

# It's Hard to Meditate When Your Butt Itches

*My Journey to Find Inner Peace*

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*It's Just the  
Beginning...  
A Journal, by  
Marsha  
Marie*



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It's Hard to Meditate When Your Butt Itches:  
My Journey to Find Inner Peace:  
It's Just the Beginning

A Journal, By Marsha Marie

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This is a work of nonfiction.

Edited by Marsha Marie.

Book cover by Marsha Marie. (Picture taken from Pixabay.com.)

This book is dedicated to everyone who can sit still for more than 60 seconds and do nothing.

I honor you.

Quiet the mind, and the soul will speak.

~Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati

**From the author:**

How did I get to this place in my life? Now that is a long story. But let's just say that I have not always made the most thought-out decisions in my life. And as a result, I have had many struggles. I have experimented with drugs, sex and alcohol. I have been married three times--all to men that were domestically abusive--and have since then overcome so much. But still, the search for true *inner peace* haunted me.

After reading the memoir, *Even the Trees Were Crying*, about a man's amazing journey of finding forgiveness for his sexually-abusive father, I met up with the author, Ernie Carwile. My mind and heart were perplexed. *How can a man who has suffered so much torment, at the hands of his own father, be so loving, forgiving and joyful?* I decided to come straight out and ask him one day. "Please tell me. How can you *forgive* like that?" He immediately stepped forward and embraced me; he quickly stepped back, looked me right in the eye and with earnest concern said, "Oh Marsha. You have so much hurt and sadness inside of you. You have to find forgiveness."

That confirmed it for me. He was right. I had not forgiven anyone in my life. I had to somehow get past all the sexual and violent abuse that I had suffered throughout my life. But I didn't know how to begin. I wanted to try a therapist, but there was no way that I could afford the sessions. I needed something *free of cost* and *freeing* at the same time. But what? I pondered day in and day out; but I was at a total loss.

I had rejected the idea of meditation many times. *How do I sit still for ten minutes? What am I supposed to say? Don't I have to pray to some god I don't even believe in.* But then one day my thinking turned around. I had recently decided to get some audiobooks for my long daily commute to work, and on my third book, a woman was speaking of her travels to India and how she had to overcome her anxieties and struggles when it came to meditation. Her words pricked my heart, but I kept my feelings suppressed. I listened for several days, until one day I broke down in envious tears. *Why can't I find that inner peace that she is talking about? Why can't I?*

Then as fate would have it, that very same day, I walked into my home, and out of the clear blue sky, my daughter starts speaking about meditation and how it would help me. *Wow. Where did this all come from? How did she know what I was just listening to in my car?* And to make matters even more stranger, she was basically saying the same words that I just heard on the way home. Like somehow, she knew that I had my doubts and fears about meditation. My daughter spoke so beautifully and lovely, that I knew it had to have been a sign from above. I must put aside my fears and start this thing they call, *meditation*.

The beginning of this journey has been rocky. I really had no idea where to start. So, I started slow, first with some meditation music and small mantras (of course I'm learning these terms as I go--I have put a small glossary for those who may need it). I struggled to sit for even five minutes silently. I didn't know how to shut my mind off for even that small amount of time. I eventually worked up to 20 minutes a day, and now one hour a day spent in meditation and study is still not enough for me. I often wondered how anyone could sit for hours in meditation. But now I see that it can be so extremely awesome. I have read many author's views on the subject and reviewed tons of information about topics such as sound-therapy, binaural beats, mindful meditation and data as to how these things can affect and sooth our minds. The subject has become such an obsession for me. I had no idea that several of the most common religious faiths instruct followers to meditate. *Why am I over 50 years old and just now hearing about this?* With such incredible results of meditation, I cannot understand why the government isn't teaching this to us as children, thus developing a world of finely tuned-in and adjusted human beings. *Oh wow. I am really going off track here. Sorry. Back to myself.*

I started noticing a change in myself after the first week. It's hard to explain but I just felt so much lighter somehow. And then I had this incredible urge to start clearing out my house of useless items. I unloaded about one quarter of the items that I hadn't touched in years. As days went on, I did more reading, more meditation and more cleaning.

I also started noticing that I was a calmer person all around; things weren't so upsetting to me, and my creativity really spiked. Moreover, sounds seemed oddly much louder than usual. I can't help but smile when I am listening to music with headphones on, and suddenly I hear a bird chirping outside. Is the bird loud enough to overpower headphones? I don't think so; I think that I have tuned into noises that I once drowned out with my own useless over-powering mind chatter.

Likewise, I am more empathetic than I recollect. Now, as I walk down the grocery isle I notice details that I would have just over-looked in the past. I see scars on people's bodies, I notice them limping, artificial limbs, and especially emotions on people's faces. I can also pick up on pain and sadness in voices that I had never noticed before. It pains me to think that I have gone so much of my life without noticing such meaningful actualities in my fellow humans. Meditation has opened not only my heart, but my mind and eyes as well. *What a change!*

So, this is my journey. I'm sharing with you my struggles, doubts, fears and how I began my journey of healing, forgiveness and clearing in my heart and mind. I hope that you enjoy being a fly on the wall as I describe my daily meditations, self-discovery and rebirth. I have laid the book out in the following order: introduction, summary of discoveries (Q & A), mini-glossary and then two

It's Hard to Meditate When Your Butt Itches: My Journey to Find Inner Peace: It's just the Beginning months of journaling. Note that with the realization that this embarking was turning into an *ongoing-life-style-change*, I decide to stop my journaling after two full months.

Here are some summaries on some very common questions I ran across while on this journey to discover my inner peace through meditation. (With a few of my own add-ons at the end.)

Q. What is meditation?

A. It's a common misconception that meditation is a relaxing exercise because of its relaxing effects on the body and mind, however, that and many other benefits are merely the side-effects of a greater picture. Meditation is a concentration exercise, in which one is attempting to elevate the base level of concentration. Meditation has many variations, but the very basics of it is that meditation is sitting down and strengthening your mind to concentrate. Now what you think about depends on what outcome you desire. This is where guided meditation comes in handy. So, think about what results you may be looking for in life, and let that guide you as to what type of meditation would be good for you. *As they say, be you boo!*

Q. Who is capable of doing meditation?

A. Anyone can meditate. Young, old, male, female, doesn't matter. Regardless the financial status, location or job, this simple and effective practice is available for all. I was just reading today that this practice is now being introduced into some of the prisons around the States. I think that this is an amazing thing. Keep in mind, this is not a *religious* practice but a *focusing* practice; one that anyone can reap the benefits of.

Q. What is mind chatter and how can it be stopped?

A. Mind chatter is that constant bombardment of our thoughts in our mind. It cannot be stopped per say, after all, that is what our minds were designed to do. But the more practice one gets in meditation, the more that this chatter can be controlled, or even overlooked. Mind chatter is usually one of several things: planning, memories, fantasy, judgements or reactions. Just know that every human has it and the more you meditate the easier the mind chatter will be to control.

Q. Where can one meditate?

A. Anywhere. In bed, in your favorite chair or even in car (like I did several days), going for a walk, while doing dishes, in the bathtub, on a pillow in a corner or even at your desk at work (just not in the closet like me, that was just dorky). Your meditation time can be any length of time you want it to be. It can be as short as one minute or as long as six hours---if that floats your boat. That is one of

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the things I really love about it; I can do it anytime, anywhere, and it doesn't cost me a single dime. The most popular spot seems to be on a cushion in a corner of the room, or sitting up in a chair. Most say that a quiet spot is preferable, but not absolutely needed, some use earplugs to drown out background noise.

Q. When is the best time to meditate?

A. Most of my research points to mornings as being the most beneficial. Not that there is some special magic about mornings, but the body and mind are well rested at that time thus making it a bit easier to concentrate. But again, do whatever is best for you.

Q. Why should one meditate?

A. The reasons *why one should meditate* are as varied as *where one should meditate*. The most obvious reason is calmness of mind, relieving stress, inner peace, finding oneself and enlightenment, and helping with self-control. But it also helps with creativity, sleep and spirituality (even though meditation is not a religious act itself). And did I mention that it is totally free! It's by far, the cheapest form of stress reliever to date. Just imagine a world where meditation was a welcomed insight in every home. The peace, serenity and creativity the family unit would share together would be so utterly refreshing today. My advice is to seek out why *you* want to meditate and run with it.

Q. How should one meditate?

A. There are different schools of thought on this. Whether it's just being aware of your breathing, or mindfulness meditation, compassion meditation or guided meditation, you cannot go wrong. All-in-all, there is over 100 different ways to do it. And since I have experimented with only a few of them, I couldn't possibly give a viable answer. But I can say that I am going to have a great time trying new ones out myself. I still have the rest of my life to explore. (So far, my favorite is *Om Mantra*, and *Mindfulness Meditation*---great for beginners!)

Q. What does the research say about meditation?

A. Oh, so much! There are clinical studies going on around the world about the effects that meditation has on the body and brain. The results are astonishing! There is a list of physical benefits a mile long, as well as increases in compassion, empathy, happiness and overall well-being have been proven as a direct result of meditation. Besides, MRI testing has shown repeatedly, that regular practice of meditation literally changes gray matter and several neural functions—termed

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neuroplasticity. *Neuroplasticity is the new black!* Check it out for yourself. Every minute that I spend in meditation is altering my brain. You've got to admit that is pretty amazing.

Q. Are there any negative aspects of meditation?

A. At first thought, you would think that there isn't, but I have found some things to be aware of. Like for instance, deep-seeded emotions may arise and come forward when you least expect it. Also, some people put too much expectations on it, and then they feel discouraged if they do not have the same experiences as others, or they let others tell them that there is only one *right* way to meditate and so they get confused. Some folks just have too much emotional baggage that they cannot get a grip on alone, and just might need a counselor to assist; but they are too wrapped up into meditation to think that they need it. So, bottom line is, yes, meditation undoubtedly has benefits, but we should always check in on any down-sides too, just to make ourselves aware---knowledge is power.

Q. What is the strangest thing I discovered in these two months?

A. Well, beside the fact that I have an unusual, constant, static-type-sound roaring in my head whenever it gets quiet---which I never noticed before starting meditation---and dramatically feeling my heart pumping during meditation, I would have to say that the strangest thing I discovered was the butt-hopping that I saw in one of BBC's documentaries about meditation. They sit in lotus position and when they feel extremely happy, they begin hopping on their butts. You have got to see this to believe it. I hope someday that I can be *that* happy as to be able to bounce around on my butt.

Q. Why did I write this e-book?

A. I wrote this book because I felt that others might benefit from seeing just a regular person whom has suffered her fair share in life, yet find a path to inner peace. At the beginning of this book, I ignorantly thought that I would be able to write about my experience from beginning to end; I had no idea that this would be such a life-changing and on-going event. To write the full experience would mean that I would be writing for years on end. (Boring, right?) At least for now, I can say that I know that I am on the right path to healing and real joy; I am not the same person that started this journal two months ago. I am more in-tuned with my emotions, I am happier than I think I have ever been in my life, my reactions are different now, I have more compassion and empathy for people around me and I feel closer to my spiritual beliefs than ever before. Let me say now, thank you for sharing my journey with me thus far. I hope that you, too, find all the blessings and inner peace that

you are seeking, and deserve. (I cannot wait to see my friend Ernie the author again; this time I will hug him!)

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### Beginners' Glossary

(Some definitions taken from Oxford Online Dictionary)

- Binaural beats: Relating to sound recorded using two microphones and usually transmitted separately to the two ears of the listener.
- Compassion meditation: Where one focuses on love and compassion for self, loved-ones or strangers; thus, strengthening one's *compassion muscle*.
- Equanimity: Calmness and composure, especially in a difficult situation.
- Guided meditation: Spiritual or therapeutic meditation under the guidance of another, or with the aid of set guidelines, a recoding, etc.
- Impermanence: Not permanent.
- Intention: Conceptions formed by directing the mind towards an object.
- Lotus position: A crossed-legged sitting position in which the feet are placed on the opposing thighs.
- Mantra: A word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation.
- Meditation: The action of practice of meditating.
- Mind Chatter: Uncontrollable talking/thoughts in the mind.
- Mindfulness meditation: A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.
- Neuroplasticity: The brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life.
- Sound-therapy: Harnessing and using sound to have a powerful effect on emotions.
- Third eye: The faculty of intuitive insight or prescience; another term for *pineal eye*.

(The first few weeks of my journaling is strictly from my meditative sessions, but eventually, I realize that it is not the session that measures one's changes or spiritual advancement but the little things in everyday life: reactions, decisions and reflections that one makes. I change from keeping daily journals in the morning during my session times to including my times of research and reflection.) You will be able to see my development over the two months times. Lots of experimentation, and lots of failure. I hope that if you decide to embark on a journey like this, that you keep a journal too; you will not regret it.

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June 17, 2017, morning meditation.

I sit on the edge of my messy bed; my clothes are wrinkled; my hair is scary. The springs squeak as I try to distribute my weight evenly on the metal support-bar in the middle. I say to myself, "Okay. We are going to try to meditate. No one needs to know. We will just do it for a few minutes and see what happens."

It is suddenly quiet. Too quiet. The fan is off and honestly the silence is deafening to me. I am alone. I mean, I am really, alone. No one to look at me, or talk to me. I'm supposed to be meditating but I all I feel is loneliness. It is too much for me. *That means god is not here either. I really am alone.* I start to cry. *Oh god Marsha, this is your first five minutes of meditating and you are crying about it? You are such a failure. You can't even meditate right.* I give up for now. Not even two minutes complete.

June 17, 2017, late-night meditation.

Today, I drank a double hot chocolate only hours before I usually go to bed. I should've known better, but because it's a weekend I have splurged. But now I cannot sleep. "Well, since I am awake anyway, I might as well try meditating again. This time instead of sitting up, I want to lie down

on my back. At first my hands are crossed on my chest as if I am lying in a coffin. *This is just too creepy. Put my hands down on the side instead.*

When I close my eyes, I see flashes and twinkles of white light; not the usual cartoonish figures playing about, or the kaleidoscope of lines that usually play out in my head every night just as I am drifting off to sleep. I just assume that the flashes of white are from the caffeine that I treated myself to today. It reminds me of static electricity. *So now what? Do I just look at the flashes and try to think nothing? I guess I cannot do that; I am thinking right now.* "Try to focus...try to think of nothing. Damn this is so hard," I say to myself aloud.

Suddenly, I get the idea that meditators always put their pointing finger and thumb together, so I try this thinking that it will somehow help me focus. It really doesn't. Now my mind has gone to Indian dancing. I cannot relax like this. But I really try. Then I feel a warm sensation in my body. I feel it but I really do not know *where* it is, or *why* for that matter. Then I feel one of my muscles twitch in my leg. *Wow. I felt that.*

Then as soon as I think that, I feel overwhelmed with other muscles around my body. I just became aware of them. It's as if my muscles had all screamed together, "She has finally heard us!"

I decide right at this moment, that I will keep a journal to document my search for inner peace. I want to explore it more. I want to find the real definition of meditation and peace, and try to really master it. *If so many others can find internal bliss, surely, I can too?* I really want to try. I suddenly envision myself being a "peaceful blissful person---walking around my home setting aside my worldly possessions because my jewels now lie within". I cannot wait for what tomorrow brings. I jump up from my bed and grab a notebook and start scribbling away. Thoughts are flowing like a river. It is like something is telling me what to write. Suddenly I write these words.

*Dear God,*

*I realize that you have created me as a spiritual canvas. Help me to create the masterpiece that you meant for me to be. Help me to spread the colors of joy and love and forgiveness in such a way that the fresco of your grace shines thru my eyes.*

The caffeine is now wearing off, and I return to bed. I now see visions of sugarplums dancing in my head. Behind them I see skulls and a cup and a straw (It reminds me of the advertisements I used to see at the drive-in movie theater when I was a kid.). *What do they mean? What are you trying to tell me? And who am I even talking to you? Will I ever know?*

June 17, 2017, night reflection.

I am beginning to wonder if I don't already meditate every day without even realizing it. Each day I spend a half an hour in my car during my lunch, with my eyes closed---just trying to decompress from the hellish phone calls I have just endured from the first half of my shift (I work in a call center as my regular job and 98% of my customers have problems that need resolution). The time goes by so quickly that I feel time escapes me. I usually just think of issues of life; not about happy things. I usually sit there worried and plan how I will come out from under it all and make my life better. Why do I do this? Because I am alone. No husband. No love. And in my car, no friend. No one hears my inner voice. Is this meditation or sulking? More unanswered questions.

June 17, 2017, night study.

Now would be a great time to understand exactly what meditation really is. Let's look at Google shall we; it says that meditation is the act of meditating. *Um okay. That really doesn't help me at all.* But then it has these synonyms along with the definition: contemplation, thought, thinking, musing, pondering, consideration, reflection, deliberation, rumination, brooding (this one I know all too well), reverie (*What the hell is reverie?*), brown study *Okay, they just keep getting even weirder; I will stop here.* So, I think it's safe to say that meditating is sort of equivalent to thinking. So that means, by definition, I do in fact meditate in my car each day. *Good to know.* It seems that now, I must learn *what* to think about.

June 18, 2017, morning meditation.

I try again on the edge of my bed. I set some meditation music on the app of my smartphone to play for 5 minutes. It's very light meditation sounds with bells and an angel-like *aaaaaa*. It's so beautiful. I hope today I don't cry again. This time I decide to lie down, thinking that this will somehow be more comfortable. (Keep in mind, I'm just learning this stuff.)

Today is different than last night. I don't see any shapes, any floating cups or candy canes. Nothing. Not even the familiar bluish-white tint that I'm used to seeing for years whenever I close my eyes and start drifting off to sleep. Today it is nothing but blackness. My thoughts are difficult to control; I am thinking about finding a new job. The one I have now is just too stressful for me. I don't

feel creative anymore because of the stress. (Which sounds strange to say, since I am *writing* this very sentence in yet another book that I'm *writing*, but honestly, I don't feel like I am accomplishing anything in my life these days. My creativity and drive has totally ceased.) I try to focus my thoughts again. I try to think of nothing. *But how do I think of nothing?* So, I focus harder---thankful that at least today, I am not crying.

While concentrating on *not thinking* of anything, I feel a sharp pain in my head. It hurts. *Omg, I knew it!* Silence hurts me physically. (I have always wondered why I felt like I had to have either the TV or radio on all the time; and now I know why. When it is quiet enough around me, and I stop thinking about life, I literally feel pain. Noise is a coping mechanism for me.)

I focus on the sharp pain in my head. It is not too bad, but it's there. Like a prick of a pin, right in the center of my brain. Suddenly, I realize the music has stopped. *How long has it been off?* Five minutes just flew by. *Was I asleep?* Next time I think I should sit up and see what happens. But hey, I proud of myself, I stopped talking for five minutes. *Awesome!*

June 19, 2017, morning meditation.

Today, I am going to try to meditate for 10 minutes. Five minutes went by so quickly yesterday, that I think, *why not*. Surely, I need it anyway. So, I set my phone timer for 10 minutes, hang my legs over the edge of the bed and just close my eyes. *You can do this Marsha. Just sit still for ten minutes.*

Sure enough, I feel the small pain in my head again---the same pin sensation that was there yesterday. I notice that it seems to be stronger when I put my full focus on it, so I try to steer my mind away from it. *I will try to think of something else. Should I try saying the word, Om? Like you see in movies?* Sure, why not. Om. *Oh stop! That sounds stupid. I sound like I am mocking those who meditate. Just sit silent instead.*

A strange heat flows thru my face. It feels like I am blushing or like I have been running. It is intense heat. I almost want to fan myself, but then just as quickly as it came, it starts to cool again. *What was that?* And then I notice the pain again. I really hadn't even noticed the pain was gone, until it came back again. *Wow. What is going on with me?*

I continue to relax. I begin--for lack of a better term--chanting to myself, "I am one with the universe. Love and forgiveness. I am one with the universe. Love and forgiveness." Suddenly, I see a vision; I am opening the pantry door in our kitchen. I reach in and pull out a white trash bin. It has

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soup-like water in it. There are tomatoes floating on top of this semi-clear liquid. I assume it is soup because of the tomatoes. *Why am I doing this? What is that stuff?*

Again, I notice that the music has stopped. *Oh my god, did I fall asleep again even while sitting up? What was with the soup in the trash bin? I don't get it. But hey, I did an entire ten minutes today. This is so exciting.*

June 20, 2017, morning meditation.

Again, I set my music for ten minutes of meditation. But today I want to cross my legs and sit up straight. Not very easy, but the fact I am sitting up rather than lying down seems to help. Just before meditation I received a text message about a job that I had applied for, so now my mind is not able to relax at all. I keep wondering if they will call me or not. *If they call me, I will need to relocate. I wonder where I can find a place to live in that city?* My thoughts are interrupted by the alarm on the phone. *Wow. I thought I shut the alarm off?* What an interruption. I'm doing so bad today already, because I cannot stop thinking about the job.

Suddenly the word *FORGIVENESS* pops into my head. I repeat it slowly to myself---like I am summoning some kind of a spirit or something. I finally begin to relax. And yes, the bluish-white dancing light is back and I take that as a good sign. I am relaxing, then suddenly the light vanishes when I hear my son scream from his room "Fucking accents!"

"Okay. Thank you, son for that. Mood killed. I give up for today."

June 21, 2017, morning meditation.

Today, I meditate for ten minutes. Instead of just some meditation music I decide to add rain. I figure that this will help me to relax. True, I am relaxing, but I still have no idea what to think about. My eyes are closed and I see nothing but a grayish void. The cat has just jumped up on the bed and is kneading right next to me. I try not to move; she spooks so easily. She lies down on the bed and touches me with her tail. I am so shocked. She never comes over and lies next to me. Perhaps she can sense that I am trying to meditate. Notice I say *trying*. This must be a sign.

I try to focus, but it isn't working. *Why can't I stop thinking?* I need to research about this today; maybe I can find some tips to help. With my eyes still closed, I see a grayish void, but this time

I can see a small wave in the middle. I finally decide that I should just pray whatever is in my heart--- this seems like as good a time as any.

*God give me strength and guidance. Lead me to the job that you want me to have.* The bluish-white light appears, but this time instead of coming from the front, it's coming from the top left-hand side of my visual scope. It looks like it's shining down on me. *What is that?* This is the same bluish-white light that keeps me awake sometimes. I remember about a month ago, I kept telling my daughter to turn the lights off so I could go to sleep. "The light is blinding me, please, shut it off," I said. After the third time asking, I looked up and the room was dark except for her computer screen that she was working on across the room. I was so confused. I asked, "If the room is dark, where is the bluish-white light coming from?"

"A white light?" She says.

"Yea. It's a bluish-white light---shining on my face. But where's it coming from?"

My daughter began dancing around the room. "Mom, that is your third eye opening up. Don't try to stop it; just let it flow." The light continued for the next hour and I just couldn't fall asleep. It was like someone had a flashlight pointed right in my face. I didn't believe my daughter when she said that it was my third, but nevertheless, I had no logical explanation for the light shining in my face. But now, I am think differently.

I hear the music stop but I stay for another few minutes. The light is here with me, and I want to see what will happen. But I need to get ready for work, so I open my eyes, breaking my connection with the bluish-white light. I unfold my leg and reach for my diary, suddenly the cat jumps up and runs away. Perhaps she knows that meditation is over.

June 21, 2017, morning research.

This morning, I decided to research about thinking and mantra. Since I do not know how to stop thinking, the least I can do is get some words to help me focus. Here is the definition that I found for mantra: *A mantra is a word or phrase whose recital raises the level of consciousness by bringing about greater awareness. It opens the doorway to a deeper understanding of the self and of the laws of nature.*

*A few mantra examples are listed below:*

- *Om Shanti Om*

*Om Shanti Om is an ancient Vedic Mantra. Om is the sound of universe, the primordial sound. Shanti means peace in Sanskrit. As we meditate on this Mantra, we are wishing and spreading peace for all human kinds, all the living and non-living beings, and spreading peace in entire universe.*

- *Ma-ra-na-tha*

*The word Maranatha is the final instruction of St. Paul's teachings to the Corinthians. It is also St. John's final instruction in the Book of Revelations. Thus, the last word, the final teaching of the entire Christian Bible is "Maranatha," which is Aramaic for "Come Lord"*

- *Allah Hu*

*It is the traditional Sufi chant meaning "God is"*

- *Om mani padme hum*

*There are various interpretations of this Buddhist mantra, but according to the XIV Dalia Lama, it means "in dependence on the practice of a path, which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha"*

June 22, 2017, morning meditation.

I set my clock for ten minutes today. I decide that I will simply sit and smile---a new mantra that I heard about in a video yesterday. In all honesty, I have forgotten how to smile. The last two years have been rather difficult for me; I had severe dental and gum issues and I lost my teeth. It was a lengthy embarrassing transformation in my life, so as the process went on, I simply stopped smiling. Not that I didn't want to smile; just that I was too ashamed to smile. Therefore, smiling today is going to be quite a challenge for me. My smile muscles have literally forgotten how to perform. But for the mantra, I begin to smile.

At first the smiling feels fake. My face muscles are stiff. I try to remember what the mantra was, the video said to smile with your face and your whole body---even your heart and kidney should smile. *Okay Marsha. Focus on smiling.* Smiling surprisingly does make me feel better. Somehow it lifted some weight off my shoulders.

I begin thinking of all the things that I am blessed with in life; I will focus on these things. My hand, feet, fingers, elbows, my work, my skills, my children, my cats, and back to my fingers. It's hard to keep smiling. I relax for a few seconds, and then smile again. It feels good.

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Today, I see no light or characters; only a vision of myself, but I don't know what I was doing. Maybe working. *Yea. I am working.* Then this reminds me of my job again. Negativity creeps into my mind. And now it is hard for me to get back on track. I just need to smile again, but the music ends.

June 23, 2017, morning meditation.

My eyes are almost swelled shut this morning. I set the timer for my ten minutes. I tried praying a bit, but I keep getting distracted. I scream at myself in my head. "Stop thinking!" I should study about it issue that I am having this weekend. I need to learn what to think during meditation.

It seems like the only thing that I am getting accomplished today, is that I am sitting in one place for ten minutes. But inside, I'm only thinking of my problems, money and my job situation. *I suck at this meditating.* I feel no peace today. No joy. No light. No visions—just my problems. Today, I am an epic failure. Maybe this week has been too physically draining and that's why I can't meditate (which when you think about it, doesn't make any sense because I am only sitting and thinking). *Go figure.*

June 24, 2017, morning research.

Today, I didn't meditate because I had a strange dream that really disturbed me; so instead, I started researching about meditative thinking and mantras. I watched some videos for beginners which instructed the listeners to let their thoughts come as they will, and to keep the focus on their breathing; the mind play will leave just as easily as they came. Thank god, I am not the only one that has this problem. I thought I was just so messed up that even meditation could not reach me. Because of the videos, I learned some interesting meditation methods and now I am really looking forward to using them tomorrow.

June 26, 2017, morning meditation.

First off, I want to say right now, that I really suck at this meditation-thing. I am trying to stay positive but, it seems useless at first. I set my alarm and fidget around on the bed trying to find a position that is comfortable. It takes me forever.

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After flopping around like a fish, I finally settle into a position and relax. The thoughts come and go. I try not to focus on them. I don't feel anxiety from them at all.

Then suddenly, I remember the time I saved my ex-husband, Zain (husband #2) from drowning in a swimming pool. He fell into the deep end while doing some filming---with his clothes on---camera and all. He went under the water, then came up to the surface and cried out for help; that is when I discovered he had fallen in. I ran over and helped him out.

I totally forgot about that day until now. It's so weird to think of it almost 23 years later; I wonder if it means anything.

June 30, 2017, daytime walking meditation.

I didn't meditate at home today, but now I am walking around the parking lot at work. I'm singing *om shanti om* and listening to locusts scream for attention. It is so peaceful and relaxing. These last couple of days meditating and walking really gives me the strength to face my daily job of answering call-after-call of angry and frustrated customers. I will continue doing meditation.

July 1, 2017, morning meditation.

This morning I wrapped my head in one of my favorite Pakistani scarves; I want to block out as much light as possible to see if it makes any difference. I set my Zen music for 20 minutes. I have decided that since today is a day off from work, I will double the meditation time. And for the first, I want to meditate. I settle in and cross my legs. I begin.

But I hear a radio just outside my front door. It is very distracting. Zen music in one ear and other stuff in another. *Oh, why is the universe doing this to me?* My logical thinking finally kicks in and I put the music between me and the outside distraction. The Zen music drowns out the foreign sounds. It is working. I feel relaxed again.

I think that this is a great example of how meditation really works for us emotionally. When we focus on inner-soothing, meditation will inevitably come between us and the outside heaviness of the world. *I wish I had learnt this much earlier in life.*

I am now able to focus on my inner thoughts. They come and go. I let them pass. Suddenly I see a vision of myself standing on the side of a freeway. Light whispers and blurring flashes of matter

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are zooming past me in both directions. I realize that these are my thoughts, and I am letting them freely flow by--I am now a silent observer---not affected, not stressed, just in silent observation.

I see the bluish-white light again today, but it is much narrower than before. Then I see a flash of red and white lights; clear and crisp. Very tiny. Looks like the top of a police car; but they leave immediately.

I then start to think of my stressful job. I pray, please God help me find another one. I then imagine myself at work, meditating in a small quiet room. *Oh, that would be so nice.*

I begin thinking that meditation is now opening my eyes to the *spiritualness* that has surrounded me throughout my life. My premonitions, the indescribable presence I feel around me, auras that I see on people and objects, and the list goes on. I finally accept that this is a spiritual world and it has been calling to me, but it has taken this long for me to respond to it. But then suddenly *fear* strikes me like lightning; I feel scared. Scared of seeing a ghost or maybe some demon. I don't want that; I just want some peace in my life.

The music stops and I am almost sad. I have a desire to meditate that wasn't there before. I am truly starting to feel a difference in my life.

July 2, 2017, morning meditation.

Today I set my time with 20 minutes again. My head wrapped and music is on. But today I keep nodding off. With each jerk back to consciousness, I think, *maybe I should lie down.* So, like a cat I lie down with my head still wrapped. I am out before I hit the pillow, and suddenly transported to Pakistan and dreaming. The dream seems hours long, but I awaken when my music stops. I have the feeling that this dream answered a question that had weighed heavy on me just days before. I am thankful for the peace of mind the answer brings.

July 3, 2017, morning meditation.

I set the music for 20 minutes. My head is wrapped and instantly I start thinking about my job and moving. It seems like I am saving my *job*-thinking for this very minute each day. I see only the gray mass with miniscule sparkles. I quietly think for about 15 minutes. The bluish-white light is finally here. It is zooming in and out. It starts big then shrinks down to a small spot and then

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disappears. The light just dances around today. That is all. Again, my heart and mind go back to my wanting of *inner peace*. Meditation ends for today.

July 4, 2017, morning meditation.

Twenty minutes and I am ready for today's meditation. This time I pray for peace; pray for a new job, forgiveness, and for guidance. No visiting bluish-white light yet---only gray; it goes jet black and then the sparkles give it a greyish appearance again.

Out of nowhere, a lined patten appears. This is a first time I have ever seen this. It is a full vision, as if I am looking up close at some pin-striped wallpaper---grey and white lines. Then suddenly when I realize I am looking at pin stripes, the vision pops like a cartoon bubble--back to nothingness. *What was that? A picture? A wall? Someone's clothing? A floor?* It looked like gray corduroy to me. I decide I need to relax again. I start with slowly saying "Om shanti om." Then, little patches of the stripes appear; they are dime-sized and randomly flashing here and there. No pattern to understand.

The bluish-white light finally comes to visit. I now expect it to stop by each day, like an old friend that stops by my desk at work just to say "hi". This time the bluish-white light is a full canvas, with waves of black coming from the right side of my vision. I want to test and see if this light is self-induced by my own eye movements. So, I roll my eyes upward; same wave. I look down; same wave. To the right; same wave. To the left; same wave. Okay, I am convinced that it's not me doing this light show. I am conscious, making decisions, controlling my eyes and the bluish-white light wave is still happening. *This has got to be my third eye.* Now if I could just learn how to control it.

The music stops but I linger for another 5 minutes---watching the wave. *What is it trying to tell me? What does it mean?*

Then my two cats get into a fight; the light is gone. Meditation is done for now.

July 4, 2017, night meditation.

All day long I have had the unusual urge to clear my home of clutter. I look at so many things around my room and wonder why I have them. I want to purge myself of these unnecessary belongings. I am imagining myself touching things and mentally labeling them as to whether they

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should stay or not. *Why do I feel this way, why do I want to clear clutter?* I don't want loud noises around me and I *absolutely* do not want to work on the phones anymore. *God help me to find peace.*

July 5, 2017, morning meditation.

During meditation, I see nothing today. I keep falling in and out of sleep. I was just dreaming of emails. Maybe it means something, I don't know. I see a flash of thin bars, and visualize myself talking to somebody. *I don't understand these fragments of information.* I keep nodding off. I cannot focus today. The energy in the gray mass is swirling around.

July 5, 2017, night meditation.

It was a crazy day today, lots of stress. I am exhausted and lying in bed. I downloaded an *Om Mantra* app on my smartphone. I figure I can listen to it on the run. I found a couple interesting apps with radio stations, songs and chants. I am looking forward to trying them out.

July 6, 2017, night meditation.

I put on rain sounds with Zen meditation music. I wrap my head and lie down. I am so relaxed. I listen to the rain and let stress leave my body. The gray mass is present as usual but then the bluish-white lights comes for a visit---dominant in its usual fashion; but then something new, a lovely lime green joins the show. The two hues begin dancing and morphing together. It was like they were making love. They move so gracefully together. I am amazed and am thankful to see such a display. I watch for a few minutes, and drift off to sleep.

July 7, 2017, morning meditation.

Well, today I try the Om App and it is quite peaceful, if only I could stay focused long enough. My head has a sharp pain, and my mind keeps rushing back to my job and how to solve my

problems. I have an idea about what to do, but I don't know if it's just my emotions or if it's guidance from another source; I begin to pray.

"Dear God, give me strength. Give me guidance." Then suddenly, a dream from last night comes slamming into my mind. I remember that I was standing inside a room looking out into the backyard. In the distance, I could see a tsunami coming toward us. Everyone was running, and I jumped on top of a wooden fence and held on for dear life. A river of thick muddy sludge came rushing in and suddenly I found myself in the middle of the yard shoulder-deep. I distinctly remember thinking "I'm going to die!" But somehow, I was lifted out of the mud and put on dry ground and just walked away from it; I was totally clean with no worries in my heart and mind.

*Could that dream be showing me my job situation right now? I honestly feel like I will die now, but maybe somehow, I will be pulled out? Wow! Did I understand a dream for the first time in my life?* Suddenly, I feel a sense of calmness. I feel I just need to have patience and be diligent.

I see no light dance today, only remembering the dream so vividly. I end meditation for today.

July 7, 2017, night reflection.

Today was amazing! It felt like my dream this morning told me that everything was going to be okay, and most importantly, I believed it. Today was the first time I have smiled at work in a long time. I even felt that maybe I should stick it out and stay with the company instead of trying to find another one. My confidence in my performance has risen and my depression has lifted. Meditation and prayer that made the difference. Maybe it was not my job all this time; it was how I was approaching it.

July 8, 2017, morning meditation.

I put on the Om chanting app at 100 repetitions. It takes about 20 minutes. I am relaxed and thankful for my new elated feeling from yesterday. I begin to focus and let thoughts leave my mind. Now I am not obsessing about my job. So, I feel much lighter and my focus is sharper than usual. The bluish-white light arrives and is very bright, but only a small amount of activity, not dancing like the last couple of days. I see flashes of some letters and numbers. Like this: 1, 2, 3 in bullet points. I is as

if I am reading a piece of paper with the letters on it: T, M, B. *What do these letters and numbers mean?* I feel so relaxed today. I feel no stress. This is wonderful.

July 8, 2017, night reflection.

Today I noticed, that people and things around me seem unusually loud; it's like someone has turned up the volume on life. And I was also thinking about the rationalizations I'd make throughout my life to explain visions, dancing lights and stuff that I would see in my mind. I made excuses like: *it's just my eyes* or *I'm just weird*. I should have respected these things and tried to better understand them. It has taken me over 50 years to finally realize it wasn't just *me* or the sun light playing games with me. The mystical bluish-white light has always been there to entertain me, as far back as I can remember.

I wrote this poem today.

*Quiet*

*only 14 days*

*not much more*

*why oh lord are things so noisy now?*

*the quieter I get*

*the louder the world around me*

*I close my eyes*

*checking as I go*

*the light comes in*

*making love to its surroundings*

*is it for real?*

*if they really cared*

*they would show us the way*

*the way to inner peace and beauty*

*how could we stand so silent?*

*awaken oh loved ones and see the way*

*to speak the loudest*

*is to be the quietest*

July 9, 2017, morning, meditation.

I set my meditation music for 20 minutes. I always wrap my head now to make sure that I am no influenced by any outside light. Today I feel very relaxed. I pray over and over my own English mantra: *Forgiveness. Thank you, lord.* The gray nothingness is calming and relaxing. I am no longer taunted with my job stress. That seems to have left me altogether.

Suddenly, a bright white star comes straight at me from the left side. It makes me jerk my head trying to duck from being hit. *What was that?* But then back to nothingness.

Finally, my bluish-white friend comes to visit. It's like it's playing peek-a-boo with me. It appears the size of a quarter, then shrinks and disappears. Again, I see a flash of lines; they too disappear quickly. The music stops but I want to stay. There is something that is drawing me to the quietness. I feel relaxed and peaceful.

Suddenly, I visualize and hear a bald man talking about snakes; but then he is gone just as quickly.

That is enough for today. My total timing for meditation is 30 minutes today. I cannot believe it. I remember when I could not sit quietly for even three. I am really feeling the effects of meditation. I want more.

July 10, 2017, morning, meditation.

Today I set the 20 minutes for music. I am trying a new meditation area that I had cleaned out just for meditation. I thought that a closet would be a great place to mediate. It's just big enough for one chair, with just enough leg room, and of course, my ironing board. I sit down and leave the door of the closet cracked just enough to see the light. But I cannot relax in here. Maybe it's my claustrophobia causing my uneasiness, but it's definitely my arachnophobia, that is for sure. All I can think of is spiders are in here with me, and I am *sure* to get bit. I try to meditate for another 30

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seconds, and decide to leave the closet, ASAP. (I openly admit that this is one of my worst ideas of all time.)

I go to the desk in my bedroom to begin meditation. I am so relaxed that I fall asleep five times. (My fear of spiders has obviously passed.) The bluish-white light finally comes as the music stops; I want to stay but I have to get ready for work. I bid farewell to the dancing light. See you tomorrow my bluish-white friend.

July 11, 2017, morning, meditation.

Today is a massive failure for me. It seems I cannot mediate at all. Too much crap on my mind. I only see some lines again, black and gray pin-striped. I wish I knew what it meant. *Why am I seeing it every day now? What are you? What do you mean?* The bluish-white light stops by at the very end of the 20 minutes to say a flirtish *hello*. I really think I should start allowing more time for meditation each day.

July 13, 2017, night meditation.

It has been two days since my last meditation and man can I feel the difference. I have been so depressed. I cried yesterday at work, held my head in shame and felt completely lost. I let the calls bring me down; and all of this in just one day. I am sure it is because of lack of meditating. It seems I have developed a habit, and my body is expecting it now. Tonight, I make time for meditation before going to bed. I set a 20 minutes flute music, wrap my head, cross my legs and begin supplication.

"God help me. Forgive me. Guide me. I feel so lost." I ask. I only see gray light. Not bluish-white light at all. I think I hear something in the room. So, I yank my scarf off. There is nothing there. I think maybe I can focus better if I close my ears with my fingers. I can't believe it, but it's almost deafening. It is like a deep rumble sound---the kind you hear in earthquake movies. I can also hear a high-pitch sound too. It's so loud. So loud that I decide it is better to uncover my ears---it is quieter this way.

I try to think of nothing. I try to feel the oneness with the universe but I feel nothing. I think I have lost it. I feel like something is standing in the way. *What is it? Why can't I feel that peace again? And where is my bluish-white light? And not even the pin-striped lines today?* I feel totally lost.

July 14, 2017, morning meditation.

I sit at my desk in my chair, set my Zen music for only 10 minutes today, and now binding my head as has become my habit. I sit silently. At first nothingness. I pray for guidance and sit quiet. Still nothingness. But at least it is peaceful nothingness today.

In time, the bluish-white light comes for a visit. It moves around in huge swirls with a bluish-white light that changes intensity. The black backdrop simply molds in submission to the light dance. I just sit and watch. The music stops and I take off my blinders; it's like I pop back into reality. So much color in my room. So many things cluttering my sight. I really love my few minutes with the calmness and soothing light. I want to go back, but I need to go for now. I feel a pulling from the other side, but I am bound to the obligations of this world.

July 17, 2017, morning meditation.

Today another failure in my meditation. I only see black emptiness. So, I just sat and prayed. Prayed for forgiveness and understanding, acceptance and compliance at work. *God help me to take my emotions out of the picture. Protect my heart from the adversaries that will call-in and verbally attack me.*

I try saying *Om Shanti Om* again, but I feel nothing. And, I think I actually *did* feel my butt itch today. But as the title of this book clearly explains, it's hard to meditate when your butt itches. Perhaps I need to get back to the foundation of meditation and start all over again. *God help me. I feel so worthless; I can't even sit quietly correctly.*

July 18, 2017, morning meditation.

I set some symphony music for 10 minutes. I notice that I am quiet. I say a few *Oms*. I see flashes of human shadows, and a long stick (like a fishing pole) and flashes like lighting in the back drop. I nod off, and then suddenly I hear in a very loud male voice in my ear, "Give time to heal." I awaken and say, "Where did that come from?"

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I continue to sit peacefully and nodded again. I awaken when the music stops. I feel peaceful today. I feel great; so different from yesterday. I think about the words I heard: *Give time to heal. Was it for me? Or about someone else?* I don't know. I will assume today it is for me.

July 21, 2017, during lunch at work

I have been too busy the last few days. Today I decide to meditate in my car. I play some music on my phone and just close my eyes. I have no head wrap today, so I see a very light gray; I can tell that it is daylight hours.

A first I am very peaceful; enjoying the soothing music. The bluish-white light hasn't come but I am relaxing very well, and feel like I am not alone. I can sense something or someone. I open my eyes and watch a bird fly over to one tree and then back to the next. His colored-wings are vivid orange and brown. He is eating a worm from the grasp of his feet. Then thru the branches, I notice the clouds and how multi-layered they are today. So much detail. And then I think of my colleague, Holly.

Today is Holly's funeral. She must be so happy now to be living in the heavenly realm. *Oh, how I wish I were with her.*

I see so much detail in the clouds, the curves, the depth, the variations of the gray and white colors. So much detail we must miss each day. What a lovely, heavenly, peaceful sight. I am not good at meditating today, but I am good at watching. I love this. I feel so relaxed.

July 22, 2017, morning meditation.

Today I decide to use Zen music on my phone. My head is wrapped; I am going back to the basics of my meditation journey I lie down and nothing but dark gray fuzzy mass. It kind of reminds me of TV that is trying to be tuned in. I can say, that controlling my thoughts seems to be easier now. I have learned that this term is call *mind chatter*. I am so thankful that I am not the only one who suffers from it.

I am relaxed, but feel a bit disconnected. I question, why no sparkles? Why no bluish-white light? Why no pattern? Just nothingness. I just sit and pray and ask God for a sign. If you are real, show me. Show me there is hope. Then a thought comes to mind. Marsha, you don't trust God. You don't trust Him for anything.

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I confirm that thought. It's right. I really don't trust that things will work out for me. I really don't trust that a higher power is in control. That is why I am a work-a-holic. I feel that I *have* to work so hard, because I am alone. Then I remember the bird I saw yesterday and I suddenly understand that if God will feed a small, hungry sparrow, that of course, He will tend to my needs too. *Okay I get it now. I need to trust more. Will do!* A bright star appears in blackish mass. Is it a sign? Perhaps. I'll trust it is for now, be thankful and smile.

My smile quickly fades as another very disturbing thought comes to mind: Love. God is love. And I do not have it anymore. *Me? No love?* I thought I was a nice person. But only now do I realize I have hate in my heart---a blackened heart that I need to clean out.

Slowly faces of those I am harboring hateful feelings against begin flashing by. I never thought that I had this much hate in me, but it pounds in my head. I feel ashamed. I don't *trust* and I don't *love*. With humility, I start to beg forgiveness. *God forgive me. Forgive me. Help me to trust and to love.*

No light shows for me today, but the spiritual world was able to get my attention anyway---with full force. Today I will begin trusting in God and love my fellow humans. God is love. *God teach me to love.* Sad to say, I do not know how to love anymore. I have to start learning and researching for this needed change.

July 23, 2017, afternoon impromptu meditation.

Waiting for my daughter to get ready to go shopping, I lay my head down on the desk to listen to some new Om Mantra with Theta Binaural Beats that I found on YouTube. I just want to listen and focus on the sounds I hear. After only 10 minutes of concentrating, a deep purple light zoomed in and out. Not bluish-white like usual, now it is a majestic purple color, with a solid black contrast. I am surprised by the change in color and think perhaps it's just how I am laying my head on my hand, so I shift to the other side. The purple light pauses for a split second and then begins moving again. I am amazed!

July 23, 2017, afternoon reflection.

Today, I had some disturbing personal financial news on the phone. Normally, my first reaction is to cry and want to die; no kidding, I am really an emotional mess at times; but today, I

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was calm, and even told the person on the phone that I forgive them and that everything will be alright. I was amazed at how calm I felt. It must be the effects of meditation.

Each day, I have been reading and listening to lectures about this amazing historical activity. I am also trying out some new sounds to assist with meditation. I bought some headsets today and will start lying down for my meditation sessions. I can truly see some light at the end of the tunnel. Meditation is working for me. Thank you, God!

July 24, 2017, morning (3:30 AM) meditation.

I lie down with my new headsets and with some *Sacred Acoustics Om Mantra* (A 20-minute-segment with high pitch awakening tones at the end of the timing). I get comfortable, and then suddenly the cat comes and lies right on my chest and touches my nose with hers; and begins purring. *Ommmmm,,,,,purrrrrr,,,,,ommmm,,,,,purrrrrr.*

I find that Om has an unusual sense of comfort for me. It just feels *right*. The cosmic light show is amazing. A bright light gray, and bluish-white light with a faint purplish tone dance slowly about and then stop. The gray mass feels like it is moving past me, like I am travelling thru it! Amazing! This is a first!

The music comes to the completion of the 20 minutes and the high pitch tones startle me; I totally forgot about them. I feel cold and tingly all over my body, like it has woken me up and my blood has started flowing again. I feel a disconnection from the *Om*. Twenty minutes was not enough for me today. I want more.

July 24, 2017, morning (8:00 am) meditation.

I want to meditate some more today. The Om binaural beat is so relaxing for me and it just feels so right, so soothing, like that of a mother's lullaby feels to an infant. My eyes flutter about as if they are in REM. I see no dancing light, only a reoccurring line pattern. It is black and white. It looks like I am up close to someone fingerprint. *But what would that mean?* I feel a prick in the back of my neck. Nonetheless, the sound of *Om* is deep and memorizing and the peace I feel is incredible to me. I wish I could bottle that up and take it with me during the day. *Thank you, God for this feeling of peace and belonging.*

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Then suddenly, I start to see a swirl of black and white colors. I recognize it as the yin-yang symbol. *Wow, right before my eyes. What does that mean?* Another prick to the back of my neck. I watch as the two colors swirl in effortless motion.

The high pitch sounds arrive, and it brings me back. My body tingles and my blood starts flowing again. I am fully awake, and in awe of the depth and calmness that I feel.

July 24, 2017, morning research.

Checking Google, I happened upon this explanation of the yin-yang symbol (I'd like to think it is saying something about me and the strides I have made so far.)

*The ubiquitous **yin-yang symbol** holds its roots in Taoism/Daoism, a Chinese religion and philosophy. The **yin**, the dark swirl, is associated with shadows, femininity, and the trough of a wave; the **yang**, the light swirl, represents brightness, passion and growth.*

July 24, 2017, night meditation.

I lie listening to my new recording *Om2*, from *Sacred Acoustics*. I feel relaxed, but tense at the same time; not able to get comfortable. During meditation, it feels like I am not alone; like something was going to touch my hand. Today's light show has a yellow color instead of bluish-white. Yellow long strips flashing in and out of sight. No dancing this time. At one point, I feel like I was moving. And then I felt a touch on the top of my head.

The 38 minutes is done, and suddenly I feel a pain on the right side of my head an inch from my right ear. It is a steady sharp pain. *Humm? I wonder why?*

July 25, 2017, morning meditation.

I am using my 38-minute *Om2* again. I am still having issues with trying to get comfortable, but the sound is very relaxing. I think I am dozing in and out. I wake myself with little snorts as if I am starting to snore. Small patches of lines appear and then disappear. I see a door and I know that I am about to walk thru it. I feel I need something that is inside that door; but I don't know what it is.

I feel a prick on my front shoulder around the final minutes of the recording. I see lots and lots of very bluish white in its normal cosmic dance. No patterns, just random. I love the sound of *Om2* recording. I am at one with it.

July 26, 2017, morning meditation.

I lie down with *Om2*. It is so relaxing already; as if I am about to visit an old friend. I read a chapter yesterday about asking God for exactly what you want, and that it's okay to ask him for proof of existence. So, I do, again. *Please God show me a sign that you are real.*

Relaxation is beginning. I hear what I think is a faucet dripping. *Oh man, did I leave the sink on? I don't even remember using it.* I sit up and take the headgear off and I hear the noise as loud as a gong. It is a tick of a clock. Tick tick tick. It is so loud to me. I get up and start to follow the sound. It is coming from a clock that is tucked away on the bottom of the shelf on my desk. That clock has been there for three years, and it has never bothered me before. *Why is it so loud to me today?* I hide the clock in the linen closet to muffle the gonging nuisance. I have noticed that lately loud noises are affecting me differently for sure, but this is just crazy and shocking to me.

I go back to bed and start the meditation time all over again. I feel pure relaxation. I can feel my body disconnect, but do not understand what it is that I am disconnecting from. My right hand slightly tingles. The light show is calm.

Now I see words and pictures flashing. They are so fast like that of a TV program opening advertisement. There are some pictures that look like Chinese writing. *I cannot understand this type of writing.*

Sadly, without understanding, they are but a mere show. Am I just asleep? Maybe. I can feel that my breathing has slowed down considerably. Suddenly it stops altogether. I gasp for air. *Did I just fall into some kind of trance? Or am I just so relaxed that I forgot to breath? I don't know. God, I want understanding.* But nonetheless, I feel calm, even with all of this going on; and for that, I am so thankful.

Time is finished, and I can honestly see why some people meditate for hours. I just came out of it and I want to go back. I feel as if the *om* sound is feeding me; it is somehow filling an empty void in my life and rejuvenating me. I want more. But even now, I can hear *om* in my head; the sound of this word is now my best friend; it is my rock.

July 27, 2017, morning meditation.

I lie down as normal to begin meditation. After a few minutes of relaxation, I see flashes of yellow, red dots. Then some lines, sparks and a light show. Today is very colorful! Suddenly, I hear a male voice say, "I like you." This startles me to open my eyes; I am almost scared. *Was he talking to me? Who was he? And how did I hear his voice? Was this just a dream?*

So much color but no understanding. I think lying down is making me more confused now. I think it causing me to fall into a dream-states, then I pop back into meditation. Flashes of light and now voices? What a confusing day. I will prop myself up tomorrow to see if it helps.

July 28, 2017, morning meditation.

It is morning meditation time. Today I am propped up with covered head and *Om2*. I begin to relax and stare dead on into an endless black mass. It turns a bit of grey and then the friendly lines appear again. The cosmic dancing begins but I have a bit of extra mind chatter today. I see a book with a white cover and some black writing. I am holding the book. It disappears before I can read it. The lines come back for another appearance. The lines are a reoccurring phenomenon now, but still a mystery. Suddenly a word cloud flashes in front of me. The only word I remember is the word: *think*. The colors today are very bright and vivid. But the high pitch tones tell me it is time to stop for now. It seems like 40 minutes is not even enough for me anymore. But, I feel soothed and satisfied.

July 30. 2017, morning meditation.

I wrap my head and put on my *Om2*. I lie down to relax. As I relax I see the normal gray static. I have some mind chatter today but not too bad. I feel as if someone is standing in the room next to the top of my bed. I think that it may be an angel. And then the name of Sarah comes to mind. *Me with an angel named, Sarah? I still do not believe it.*

I see flashes of color; some orange and a shooting star. I feel for a second like I am moving in space. I see the letter "S" and then a letter "J". The cosmic dancing with color continues, more purplish bluish-white with lovely orange and green. Suddenly, I see a vision of a standing figure before me. I can only see waist up. The face is blurred out, as is the rest of the white body. But I can

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clearly see a number 6, just over to the left on the chest. It looks like a badge with a big number 6 on it. I cannot tell who it is. I feel no emotions; I only look at the number. The figure disappears.

The time for today is done. The high pitch brings me back to this world. I feel like I am disconnected again. I can tell that I have been unplugged from somewhere. I do not like this feeling of disconnection. My body feels cold and rigid. I want to go back. I love the peace and relaxation when I am there. I will do some more later.

July 30, 2017, night reflection.

I did some research today and read that the number 6 is said to refer to materialism, finances, or earthly worries (well I sure have enough of that to go around). I also read that I should not pay so much attention to the colors that I see or the voices that I hear, but what is happening to me after meditating---in the real world---my levels of compassion, empathy, reaction and focus. Starting tomorrow, I will be focusing more on my actions *outside* of meditation instead of the time spent *in* meditation. This will help me monitor my progress more realistically.

July 31, 2017, morning meditation.

Today I do not want to focus on what I see. Instead I pray for forgiveness, guidance, patience and for others who are suffering. I focus on my breath. It's loud today, or maybe it's just that I can hear it for the first time today. Whenever the mind chatter starts I turn my focus back to my breathing. Today my breathing is comforting to me. An idea about this book comes to me; I realize now how I want to format the information in it.

Again, today during meditation I stop breathing and gasp for air. I wonder why this happens to me. I feel so relaxed. The high-pitch sound comes and I smile. Today has been an amazing meditative experience.

August 1, 2017, morning meditation.

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A beautiful day of meditation. A lovely full-view swirl is very relaxing to watch. But, I feel a presence today and it seems to be lingering here with me. I feel as if it is very close, like it is face-to-face with me. I lift my scarf to check, but nothing is there. I am a bit confused by this.

I pray a lot for me and everyone who needs a touch of grace and mercy. I am so grateful---repeating over and over: Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. My time ends and I smile. I want to go back. But know I can whenever I need to. *Thank you, Lord.*

August 2, 2017, morning meditation.

Today, I don't remember anything but some lovely swirls. It was so relaxing that I feel asleep.

August 3, 2017, morning meditation.

Today, I sit up at my desk to meditate. At the beginning I am fine, but then my back gets tired and my butt falls asleep and starts to tingle when I fidget. It is difficult for me to sit up straight for long periods of time. I finally lay my head down. Mind chatter is of course there, but I don't care as much now---it is like I can separate myself from it I say, "Thank god. I trust you. Thank you for all of our little blessings."

August 3, 2017, morning reflection.

Meditation is clearly changing my life; I can see it in some decisions I make throughout my daily life. I pray more, instead of having emotional outbursts when something stressful comes my way; these emotional outbursts are more under control. I still want fewer things around me and my attachment to material things seem to be lessening every day. I still have the urge to clean out my home---to lessen the heaviness in my life. *Thank you, thank you, Lord, for making my days in an unbearable job more tolerable.* I now pray for my callers; I want to be a blessing in their lives. But as for my meditation, I think I will do only 20 minutes tomorrow so I don't feel so sleepy.

August 4, 2017, morning meditation.

Today, I wanted to do something different. I want to focus on my breath---a oneness exercise. I feel it is easier to concentrate today, but hard to sit up straight. My back is just not strong enough. *Why is this so hard?*

By the end of the 20 minutes it is getting even more difficult. The thought comes to me to wear some kind of back brace for support. *Man, that sounds really stupid, but maybe it will work, if I can only find the one I have.*

August 4, 2017, morning research.

After watching some videos on meditation, I finally have the realization that this is not a quick fix for me. Meditation is a long-time commitment. For this process to work it must be done every day! Can I do 20 a day? Yea. I can swing that. I just need to somehow stop falling asleep during that time. More research is needed.

August 5, 2017, morning meditation.

I sit with my legs crossed today, and I am sitting against the wall with some pillows in hopes that this will be more comfortable but still keep me awake. I let my thoughts flow. My goal today is back to basics of meditation---sit still. Every few breaths I bring my thoughts back to my breathing. A lovely cosmic light show begins. It is as if the bluish-white light is a flashlight that someone is shining in my face again. I think I just felt my bottom move, and it scares me back to reality. *Did I just fall asleep again while sitting up?* But I keep still and stay relaxed. I force myself to focus on my breathing and watch the light show in awe. I am grateful for this opportunity to feel such calmness and peace. Suddenly, I feel bad because of something that I said at work last night. I ask for forgiveness over and over. *God help me to control my tongue.*

My music stops but I linger on. I pray for my children and all of those around the world that are suffering and needs a touch from God. I am so thankful for this feeling of compassion and love. I still have the feeling of getting rid of useless things around the house. *God help me to purge; purge any evil influences that are in my life and home.*

August 5, 2017, morning research.

I now understand after watching some more videos that there are many different types or methods of meditation. We should learn a variety of methods and inter-change between them. It is like a pot luck.; we decide what we want for any given sitting. We need to find the ones that work for our personalities. This is an amazing revelation. I can see that I have only scratched the surface on this massive topic.

August 6, 2017, morning meditation.

Again, I try yet another position, this time the *lotus* position with my legs crossed and back straight---only using my arms to keep my back supported. The method that I have chosen for today is the *Do Nothing Method* that I studied about yesterday. The whole idea is to do nothing while you are meditating. You let your thoughts flow as they may without any reaction at all. The only thing that you are supposed to do it to drop the intention that you have *to meditate*. I understand the method, but clearly cannot explain it well.

So anyway, I begin. And almost instantly I am struggling with my intention. *Oh my God, this is so hard! I absolutely cannot control, not controlling. That is the whole point of this do nothing method and I am already sucking at it.* I am able to keep my back straight but it gets harder the longer I hold this pose.

My mind goes all over the place and of course I think to myself, "I need to be mediating, but I am not supposed to think that." *This is so confusing to me and difficult. I do not get it. How is this helping me?* I try not to focus on my breathing, but this again because, I am not supposed to have any *intention*.

My legs fall asleep and my neck starts itching. *I will not scratch it.* I want to at least say that I sat absolutely still for 20 minutes. I do not move my hand. My feet are hurting, my legs are hurting. I am not relaxed at all in this position. This is a horrible meditation for me. I am just dying for this bloody 20 minutes to be finished. I scream in my head, "Damn music, just end already! Surely it has been 20 minutes by now. I am in misery!"

Finally, the 20 minutes of torture is over and I try to unfold my legs. I feel excruciating pain in my right hip as I unfold and stretch out my leg. My left leg is just numb now. I stretch it out and then it starts that awful tingling as the blood begins flowing. I lie back and give my legs time to recuperate from today's session. I do not feel relaxed at all. Tomorrow I will have to use another method.

August 6, 2017, morning reflection.

I don't know if I like this *Do Nothing* method at all. I seemed kind of all over the place. Whenever, I would try to focus on peace, I would remember that I wasn't to have any intention at all. The instructor said it is strengthening my mind, but I am not relaxed at all today. I really don't think I got anything from it. I am sure I did it correctly, but then again maybe I didn't.

August 6, 2017, day research.

I have been researching meditation on YouTube again. I listened to many different definitions and thoughts on the topic. It seems that the best way to describe meditation is to simply detach oneself from thoughts. Not to let the thoughts control us. Now *that* finally makes sense to me. With daily meditation, you strengthen your mind-muscle enabling you to have less reaction than you would have before meditation.

And, interestingly enough, meditation actually turns back time for us. With dedication, meditation can help the body to *age backwards*, if you will. See this example below.

*Without meditation, a 35-year-old seems like he is 40 years old.*

*With meditation, a 35-year-old seems like he is 30 years old.*

Isn't that is awesome? For various studies, lectures, viewpoints and mini-bites of meditation information just go to *YouTube* or *Tedx Talks*; there are dozens of resources. They are great to watch and learn from while having your morning coffee. Just for fun with it. I Googled how many different types of meditation methods there are, and I was utterly stunned to see that there is over 100; I can see that I still have so much to learn.

August 7, 2017, morning meditation.

I read yesterday that we should do what type of meditation works for us. From the very beginning of this journey, the Om2 recording called out to me, so after yesterday's meditation fiasco I decide to go back to what is comfortable for me; I just want to focus on my breathing and stillness.

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It feels amazing. I have that sense of calmness and peace I did the very first time I tried meditation. It feels like home. It says to me, "I am here. You are not alone!" The word Om is a comforting lull to my soul.

My body is relaxed. Each time that my thoughts wonder I bring them back easily to my breathing. I feel tiny itches in different places but I focus on my breathing again and they go away. The light show begins---beautiful bluish white with some purple. What a contrast to yesterday! I feel accomplished and positive. I am ready to start my day.

August 7, night research.

Tonight, I am studying about having *attachments*. In the video lecture that I am watching, the Buddhist monk explains how Buddhists believe attachments cause suffering. We love things---our bodies, people, our jobs---but then with time they change, and that is when we start suffering. We are human and we easily attach; it is part of our nature. Shockingly enough, the very example that was given was the very same thing that I have been suffering over the past several months. The teaching makes sense. The best way to lose these attachments is to work on the inside. Become more happy inside and in turn the items, people, and status on the outside will lessen in importance---thus lessening the suffering. Sounds easy and logical, but I can already tell this will be a challenge for me.

Tomorrow morning, I will meditate and ask for help in releasing some things that I have been holding on to emotionally. Now that I think about it my list is long. I will not bore you with my petty dependencies, but I am sure you can imagine. I am in my 50's and have had three failed marriages---that alone can create a list as long as the Nile. But recognizing the problem is half the battle, right? It won't happen all of a sudden but it will happen in time. We must take it slowly. It is a long road, but a worthwhile road.

*"Always think that attachment is a path. It is a path where by you allow yourself to attach to those things that are really important in life. Attach to those things that bring spiritual progress rather attach to those things that give rise to pure suffering in life. Attach to those things that lead away from suffering."*

.....Ajah Brahmali

August 8, 2017, morning meditation.

The problem is that I keep falling asleep. My head keeps falling over, and my legs seem to have fallen asleep too. I see mostly lines, lines and more lines. *I wish I knew what they mean.* I finally give up and go lie down. I am so relaxed, but I honestly think that this music puts me into some kind of hypnotic state. Tomorrow I will sit up in a chair and maybe use a different sound altogether. I have got to stop falling asleep. It's like I have no control at all.

August 9, 2017, morning meditation.

I sit in my chair at my desk, with my head straight forward and my hands cupped together. I do not want to fall asleep again. I want to focus on my breath and think about positive things. I feel relaxed, but I have these little itches all over---my arm, my leg, my breast and my neck; but I refuse to respond. After a few breaths they disappear, or I have just deleted them from my mind; either way, this is great that they are gone. I *am* able to control.

I notice that my breaths have been very slow and small, but I feel okay. I am in oneness with Om and repeat it with the soundtrack. I begin to pray, thanking God that I have been able to sit still and stay awake today---great accomplishments thus far. I start to think of how I acted at work yesterday. Not that I was bad, but I want to be better. I don't want others to see any negativity at all in me. I need to work on this. The chimes begin. It is time to end for today. I am very happy I didn't fall asleep and I sat still for 20 minutes. I think I will continue to sit in this position from now on.

August 9, 2017 morning reflection.

Since I started this journey, I have been doing so much research; every free minute I have on is spend on this subject of meditation. I read, listen to lectures, even listen to audio books in the car on my daily commute to work. There is so much to meditation and I see that I will be on this journey for the rest of my life. But I can say with confidence, that see something in me that I didn't have at the beginning of the journey---hope.

True, it will take me a while to work through all of my past abuse, and finally end all of the triggers that cause me to nose-dive in life. For example, the last 2 nights I have been plagued with bad dreams of my abuser trying to kill me. Will these night terrors ever end? I don't know, but at least now I have hope---something I didn't have at the beginning of this book. I have learned there

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are some meditation methods that can help trauma survivors, but I am not ready for that yet. Right now, I am delighted to control a simple itch on my body, if only 20 minutes at a time. My inner healing is beginning and I can feel it.

August 10, 2017, lunch meditation.

I didn't have time to meditate this morning and I feel as if I am missing something. I am on my lunch in the driver's seat of my car I set the music for 15 minutes of Zen music. I set my hands in the form that was mentioned in my audiobook this morning: hands together, palms up, left hand on bottom, thumbs making a triangle. I don't know what it means but it feels comfortable enough. I focus on my breath. I sit here in my car without the air conditioning on and I feel surprisingly relaxed and focused on my breath. My leg twitches as it tends to do when I am deep relaxation. Eventually the lights show begins. Even with sunlight outside I can see it. Swirling around effortlessly. This is amazing. It is a lighter color of grey, but I can see sparks of red. I continue to focus on breath ignoring any itches that come. The music ends and it is time to go. I am thankful for this time of recharging; my steps back to work seem a fraction lighter.

August 11, 2017 morning meditation.

I am so happy that I can now focus on my breath, my mind jumps to something but I pull it back to my breath. It is soothing to know that I am now able to control something I was totally lost about. Today I want to test my posture and hand setting. Again, as I head in my audiobook, I sit up straight, head tilted slightly as a peacock and hands cupped palms up. Sitting this straight is a bit difficult but nonetheless I try. The light show begins and I just watch without any expectation or judgement. I don't even wonder what it means anymore. I now take it as a sign that I am in deep meditation. I guess they would call it *mindful meditation*. That name is coming to mind.

My leg jerks and I realize there is not music. *When did it stop?* I think of my gratitude for this moment. The light show is still in full force, so I decide to linger for another few minutes.

August 12, 2017, morning meditation.

Today I must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed. I am angry. I really do not know why, but just angry. I really do not want to be here today. I fidget about, I cannot seem to get comfortable. I cannot wait for the 15 minutes to end.

August 12, 2017, night reflection.

Well, the bad mood stayed with me most of the day. Thank God it finally let up later in the afternoon. I guess we all have bad days, and this shows me that although I have started meditating and praying more, bad days are still going to pop up. But I can say this, today when things were making me so angry that I just wanted to yell, I didn't. I even felt myself a couple times taking my attention back to my breathing. I was really shocked by that. I stopped and felt the intake of oxygen, and held my tongue. *Oh, that would have never happened before.* I can honestly say, that this day was absolutely one of my not-so-happy-days, but it is proof that meditation is working in my life and for that I am extremely grateful.

August 13, 2017 preface to morning meditation.

Well, I woke up in a better mood this morning, only to lose it as soon as I went to the bathroom. While on the toilet the words, *grandfather's letters*, came to mind. (I am also working on a different book called, *Traded.*) Today, I am scheduled to write a letter from the heart to my grandfather.

As many writers know, sometimes words come to us at the most inconvenient times. Today my words come to me just before my morning meditation timing. So now, I will have to meditate while the memories of my sexually-abusive-grandfather is spitting around in my mind. *God help me today to get thru this.* I enjoy associating meditation with peaceful feelings, but I'm not feeling peaceful right now. I have true and deep hatred for this man. I do not know if I could ever forgive him for what he did to my mother so many years ago. Today, meditation gets real with me. I will write out the letter first to see if that will ease my tensions.

August 13, 2017, morning meditation (after writing the letter).

With a very un-calm mind, I set my Zen music to 15 minutes, wrap my head and sit up straight in the chair at my desk. It's very difficult today to do this. The thought of that monster dominates my mind right now. His drinking and repeated rapes are too much to bear. My body is boiling; I can feel the anger throughout it and I can feel the heat radiating off my face and shoulders. My lips are cringed together. I don't want to be thinking about this right now. But sadly, I remember pictures of my mother as a child. She was lovely and innocent. I wonder how my grandmother could have stood by knowing it was happening, over and over again. I am burning with anger. *Can I ever forgive my grandparents? I don't think so.* Then another thought comes to me, "Can I forgive Hitler?" Instantly my mind barks out, "No!"

I try to go back to my breathing but I feel no peace today. How can I while thinking of such monstrosities on mankind. Maybe my grandmother was scared to leave him, or scared of him. I will never know. This thought then leads me to my involvement in domestic violence awareness. I know how hard it is for women to leave an abuser.

Again, I focus back on my breaths. My body is still warmer than normal, but I can feel my heart rate beginning to slow down. Still no peace but just trusting God to help me overcome. I see the light show begins. Some bluish white and purple, but have no joy in it today. I focus back on my breath. I always go back to my breath. I hear the music stop and I feel indifferent. I don't know if I want to linger or just face my day. I decide to come back. This was a very rough meditation session today.

August 13, 2017, afternoon reflection.

This morning was very difficult for me indeed. I remember reading some information about memories and uneasy feelings may come up during meditation, and it did for me today. I would love to say to you that meditation saved me today and that I feel everything is *Skittles* and butterflies, but it isn't. I still feel anger and disgust. I will have to take it one day at a time; one meditation at a time.

August 14, 2017, morning meditation.

I feel as if I am more control this morning. I assume the erect sitting position without overthinking it and instantly begin focusing on my breath. I have so much more confidence now. The familiar lines show up in my visual canvas within minutes. They come and go as if playing a game of

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peek-a-boo with me. *Do they disappear when I focus on them? But how can that be? Does our 3<sup>rd</sup> eye have to focus?* I am thinking like a human putting humanistic attributes to a spiritual item. *Very funny Marsha.* I have an itch in my left ear again. It is almost painful. Time goes by quickly and the music stops.

August 14, 2017, morning research.

Everyone's brain jumps from thought to thought; that is how it is wired; we cannot help it. The key is being aware that you have strayed your attention and bringing your attention back to the focal point that you have chosen, be it something internal or external. The key is awareness---or mindfulness. I finally understand now. We really can meditate anywhere, and at any time. The key is being aware—having mindfulness.

August 16, 2017, night reflection.

Again, I have proof that meditation has changed my life. Something happened with my bank today, that would have normally made me tailspin into anger and tears, but I was calm and thought to myself, "We need to see how this happened and see how to prevent it from happening again." Then I smiled. It is only money I thought. Money will not do me any good in the hereafter.

This change of attitude really shocked me. This is indisputable proof to me that meditation is making a massive difference for me, spiritually and physically. Maybe others cannot see these little private changes, but I certainly can.

August 17, 2017, morning meditation (at work in the parking lot).

Today I am meditating in my car before I go into my office. I think that I may confusing myself focusing between breath, music and prayer. So now, I will try focusing only on the Zen music. It is amazing. There is a huge difference. Instantly purple lights slowly begin moving upward and I feel extremely calm. After a few minutes, I switch my focus to my breathing. I think I am really starting to understand this meditation much better. *Thank God.*

August 18, 2017, morning pre-meditation.

I was listening to my audiobook last night on the way home, and the book was explaining *impermanence*. I have never heard this term before, and I was mesmerized by his description of it. One day, we will all separate from everything we know and love; including our family, friends and the possessions of this world. We should remind ourselves that everything in this world is temporal. But instead, we tend to think that nothing should never change, and that we have all the time in the world, so no need for urgency. This causes us to procrastinate, and not focus on charity and love, but only in our own pleasures and money.

What a sobering revelation. *God grant me the knowledge to know what is more important in life, and not to spend all of my energy on things that will do me no good later.*

August 18, 2017, morning meditation.

This morning I try a new meditation method. I want to sit and focus on sound---sound of fire. I set it for 15 minutes and settle in. Today no more head wrap. I don't think I need it anymore. I begin counting my breaths from 10 to 1. I do this twice, and then focus back on number one. As my thoughts drift I gently return my attention to the fire. I focus on the crackling sound. It is very relaxing. I am now able to sit with a straight spine (without support).

I am also applying the *Touch-Sound-Sight* method to keep me more focused. I learned about this method yesterday. I am so surprised how noting the item that distracts me makes it so much easier to bring my focus back to where I want it. Amazing technique that seems to work well for me. (To summarize the method, you label each distraction that takes you away from your focus point; label it either *touch*, *sound*, or *sight*. This tends to stop the distraction much quicker.)

August 19, 2107, morning reflection.

I saw a news report online today that there are now several schools conducting meditation with students as a regular part of the day. I was so glad to hear this. Finally, we are giving students the tools they need to become better humans. Then the program aired a man that was warning the public, that meditation is a form of *government mind control*. *Really dude?!* My official response to

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this is: How can he consider 6 hours of *SpongeBob SquarePants* cartoons *not being mind control*?

Which would you rather have your child do? 6 hours of cartoons every day or 10 minutes of a concentration exercise that develops empathy and compassion? *I know what I would prefer.*

August 19, 2017, night reflection.

Something strange happened tonight while sitting with my family in the living room. I was looking towards my right side of the room when, suddenly, I saw a flash of light about three feet tall on the left side of the room. It was like a camera flash. It was pure white and was gone in an instant. I looked to and fro to see what could have caused such a flash in my living room. My cat was lying on the floor close to it, but didn't react to the flash of light at all.

I was intrigued, so I decided to do some research, and it has been reported that flashes of light appear whenever angels are around. Different types of flashes have been reported throughout history, and even in the Bible. It seems like I have just opened a whole new topic; search for angels just might be my next book; we'll just have to see.

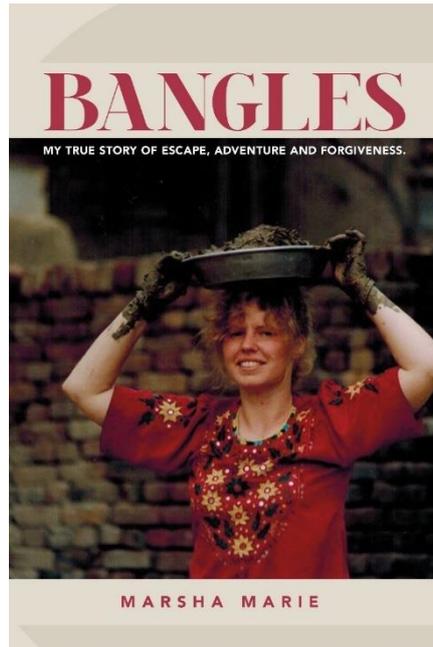
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Marsha 'Yasmine' Marie is an author, human rights activist, public speaker, radio personality, voice-over artist, blogger, mom and now, meditator. She has also worked as an English department head, English instructor, American accent trainer, and communication lab designer. Marsha was born in Ohio, but then raised in Arizona; to escape and domestic abusive relationship, at 25, she moved to the Middle East---where she lived and taught for over 20 years.

She's now back in Arizona and lives with her children. She has joined forces with RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence and is currently a member of various speaking bureaus to share her story. She is also working on her upcoming radio show, *The Izz Wow Radio Show*---a show focusing on her love for Middle Eastern music and women's' issues around the world.

Check out [www.MarshaMarie.com](http://www.MarshaMarie.com) for updates, information and upcoming titles.



## Bonus Chapter from *BANGLES*

### Chapter One: Surrender

by Marsha Marie

Twenty years of running ends today—March 1, 2014. As a result, I am sitting here on an international flight, wedged between my daughter and a young handsome Marine going home on his leave. I'm heading towards Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport to turn myself in.

The plane ride is long and tense. I've been chatting on and off since we left Dubai, trying to keep my mind busy. I can't believe I'm finally bringing this to an end. I've taken my head scarf off for the first time in years. I feel an unusual sense of freedom, but shyness at the same time.

Mona, now twenty-five, has been my greatest support and comfort. She calls Dubai her home and rejects the idea of returning to the States, most likely because she fears what lays ahead. Nevertheless, she stays positive.

"They are not going to take you," she says, reaffirming herself more than me. "You have to think positive, Mom."

"Okay, dear. I will," I say with a slight tremor in my voice.

Walking down the long carpeted hallway of the terminal, I feel as if everyone around me knows who I am—knows of what I have done. But in reality, each of the passengers is in their own world, clambering to see who can get to the immigration counter first. The lines are lengthy, but just as well for me.

Wait! Is that my heart pounding? Can everyone hear it? I feel as if I am in Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart." My booming chest will surely give me away.

I step up to the counter. This is it. The man asks for our passports, and I hand them over. I try to breathe, but I feel as if an elephant is sitting on my chest; it's just too heavy to bear. "Breathe, Marsha! Damn it," I scream to myself. "They'll know something's up!"

The immigration officer is wearing a typical black police uniform, safely tucked away in his little Pope-like glassed area. Tick, tick, tick on the keyboard. Each stroke—taking me closer to exposure. Will he discover in the system that I am wanted by FBI? Will he know that I have been eluding the authorities for the last twenty-two years?

Yes, he will. And he does. I see it in his eyes. I guess it's true; a criminal can always tell when they have been made.

He tries to make small talk with me about Dubai. But each stroke on the keyboard seems more urgent, more excited as he informs his colleagues on the other end of the intranet about me. I know on the inside that he is jumping up and down like a screaming little kid, "I have finally caught somebody! Come and get her!"

Suddenly, I see a large police officer standing to my right. "Can you go with this gentleman, ma'am?" the immigration officer says. Slowly and steadily we follow as I grasp Mona's hand. He leads us to a large deserted area in the terminal. About four other officers are huddled together, as if in a football game.

As I watch them discussing nausea sets in. After a minute or so, one of the four separates and comes

towards us. "Ma'am. Are you aware that there are two arrest warrants out for you?" the officer inquires.

"Yes, I do," I say. "Can I get my attorney's letter out of my bag? I can show you that I am surrendering myself—to clear all of this up." I continue as I reach in my purse for the letter, "My son should be right outside waiting for me. Can I call him?"

"No! No calls," one officer from the desk area quickly snaps back. The officer standing near me takes the letter and returns to his group.

Mona starts to tear up; the pressure is now too much. This has just gotten real for both of us. I grab her hand again and hold tight—a feeble move to calm a young autistic lady who hasn't been separated from her mother in the last twenty-two years.

"Everything will be okay, sweetie. Don't worry, I have this all planned out. I have to turn myself in. They will let me out in a couple of hours. This is all part of the process."

"Marsha, we have just spoken to your son outside. He is waiting for his sister," the officer informs me. "Please stand up. You are under arrest; we have to take you into custody." Like clanging church bells in my ears, the finality of it all has hammered down. I embrace my daughter and try to calm her tears.

"Why are they taking you? You have done nothing wrong!" she bursts, unable to bear silence any longer.

I try to calm her. "Sweetie," I say, "your brother is just outside the airport. This officer will take you to him. Okay? I will be fine. This is what I came back to do. I have to do this. For all of us."

The officer leads my precious Mona away from me—out of the terminal and towards her awaiting brother. She is sobbing. My heart is breaking. My legs go numb, and I have to sit down. A woman officer comes towards me and asks me to stand back up, then handcuffs both hands behind my back. The clasps of the cuffs echo through the empty terminal. I am escorted to the awaiting police vehicle outside.

The cuffs are cold and hard, making it difficult for me to sit in the back cab of this small pick-up truck. The escorting officer bizarrely asks me about Dubai. "Yeah," he says, "I've always thought about going there."

"Really?" I reply, almost reminiscent, with a touch of regret for having just left. "It really is an amazing place."

My holding cell. Could this be any smaller? But still, nothing like I had imagined. The walls are made of cement block, with a cement shelf built into the back of it. The shelf is about two and a half feet off the ground. The entire room is painted a shade shy of daisy-yellow, and the door is oversized and metal. A woman officer un-cuffs me and asks if I would like a drink of water. "Yes. Please," I barely utter. "This room is awfully small. Can you leave the door open for me? I'm extremely claustrophobic." The woman very politely—and surprisingly—agrees. (You never know when you'll get what you ask for.)

I sit on the hard cool shelf, like an obedient child who has just been given a time-out, and watch them as they cluster around the desk reading and discussing my profile on two different computer screens. I eventually get tired of trying to eavesdrop, and look to the floor to size up the room. "Six feet by four. Yuck! Please God, don't let them shut the door." I pray this under my breath with all sincerity.

"Is it true?" I hear suddenly. I look up and see one of the officers is slightly leaning against the metal door frame, with his arms crossed. "Are you really surrendering yourself after running for twenty-two years?"

"Yes," I say, without even a touch of pride.

"That took a lot of courage," he replies. "Well, I think you're doing the right thing by turning yourself in. Don't worry. This will all be just a memory in the morning."

After a while the woman officer returns to me. We are going to transfer you to the main city jail

now. I will have to put the handcuffs on you again. I stand up and go along without any kind of hesitation. One of the male officers escorts me out to the transporting wagon, or paddy wagon as some call it. He opens the little cab area between the driver's seat and the back cage. He guides me in. It is cold and dark—almost black. The seats are hard plastic and my hands hurt pressing against them. I try to scoot over, but my long tight skirt is only complicating matters. I half lean over and my head rests on the side of the cab just behind the driver's side; my feet are still behind the passenger's side. I give up trying to move any further. The only light I can see is from the streetlights looking out the front windshield through the metal screen that separates me from the front. Suddenly, I feel true isolation for the first time in my life. Such intense loneliness I have never felt before. I begin to weep softly.

A few seconds later, I hear a voice coming from behind me. "Mom. Whadja do?" I'm a bit taken back. It's a young male's voice coming from sheer darkness. Not knowing if I am annoyed that someone is getting up in my business, or relieved to hear a human voice in my darkest moment, I barely give the effort to turn my head to see who is speaking to me.

Oh, what do I even say to THAT? I don't reply but continue to sob.

He says, "Oh Mom, don't worry. Everything's gonna be okay. You'll see the judge in the morning and you'll get to go home. Morning will be here before you know it." Then the voice goes silent again. A driver climbs in the front and we're off. I peer out my screened opening to see if I can recognize Phoenix. I recognize nothing.

We arrive at the main city jail, or "the matrix," as the streets call it. I continue through a rigorous and calloused check-in process, from one small holding cell to the next—all serving different functions: mouth swabbing, groping, finger-printing and of course the infamous mug shot. Like controlling cattle, the door opens to one of my holding cells. The officer calls my name and tells me to stand behind the podium for my picture to be taken—leaving me open for yet another opportunity of enquiry. "So-o," the officer says, all drawn out. "I hear that you have been hiding out for over twenty years. Is that true?"

"I am not proud of what I have done," I murmur.

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With amazement in his voice and almost a chuckle, he says, "Well, you're either really good, or we're really bad?" It almost sounds like he wants me to answer the question, but then he quickly adds, pointing at the card taped below the camera, "Go ahead and look at this card right here." Snap! "Turn." Snap!

After the mug shot, the officer instructs me to go to the nurse's station. This main function area is now co-ed. The female nurse sits behind a huge desk. She is wearing a typical white nurse's uniform. She looks over at me and says, "I am going to ask you some questions and you just answer. Okay?" I shake my head, agreeing, another tear streaming down.

"Do you smoke?"

"No."

"Do you use marijuana?"

"No."

"Do you use heroine?"

"No."

"Have you ever shared a needle with anyone?"

"No. Really, are all of these questions necessary?"

"I'm sorry, but I have to ask them." She continues, "Have you ever been a prostitute?"

"No!"

"Have you... Have you... Have you...?" The questions keep coming.

"No...no...no...." I answer with mirroring rhythm.

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Finally, the nurse says, "You know what? Looking down this list, I don't think we need to continue. I can already tell what the answers are..."

Suddenly, just as she was ending the sentence, a mammoth of a man inside the holding cell directly behind me starts slamming his fists on the metal doors and screaming profanities at the top of his lungs. I jump in surprise as fear strikes through me as lightening. I begin crying even harder—but now out of terror. The man keeps pounding and pounding on the door. Three officers bellow at him to calm down. He doesn't stop. The door flies open. They tackle the man and start tazing him.

My entire body is literally shaking by this point. "I don't belong here!" I sputter at the nurse, knowing very well she can't help me.

She leans in closer to me over the desk and says, "Do you want to know how to survive in here?"

I shake my head as if to say: yes.

"Just focus inward. Try to block out everything that is happening around you . Okay? You will make it through the night." (Again, a voice of reason comes to me when I most need it). She continues, "It's nice seeing someone that really doesn't belong in here—if you know what I mean."

I nod, wiping another tear away. "Thank you."

I get up and walk to the next process station. I take a seat at the beginning of the long bench. As we are called, we move down to the right. In due time, I make it to the end of the bench. My tears have dried for now. A young boy seats himself next to me. I continue looking forward. Suddenly, I hear him say, "Are you okay, Mom?"

With instant recognition, I look up towards the boy. It's the same voice I heard in the dark hole.

With a half-smile, I reply, "Yeah. Yeah. I'm okay."

"Has anyone told you what will happen tonight?"

"No. No one."

“Once you’re done here, you’ll go out into the hall in the next room. They’ll search you again and then take you to another cell for the rest of the night. Then in the morning you’ll see the judge, and then you’ll get out. Don’t worry. It’ll go by fast.”

“Thanks. What’s your name?”

“Kevin.”

“Thanks, Kevin.”

Again they call my name and take me to the next hall just as Kevin had said. The beckoning officer politely instructs me. “Stand here, young lady. Remove your coat and shoes.”

A woman officer heads over with surgical gloves on.

Oh my God. What is she gonna do?

She stands directly in front of me and says, “Bend over at the waist and hang your arms straight down.”

I oblige without saying a word.

“I am sorry for doing this,” she says. She runs her fingers along the bottom-inside of each cup in my bra. She then grabs the middle area where the cups are joined, and shakes it to and fro. Then she says, “Now put your hands against the wall.” Another patting down.

Again? How many times are we gonna do this tonight?

“Alright, put your stuff back on and stand against that wall.” The officer then leads me down the hall into my next holding tank. It’s about 2 a.m., and there are about twenty-five women sprawled out like cats sleeping on the benches and the floor. The room has two phones on the wall to my right, and a u-shaped cement bench to the left. There is a toilet against the back wall and a green thirty gallon garbage can by the toilet. How odd. I find a narrow spot along the middle of the u-shaped bench and settle in—nothing to do but wait for my attorney to arrive.

As women often do, I carefully chose my wardrobe for the arrest. Unfortunately, I didn't consider that I might have to sleep on the floor of the city jail. I'm wearing my favorite long Turkish black skirt with a black turtleneck shirt, my bluish-purple power-blazer, black high-heels, and—to top it off just right—a multi-colored long mini-stone necklace. Maybe I over-thought it just a bit—and by the looks of it, I am the only one who did. Some of the women have dirty jeans on, some shorts and tank tops. One lady even has her house slippers on. But the thing freaking me out the most is this young girl who's scratching and shaking. Forget her dirty clothes; she has scabs all over her body. What is wrong with her? I later found out that she was a Meth-addict. (This was my first encounter with someone who was on Meth. It was not pretty.)

The cement holding cell is chilly, with a dirty brown cement floor, and a pungent metallic smell. Suddenly, my claustrophobia kicks in. I find it harder and harder to breathe. My eyes begin dashing to and fro, looking for a passage for air. I lock onto the two-inch space under the steel door. I convince myself that the air coming from under the door is just for me. I can actually see it flowing towards me; it's invisible, but I can see it. "Okay, calm down. You can do this. Breathe... Breathe..." I say to myself, between each long gulp of air. I start to relax. My breathing stabilizes.

One of the girls gets up and uses the toilet. Oh my. Am I supposed to look the other way? After she finishes, she lays down in a different spot. I notice a depleted roll of toilet paper next to me. The other girls are using the rolls of paper as pillows. I had better take that and keep it with me for later. I slyly snatch the roll and press it flat, stuffing the roll into the left front facing of my blazer. Okay, now I'm ready just in case. (That stash of toilet paper came in very handy later that night, as the call of nature came to light in the most inappropriate way for public display. I tried to scrape up some self-respect by using the garbage can as a barrier. (Not one of my funner moments in life.)

Around 5 a.m., we are suddenly jarred alert by an officer at the door. He yells out that it is time to eat. Like a scene in a zombie movie, the women begin rising from the floor and take a spot on the bench. I wonder what they serve in jail. The officer leads a young man in an orange prisoner jumpsuit holding an open box with clear baggies spiking out the top; he couldn't be more than twenty-four years old. Without uttering a word, he walks around to each woman in the cell and offers them the three entrée items from the menu tonight: One small bottle of school cafeteria fruit juice, one hamburger bun, and one baggie with a few tablespoons of creamy peanut butter.

The two “waiters” leave the cell and the women begin devouring. I decide that it's best to ration. Who knows when my next meal will be? So I take a few bites of the bread, and suck some of the peanut butter for flavor. I savor it slowly, and then down it with a small swish of juice. Once the women have finished, they return to their spots on the floor and benches, and drift back off to sleep again. I sit silently in the same spot, thinking. Keeping my food supply near—and just thinking.

Time crawls its way to morning. The sound of the keys rouse me. Finally. Maybe it's time to see the judge? They call out a list of names. Yes! Thank God! I wait anxiously for my next instruction. He tells us to line up against the wall outside in the hallway. With my peanut butter and juice bottle in tow, I accept my place in line and follow the lead. We walk slowly with no sudden movements into a small white room. Again they take my fingerprints. A lady officer looks at my food and says while pointing to a trash can, “You can't take that with you inside to see the judge. You need to dump it here.”

There goes my food supply.

The officer leads us into the courtroom next door. It's cold, and much brighter compared to the holding block—mostly white floor and walls.

Hey, where's my lawyer? I look around and keep thinking that he will come into view at any minute, but he isn't. The proceedings begin anyway. A recorded male voice comes over the speaker: “You have a right to...” The words fade into the background. I whip my head to and fro. Where is my attorney? He is nowhere to be found.

A female judge, sitting on a circular brown platform, calls my name with authority. “Marsha Marcum.” I walk to the marked spot as one does on a performance stage. “State your name and date of birth, please,” the judge commands.

My voice crackles as I answer her.

The judge continues, and without any explanation announces, “Because of your record, you will remain in jail until your hearing.”

What? My legs go numb. Oh my God! I'm going to jail? Where is my attorney? This was not

supposed to happen like this.

Suddenly, I remember that my attorney had scheduled a quash warrant hearing for me. I finally muster the courage to speak to the judge. "But, Your Honor, I came to America for a quash hearing," I say with great desperation. "I thought my attorney would be here for me right now, but he isn't, and I don't have his number with me. My purse went home with my children."

"Okay. Let me look into it. Go back and sit down. The bench will call you up when I am ready."

My mind is racing a thousand words a minute. I begin mumbling to myself, "I shouldn't have come back home. This was not supposed to happen like this. Where is my attorney? Oh God, what have I done?"

After what seems like hours, but in reality is only about thirty minutes, the judge calls me back to the bench again. "We looked into it, and yes, you do have a hearing set in a few days. I will go ahead and release you."

Oh, thank God! "Thank you, ma'am," I say.

I am transferred to one process room after another. Each room is getting smaller than the one before. I wait anxiously to be released. I am still trying to fathom what in the world happened with my attorney. Why didn't he show up? I replay it to myself over and over again. We had this planned out for well over a year.

The final process room has a phone in it. I try to call my son to let him know that I am being released. But I can't remember the bloody number. I think as hard as I can, but it's just not coming to me. Luckily, one of the other girls being released is calling her mother on the phone next to me. I ask her if her mother could go onto Facebook and let my son know what is happening—it's worth a shot, anyway. After twenty minutes, her mother has found him. "He is on his way," she says.

Awesome!

At last, the final door of the matrix opens. I step outside with great anticipation, but nothing greets

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me except a light shower of rain. But I'm not sad. I'm back home. I made it to America. These cool refreshing drops are a welcome change from my former desert refuge. At last, appearing from around the corner, I see my son and daughter on American soil. We embrace. This is the first day of a lengthy legal battle, but my two children are here beside me, to love me, to support me and my past decisions.

"Son," I anxiously ask, "where's my attorney? Did you call him and tell him I was arrested at the airport?"

"Oh yeah..." he says, "I forgot."

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