once my son was asleep for the night. I faced the truth of how needy I still felt, how I wanted a man to save me, an investment to sustain me, something on the outside to make the pain on the inside go away.*

*I started dating and vowed to tell the truth, be myself, explore my true sensual expression, and never settle again. Slowly, I began to live sensually, in the moment, savoring life more deeply and cherishing motherhood. I felt this unexplainable, unconditional love for my son that healed the loss of my mom, for I knew the depth to which she had really loved me.*

## **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

I invite you to write your own “Thank God I...” story.

What lead are you ready to alchemize into gold?

What challenge are you ready to say “THANK YOU” for?

Bonus: read your story to a trusted friend, post it on your blog, read it to your beloved. SHARE your inner most truth. Be bold and vulnerable and LET GO.

## **MY PORTAL TO FREEDOM**

We swirl our fingers through luscious shaving cream on the bright red picnic table. This lasts barely a minute before my soapy toddler and I are in a full-fledged foam fight. We

artfully compare our sudsy mohawks, rinse off, and retire for a restorative nap. His trumpeting voice alerts me that he's ready to race into the afternoon, so crouching down on all fours, I enter the room clucking like a chicken. He laughs hysterically as I beam.

Maybe it was giving birth and spreading my legs for all to see that dismantled my preoccupation with what people thought of me. Until the birth of my son, I was wired to seek approval for my every decision. Disapproval felt like fingernails down a chalkboard. I remember the shame of being turned away by my former husband, too preoccupied with work to enjoy my surprise lunchtime strip tease. I remember women's glances of pity as I, the poor girl who hadn't the pedigree to know any better, chatted and tore open my power bar for a homeless, fingerless man.

I valued other's approval more than my own eroticism or generosity. The insecure lens through which I saw the world opened, literally, during birth. My thoughts and behaviors were molding an innocent human being. I had been waiting for permission to stop flat-lining through life. Motherhood became my portal to freedom.

My own mother once told me, "You wouldn't care so much about what people think of you if you knew how little they did." At the local diner her wisdom comforted me as my son smashed eggs and hash browns into his hair then plopped into the public fountain. I was reminded that he was washable. Dryable. I encouraged myself to savor these tender moments.

From my new vantage point, it turns out dirt is decadent, mess is marvelous, and hugging trees is grand. My creativity abounded as we picnicked in the backyard tree house, read under forts of blankets, napped in tents in his room. My brain said, *I don't have the time or energy for this silliness!* But my heart whispered, "nourish and liberate your soul to the brim with sticky hands and make-believe."

This latitude spilled over into juicy girlfriend time. Instead of victim sessions over the phone, we had fun painting each other's toes in the driveway at sunset and dining by candlelight on the shag rug around the coffee table. Conversations werew magical, laughter was intoxicating, and insights were divinely inspired. I was still pissy on my period, beside myself when my kid clobbered another kid, and angrye when drivers cut me off, yet these moods passed quickly because I could now see joy was my choice, my responsibility, my gift to myself.

Being able to lovingly laugh at myself through the process sustained that joy. Bless motherhood for pouring forth my wellspring of happiness.

Let's just hope my son forgets that I clucked like a chicken. Actually, let's hope not!

## **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU ...**

How silly are you?

Goofy are you?

Free are you?

Expressed are you?

I invite you to do one silly thing a day. Downright dorky, Divine Dorkiness.

See where your comfort zone is and go beyond. Ask your kids for ideas and the VERY thing you least want to do, do that one!

Stretch your edges, laugh until your sides hurt, let go of what people think.

Know I adore you, and so do your kids for unleashing this energy.