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BREAKTHROUGH

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If you don't believe in a higher power go make a blade of grass.

Consider these options: You are on a journey that has been carefully customized specifically for you. You are an essential part of the Universe. You are both a component of God's plan, and you are also a creator of the plan. Nothing in your life has been accidental. Your essence has been stamped on the places you've lived, the people you've spent time with, and the passions and desires that have filled your days. In your connections with others, you collectively create the future.

Or, maybe you are a bit of aimless protoplasm. Caught in the forces of evolution, you've developed consciousness, intelligence and the ability to alter your environment. Collectively, you, and the millions of others like you, are using these randomly developed traits to move at an ever expanding rate towards extinction.

Which version of yourself gives you more energy and motivation? Which encourages you to give the best of yourself to your life and to the lives of those you care about? Which has an intuitive resonance for you?

My first 28 years were lived in an existential state of *anomie*. *Anomie* is a word I encountered in a first year sociology class at university. Up until then I didn't know what to call the random, apparently purposeless experiences I'd been living. As an adolescent and young woman, I felt like I'd experienced more than my fair share of pain and dislocation: immigration from Ireland to Canada; family pain and dysfunction; depression and anorexia. (without formal diagnosis – recognized as such in retrospect). The metaphor I used to describe my life in those days was –that I was blown from place to place like a tumbleweed, caught in the storms of life without a means of controlling my direction or destination.

But let me get back to *anomie*. Emile Durkheim, a Frenchman living in the 1800s whose claim to fame was being one of the fathers of sociology, coined the phrase *anomie* to describe a sense of confusion and social breakdown. He was referring to society at large but I understood the word personally. I didn't relate it to the collective experiences of society but to my own life. To me, at the time, many confusing and isolating, painful experiences were nicely summed up by "*anomie*." I remember being glad to finally have a word to describe them. A single, tidy word for so many different kinds of pain.

At the ripe old age of 29, I had an experience that shifted me out of my nihilistic, *anomie*-filled consciousness and reshaped my life as I now know it. I was born again. Spiritually that is. My world changed in a way that I could never have imagined. Unexpectedly and delightfully. An unanticipated gift – God consciousness - entered my life. Let me tell you, it was a far out and freaky experience! Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to experience something like this. Something I didn't even believe in had happened. To me. Yup, me! Now how could I explain that?

Here's what happened. I'd been living on a kibbutz in Northern Israel for a couple of years and had decided that it was time to leave. This meant leaving my boyfriend of the time, whom I still loved. He was so clearly an entrenched Israeli, while I was so clearly neither Jewish nor Zionist, that continuing our relationship looked like a recipe for a life of complex tensions. So for perhaps the first time in my life, I found myself consciously and deliberately letting my head rule my heart – and leaving a man and a lifestyle I loved because I couldn't logically justify my choices .

I'd loved living in the sunshine of the Northern Galilee, but there was no denying that politics, for better and very often for worse, were all pervasive in Israeli life. Going to the beach on Shabbat (the Jewish/ Israeli Sabbath), our group of kibbutzniks passed through convoys of soldiers heading north into Lebanon. It was the early 1980s and Israel had invaded Lebanon in yet another futile attempt to suppress the PLO. The soldiers who we passed as we headed to swim and play in the Mediterranean were men like my boyfriend - sons and fathers, husbands and brothers to the people who loved them. I couldn't see myself raising children knowing full well that my sons and daughters would become army conscripts. And I knew that converting to Judaism in order to follow "the rules" of the otherwise secular kibbutz that I was living on didn't make any sense. So, despite that fact that my day-to-day life in Israel made me happier than I'd ever been before, I decided it was time to leave.

Wow! I quickly found I'd bitten off more than I'd anticipated by making this decision. For two years I'd worked in orange orchards and banana fields, or in the field kitchen under blue skies and sunshine. I'd been surrounded by kind people who had embraced me into their community. I'd had a love affair with warm weather, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Hebrew language, not to mention the man I'd now left. And by leaving Israel I was going to do ...what? I didn't have an answer. I really didn't know. I was, at that time, living my life by the process of elimination – what I *wasn't* going to do. I didn't have a clear plan about what I was going to do.

So I headed for Scotland and sought refuge with my favorite aunt and uncle. They had given me shelter from my own dilemmas before. And, bless them both, they were willing to do it again. Their household was always an easy place to land; a safe retreat from the demands of earning a living or needing to have a public persona.

This visit, I filled my time with long walks through the hills that surrounded their home and worked for a neighboring farmer, bringing sheep in off the hills to be dipped and branded. I was confused about what I was going to do next. I didn't have a clear plan. Just living from day-to-day was my focus, while I pondered the question of where, let alone what, I was going to be and do. Israel was still calling more loudly than any other place. My heart was there. I hadn't yet unhooked myself from the people I'd lived with for two years, nor from the simple pleasures of kibbutz life. Canada was a possible destination since the rest of my immediate family lived there, but I had yet to make peace with Canada as a permanent abode. Britain was a contender solely by default – I was already in Scotland, why not just stay there..

Somewhere in the midst of this time, I came across the name Findhorn. I think it may have been my aunt who first mentioned it. I'd never heard of it before but what she told me intrigued me. It sounded like a European version of a kibbutz – a tightly knit community but without any of the problematic underpinnings of Zionism. I decided to write away for information, and soon received a brochure in

the mail. It explained that before becoming a part of the Findhorn community, newcomers were required to participate in an “Experience Week.” An old hotel in Forres, a town in northeastern Scotland, had been converted into a residence for guests and members of the Findhorn community, and it was here that newcomers received their first taste of the magic of Findhorn. I think the brochure may even have used the phrase “the magic of Findhorn”.

I was sorely missing my friends in Israel. I was searching for a place to belong. It was clear to me, and no doubt to others, that I needed help to decide where I was going to locate myself and what I was going to do. So, in the absence of other compelling agendas, it didn't take much reflection to book myself into an Experience Week and to hop onto the train to Inverness, en route to Forres and Findhorn.

How I managed to miss the fact that Findhorn also billed itself as a new age spiritual community remains a mystery. Somehow, I didn't notice that the place I was headed to had regular meditation sessions as part of its daily schedule. I'd missed the part of the brochure that explained that Findhorn had initially earned its reputation by growing giant vegetables – not as a result of unusual agricultural practices, but because the community founders applied metaphysical practices which resulted in mega-vegetables.

But it didn't take long to find out! Each Experience Week was facilitated by two permanent residents of the Findhorn community. It was their job to expose us, the Findhorn newbies, to the culture of the greater community – where meditation, channeling and applied synchronicity were standard approaches to daily concerns. The rag tag crew participating in my Experience Week hailed from Australia, Holland, Germany, Britain and North America. We ranged in age from early twenties to late sixties. We were single and married and divorced. We numbered about 15 in total – and we all got along well.

I participated in daily group meditations in the Chapel of the hotel - more to be part of the Findhorn culture than because I had any awareness that these processes might somehow be transformative. It was my need to belong rather than a need to evolve that lay behind this participation. But despite myself, the process of intensive and regular meditation began to work on me.

I experienced events at Findhorn that I had no way to explain. I had a strong connection to the other people in my Experience Week group that made no sense given the very short amount of time we had actually spent together. With Harry, a young Dutch man who had come to Findhorn with his mother, I had a tie that I couldn't understand. I remember waking up once in the middle of the night and heading down to one of the mediation rooms, where, as it turned out, Harry was wrapped up in a blanket meditating. He and I engaged in a conversation that was so intense I couldn't understand what was happening. It was more than our few days of casual contact could reasonably account for. It was outside any of my previous parameters of social or intimate connection..

The very last day of Experience Week was when my mind was blown. As one of the rituals surrounding our goodbyes on the last day, we held a final group meditation. Then we engaged in some reflection about the time we'd spent together. It was sometime during this reflective conversation that my life as I had known it changed forever. Out of nowhere, I sensed an intense energy in the room. It felt like the air was suddenly charged with electricity. Simultaneously, various people in the group, as they spoke of their own lives and experiences, assumed the roles of key people in my life – my mother and father, my sister and brother, my best friend and her husband, and, to my great surprise, two new roles were inserted into this conversation - that of “my husband” and his “mistress”. -. Certain group members seemed to suddenly acquire an archetypal identity – as if they had been cast in a role in a play, the title of which was something like “Tell Adrienne How Life Works.” Each of the archetypal characters spoke to me about their roles in my life, or about their

relationships to one another. It was like suddenly having all the clues in a mystery novel revealed at once. Parts of the puzzle of my life were suddenly visible. Questions about why my parents remained together, despite the fact that they seemed to be living out the cold war within the confines of domesticity, were suddenly clear. I knew, intuitively, that I was supposed to tolerate the presence of my husband's mistress, and that she was actually no threat to my relationship with him. I could see the roles my brother and sister played in my life.

After about five minutes, just as suddenly as it had started, the electrical charge in the air disappeared. Once again, I found myself sitting with the other members of my Experience Week group, wrapping up our time together at Findhorn. Initially, I was in emotional shock as a result of this experience. There was so much happening in the process of saying goodbye to Findhorn and the people who I'd shared Experience Week with that I didn't have time to process what had happened; not to mention that I didn't know what had happened. It was completely outside of my previous experience. I didn't speak to anyone of what had occurred. I wasn't sure what they would make of it or of me. I didn't want to add the descriptor "crazy" to other terms, such as "unsettled" or "still figuring out what she wants to do," that people might choose to describe me.

So I caught a train from Forres back to Inverness and started to explore what had happened. I remember that everything I looked at seemed to be brighter than usual. My heart was lighter than usual. I was filled with gratitude and I felt very blessed. I was glad that I'd never taken hallucinogens or other drugs because at least I knew that I wasn't experiencing some drug-related, post-trip flashback.

Somehow I knew that I was seeing the world differently. Since being shown a play that explained things I'd always found inexplicable about my family and other key relationships, I didn't feel I was caught up in a nihilistic drama any more. It was like all my formerly random life experiences cascaded into order – each of them clearly having been a necessary precursor to the next. Granted, my life hadn't proceeded according to the life stages that sociology and psychology textbooks seemed to think were essential. But it had, nonetheless, proceeded in accordance with its own inner plan.

I felt so much joy. I wanted to find others who would share my pleasure in being a part of the divine plan. I wanted to celebrate the crazy, often painful events that teach us how to become human and how to hone our spirits. I also needed to understand more about this new reality I had entered. My *modus operandi* changed from thinking about what did I need and what could I get, to wondering about what could I give and who might need what I had to offer. Truly, the world had become a new place.

When I returned to my aunt and uncle's home, I knew that my aunt was aware that my week away had created a seismic shift in my consciousness. I could tell by the way she looked into my eyes that she knew about this reality too – that she was not a stranger to the fact that in some miraculous way God is in each of us, and, equally miraculously, we are collectively part of God. On a practical level, I received a phone call from a former colleague in Canada. It came out of the blue. She asked if I'd like my old job back. And since I now believed that there were answers to prayers, I said "yes."

I don't know how you've experienced the divine in your life, or even if it's a concept you consider. But I do know that my life turned around and took on a new direction and depth after my first trip to Findhorn. I returned in the following years to the Findhorn caravan park several times in a misguided attempt to recreate a miracle. Although I had interesting and pleasant times, I didn't re-experience having my mind blown.

Now I realize it actually only needed to happen once. Because the soul sense of being part of something way bigger than me has never left. That's not to say that I haven't been confused or in

great pain since. I certainly have. But I've had a whole new place to go to find hope in order to move through difficult times. Small speck of humanity that I am, I know that I'm also part of a greater consciousness. Not that I understand that consciousness, or pretend to have any insight into why things are the way they are. I don't. But when I'm overwhelmed or challenged by my experiences, I can now live in the paradox of simultaneously being part of magnificent plan while I stumble through my daily life – and this provides me with comfort and solace.

So I want to ask you again. Are you a random piece of conscious protoplasm, or a part of God's plan?

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