

Daily Inspired Life



**CANCER  
SAVED  
MY LIFE**

*Chaya*

**I QUIT  
CORPORATE**  
to Teach English

**FAMILY  
GAP YEAR**  
Abroad Saved  
My Sanity

**HORSES LED ME**  
to Travel the World

**WHEN THE WIND  
WAS PERFECT**  
Sailing with Amy

# *Escape* **TO FREEDOM**

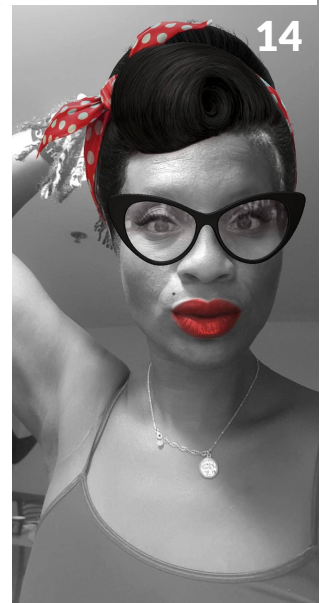
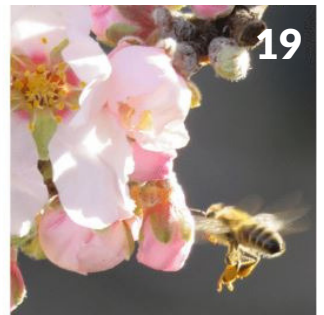
**STORY COLLECTION #1**



PLUS Discover *Mornings By Design*

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Photograph By Tom Podmore, Unsplash

# *The Magic of Elsewhere*

BY SCOTT STAVROU

## **Wanderlust is my patrimony.**

Since I was born I have never lived anyplace for more than a few years. In an itinerant life of crossing countries and continents, I have loved many places. Just not for long. The song of elsewhere was always strongest.

What I love is the heart-throbbing passion of falling for a new place. Falling so hard that you want to not only visit there, but yearn to live there. To yield to the infatuation and actually pack up, pick up, and move. To become, even if only for a time, a part of a place. To uncover some of its secrets. Of course infatuation does not always last forever; the magic, soul-stirring spell of a new and unexplored place can transition to routine.



“

*... We wanted more.  
Or to be more accurate,  
we wanted less.*

But special places and experiences become not only a part of our past, but a part of ourselves. Things we carry with us forever.

#### **Living in Venice was one of those.**

When first married, my wife and I had attempted to forge some stability. We had met while traveling Europe and then pretended to be real grown-ups. Got engaged, married, moved back home to America. We settled down, started a business, bought a house. We did all this because it seemed what we were supposed to do, what we were supposed to want.

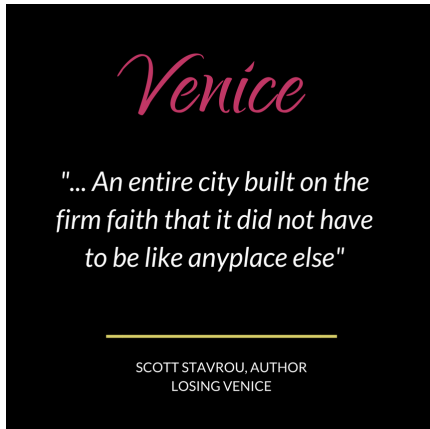
These things that we'd acquired were what we *believed* we were supposed to want. They were, it seemed, the very things that real grown-ups were expected to have. But when we looked around at the tangible trappings of the lives we'd built, they felt like exactly that to us: trappings.

We wanted more. Or to be more accurate, we wanted less. Less obligation, less convention, less mundanity; in short: less reality. The recommended requisites of real life and convention had been tried, tested and found wanting. And left us wanting something else. Something more.

#### **The magic of elsewhere.**

And so we packed ourselves and our two dogs and moved to Venice.

After all, what better place in the world to remedy the ills of too-much reality than Venice, a place that positively defied all definitions of reality? Few places are further removed from the regular reality of the real world.



Venice has always been something other: not quite land, not quite sea, not quite dream, not quite reality.

And if you can move yourselves and your lives to someplace that sits on the sea on the misty borders between dream and reality, you do it. Some friends told us not to rock the boat. Things were going well for us, and after all, they said, these were our prime-earning years.

But we were less concerned about maximizing our prime-earning years than enjoying our prime-living years. And we had a strong suspicion that if you didn't boldly embrace your dreams, they could fade into dreary regrets of things you wished you'd done.

We knew we were impulsive but nevertheless when we looked back on our lives, we wanted the list of dreams we'd chased to be longer than the tally sheet of things we regretted not doing.

“

*... we were less concerned about maximizing our prime-earning years than enjoying our prime-living years.*

Like Venice itself, we found ourselves in-between things. We were in-between youthful impetuosity and the grown-up acceptance of adulthood and its demands. And we wanted to stay in this in-between as long as possible. To savor it.

There's a lot of in-between in Venice, floating as it does precariously on the misty borders of land and sea, dream and reality. It's a city built in the middle of a lagoon, a place no city belongs. Murky mudbanks made majestic.

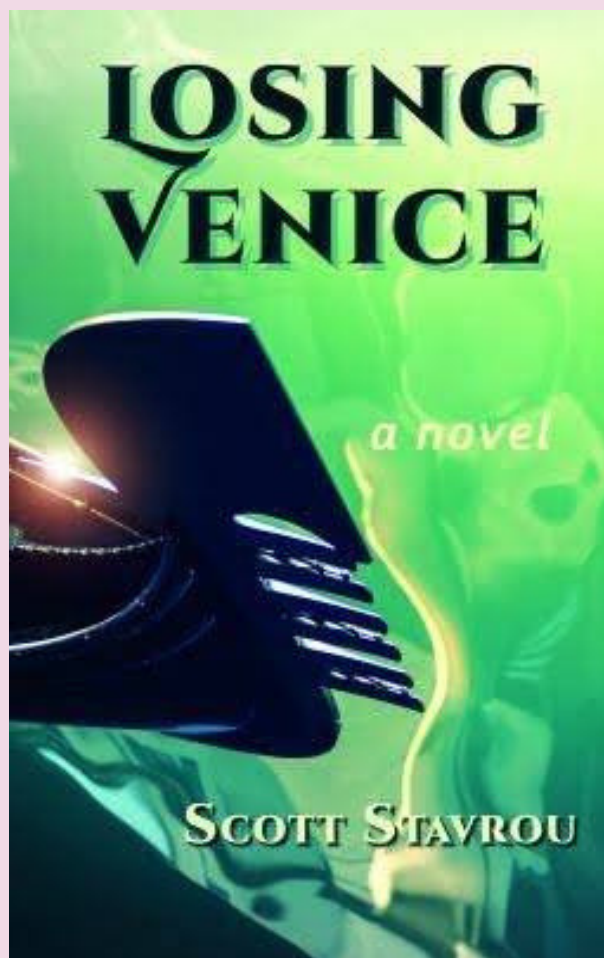
An entire city built on the firm faith that it did not have to be like anyplace else. A place where stones stride the sea, seemingly floating on nothing.

And though dreams don't last forever, the chasing of them does and so you find that you move to other less enchanted shores but still carry that experience with you.

And things that stay with you sometimes beg to be shared, to be shaped and molded. To become art. That's how the love of the lasting beauty of living in Venice turned into a novel.

And the writing of the novel, even when it's about fictional characters and their own different dreams, makes you feel closer to those dreams even as time and distance draw you ineluctably farther away.

**Losing Venice** is available on Amazon. [CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)



# FAMILY GAP YEAR ABROAD SAVED MY SANITY

BY MEGAN BARNES ZESATI



## *My Mid-life Interrupted ...*

**A curious thing began to happen in my hometown of Austin, Texas.** It started the month before our family sabbatical in Costa Rica was due to begin. The birds. I'd be at work, where I was supposed to be listening intently to the stories of my therapy clients, but the louder voices would be those of the songbirds outside the office window.

Were they really getting louder, I wondered? How had I never noticed this before? It was distracting. It was delightful. It was a harbinger. It was my attention being pulled to some place just outside the familiar walls of my life. I had to know what was calling.

The birds were a nice break from the craziness of our final days in Austin, where I often wondered what the hell we were thinking six months ago when we sprouted the idea to take a family gap year abroad - to reduce our belongings to six suitcases and four backpacks - to purposely grind all of the forward momentum of our family, personal and professional lives to a halt.

“

*... reduce our belongings to six suitcases and four backpacks?*

At a time when it made no sense at all to take a break, to stop. *'We have responsibilities. In our 40's, amazing eight-year-old twins and a dog. We have a 1,000 square foot house that we have owned for 10 years and outgrew (by North American standards) 8 years ago in a lovely neighborhood.'*

My husband and I are both psychotherapists who spent the past decade building a successful private practice. And yet, in spite of our desire to live an uncomplicated, wholesome family life, the song of our last decade had been “more, more, more, better, better, better, faster, faster, faster.” Now I find that I can't dance to that song anymore. I just can't.

So, we decide to step away for a year, to see how our comfortable life looks in the rear-view mirror, to give our children an experience of cultures, languages and foods outside of the comfortable bubble that they know. We decide to take a family gap year abroad!

We commit to open-up to what is unknown, unexplored, and unscripted in the life of our family and ourselves. Me? What do I want out of this? I want to gain some insight into some unsettled feelings growing louder inside of me over the past year, that I struggle to understand or tame.





Maybe it began when I fell down the stairs. That was over a year ago. That's when the chronic neck and shoulder pain began that failed to respond to my interventions. I began saying "this life is not sustainable" without really knowing what that meant.

My body told the story of this life not being sustainable, but I didn't know how to respond skillfully. I tried to power through. I tried to keep up. I talked with friends. I tried to pretend. I tried to numb out the discomfort, to manage the stress. I tried to cleanse.

I went to doctors, therapists and healing experts who offered me temporary feelings of hope and well-intentioned remedies. They were all lifeboats that worked for a while, but they all had leaks.

I began to feel like a fraud at work, aware that I had no solution to the problems that plagued both my clients and myself. I had lots of empathy, but I felt useless as an emotional sherpa, navigating the terrain of modern day life.

- We aren't meant to receive information about all things going on in the world at all moments through a news-feed that never sleeps.
- My iPhone gets more eye contact than my husband or kids
- I feel constantly in motion, yet disconnected--from myself, from others, from life's purpose.
- I am burdened by our stuff.
- I need more space, more quiet, more stillness.
- I don't have time to think anymore.
- I am overstimulated--socially and emotionally.
- I am ultra-connected to everyone and everything, yet I've never felt more alone.

I was too lost in it myself. I was genuinely puzzled and surprised that I wasn't fired much more often by my clients. To date, the only plausible explanation I have for this, is the power of empathy and feeling understood, rather than "helped."

## *Planning a Family Gap Year Abroad ...*

The planning of our family sabbatical began with my husband and I taking a weekend away. From within the quiet warmth of a cabin in the Texas Hill Country, we began writing out our vision and values for the year.

### **The mission was fairly simple.**

We wanted more slow time. We wanted to live in closer alignment with our Buddhist spiritual values. We wanted more time in nature. We wanted rest and play. We wanted to practice our Spanish.

We wanted to engage what is different, uncomfortable and foreign in other cultures with open and curious minds. We wanted to be with our children more and relearn from them how to face the world together with fresh eyes, creativity and wonder.

Sounds nice, but how does one actually stop the music of her busy middle-aged life and leave as a family? Are we just running away from reality? Shirking our responsibilities? I quietly wondered: is it really fair to take my kids along for the ride of my mid-life-crisis roller coaster? These were the questions and fears that accompanied our planning about how to step away for a year and to see how our comfortable life looked in the rear view mirror.

## *Letting Go, Purging & Experiencing Release*

We leased our home in Austin for the year, sold many of our belongings, subleased one therapy office and let another one go, planned for the time away with our clients, searched for our home-base abroad and decided on the small town of Atenas, Costa Rica. We sold and saved and planned for financial worst-case scenarios. We exchanged plans to buy a bigger house in our hip Austin neighborhood for a year of travel in countries with lower cost of living.

The experience of purging our belongings was both cathartic and the true beginning of our adventure in my mind. It was surprisingly fun for our family to reverse gears: to shift from a long-term state of accumulation to one of release. My body registered the newfound freedom and lightness with a loosening of the areas of chronic holding and tension.

We predicted and worried that our kids would cling to their belongings and suffer over letting them go, as they did every spring cleaning past. We were wrong. In an epic garage sale/giveaway that lasted 12 hours, our children happily sold and gave away their toys. They saved a few items to bring on our journey—some prized stuffed animals, a box of legos and some art supplies. Not once have my kids mentioned even one of the hundreds of toys that they released almost a year ago. And I struggle to recall the belongings that I most agonized over. In this year, we have all experienced an explosion of creative energy and I believe it is directly connected to letting go of our stuff.

We were fortunate that our friends and family were very supportive of our decision to travel abroad and many even came to visit! As we were planning to leave, the most common refrain I heard from others was how they would love to do something similar but it just felt impossible. It's true. There are so many moving parts—career, kids activities, schools, financial burdens, medical care, aging parents, and more—that make it legitimately hard to plan a family gap year abroad at this stage in life, as a family. It really feels impossible when you are sitting in the center of your swirling life contemplating a change, but that is a feeling worth challenging.

Travelling with a family is different than travelling solo or without children. We move slower and cover less ground. We have a home base where the kids go to school and we maintain an online private therapy practice. It is true that we have recreated another family dance in a different place, but the rhythm suits us well and our daily life aligns with the values that we reclaimed.

As for the travel, we have been able to leverage the different school calendar in Costa Rica to enable slow travel during school vacations. We have embraced last-minute flexible travel adventures in ways that previously seemed impossible and the price of a plane ticket often determines our next destination.

We spent the month of December travelling through Thailand and Cambodia, which was the trip of a lifetime for all of us. In January, we lived in Mexico, visiting various cities and spending time with extended family. During another school break, we spent an amazing ten days in Nicaragua, which we wished could have been longer. And we have enjoyed shorter exploratory trips all over Costa Rica from our jumping off point of Atenas



Now I know what those songbirds outside my office had to offer. I have been a therapist for almost twenty years now, but like a beginner, I am mainly in touch with all that I do not know about the messiness of being human. I return and rebuild, humbled, clear, still uprooted, yet mysteriously grounded once again.

AND now I begin to transform my therapy practice from one with walls to one with wings.



**Megan Barnes Zesati, LCSW** ... is the founder of Digital Nomad Support, an online therapy practice for fellow nomads, expats and travelers. [www.digitalnomad.support](http://www.digitalnomad.support)



**An inspiring story of breast cancer survival**

**“** *“So many of us look at life through a peephole, but what we don't realize is there is a window to life. Open the curtains and live fully”*



# Cancer *Saved My Life*

BY CHAYA LEV

## **I sat in a cold hospital room.**

The grey curtains covered the window in front of me. I couldn't see outside. All I could see were dull plastered walls, and clinical white floors. I didn't care. The nurse administering the chemo looked at me and smiled. It was my first session and her eyes told me this wasn't going to be an easy journey.

Just forty years old. A few weeks earlier, I had booked an appointment with my doctor for a "routine" breast examination (who even made the word 'routine' up). At that time, everything in my life felt routine. I was over-weight and over-stressed.



**I was living in the shadow of happiness.** Really, I had a false sense of happiness; the idea that was beaten into my mind from childhood - that if you are successful and have a white picket fence, then nothing else mattered... What a wake-up call I got. One that forever changed my life.

## The Wake-Up Call

I expected the breast examination to just be routine. No problem. I was young, and there was no incidence of cancer in my family for at least five generations. My doctor sat across from me, he looked concerned. "Chaya, we need to do a biopsy. Something doesn't look right". Two days later I got the call. It was my doctor. "Chaya, you need to come in".

THE BIOPSY revealed that I had stage two, grade three breast cancer. WHOA... WHO? NOT ME. NEVER. I had no Idea that MY JOURNEY IN TO LIFE would BEGIN AT THAT very MOMENT.

I sat there in that hospital room looking around at the other cancer patients. We were all going through the same ordeal. Tired, stressed, sick, dying.

Then there was this moment. I looked up, I saw a sliver of light streaming through an opening in the curtains. I thought to myself, I'm not dead. I'm alive! *And while I'm alive, I must LIVE!*

I looked at the lady sitting across from me. She had an energy that could bring the whole room into sadness. Head slumped down, her whole body was saying to the world that "it was over". I wanted to shout out. "Look lady, right now we are alive. Let's live while we are alive!" After my infusion, I walked over to her. I bent down, looked into her sad eyes and whispered in her ear. "It's not over. This is only the beginning."

I had no idea how important those words would be. Until this day, I live my life with that sentence in mind. Because I believe it.

Before I left the hospital room, I walked over to the window and slowly pulled back the curtains with what energy I had. Light came streaming into the room. Hallelujah! My journey into life had begun.



## Journey Into Life - Not Without Challenges

There were so many challenges to overcome on my journey into life.  
There was the ...

*Chemotherapy, and the chemotherapy with a broken port that burned my skin  
and almost killed me  
and the radiation treatment and a bilateral mastectomy  
and many missed baseball games for my son  
and a crumbling marriage that wouldn't last the battle with me*

So much pain, so much struggle. But I came out of the battle with a clear sense of who I am. I wanted to live a fulfilled life. It was time to fully live.

As my chemotherapy and radiation treatment came to an end, I left America and made a move to Israel. I had a dream to live in Israel, so I did.

I moved to a small beach town in the North. Later I longed for more adventure. I longed to live where I truly belong, Tel Aviv, Israel.



## Everyday An Adventure

Now every day of my life is an adventure. Ordering coffee and speaking to interesting people is an adventure. Going to the post office and finding new doctors (most of the time in my new language), is an adventure.

I'm single. I'm dating with my new body and it's so much fun and definitely an adventure. New friends. Tons of beach time and meeting new people. I have four jobs and together they allow me to have freedom. One of my jobs is a Zumba style dance teacher. For me, dance and travel have been great healers. I'm even doing comedy here and there.

**I feel more alive post cancer than I have ever felt.** Mainly because I refuse to look through that peephole that many of us have been conditioned to love ... well until something happens, that moves us to open the curtains and see life in full view.



## A Survivor's Healing

Yes, I have faced many challenges along the way, but these set-backs make me feel alive and bring adventure and healing into my life.

That's the lens I see my challenges through. I AM DETERMINED to see the beauty in everything, because my eyes are wide open

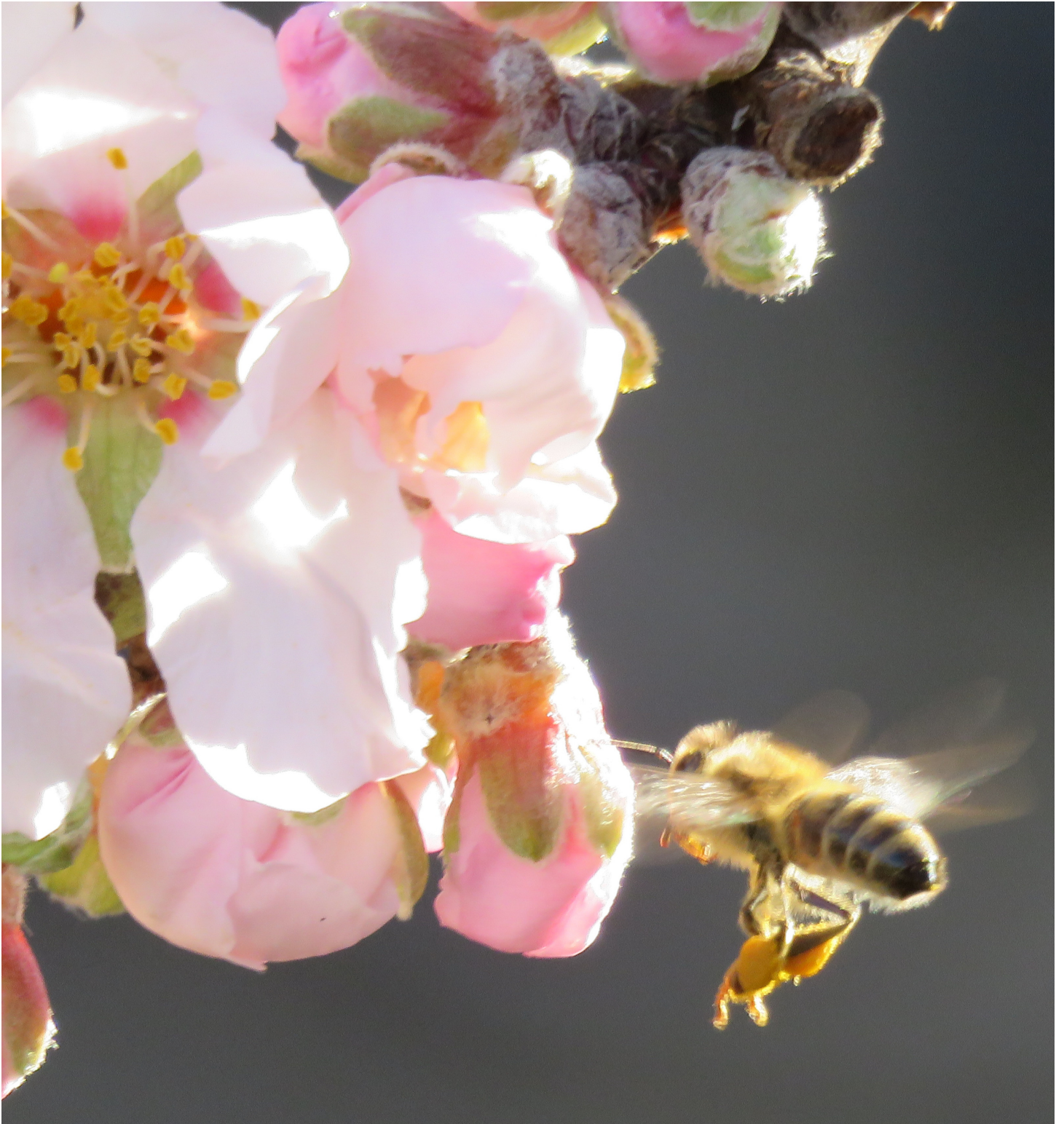
As I live my life in fullness, I receive constant reminders that I am a survivor.

But more importantly there is this energy that says girl...

**YOU MUST LIVE. YOU MUST LOVE  
AND YOU MUST JUST BE  
UNAPOLOGETICALLY YOU.**

Follow Chaya's Journey On  
Instagram: @brownsugarjew22/

Photography By: Elisa Ruth Szklanny



BEAUTIFUL MORNING ...

**LESVOS**

# Slow Down

WAKE-UP WITH ME IN SKALACHORI,  
LESVOS, GREECE

BY KARLETTA MARIE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN DIONYSIOU

I'm not a rich person, but I live  
a rich life, made decadent by  
the simple things ...  
like deliberate MORNINGS,  
by DESIGN





## BE GENTLE ON YOURSELF ...

*Especially in the mornings*

I dreamt of mountains, I dreamt of sea. I found myself in **Lesvos, Greece**. I've stepped out from reality and into a world where it seems time has stood still.

Everything moves at a gentler, slower pace here in Skalochori - I move at a gentler, slower place. Even the goats in the street. Even the sheep.

People smile as you pass. "Yasou", the women wave, the men nod. The village plumber's wife brings us risogalo straight from her kitchen.

It's warm and sweet and the custard slips down your throat like a satin sheet slipping from your bed.

Nikos the baker holds up a sesame breadstick with two hands stretched out toward me, he smiles, his eyes sparkle and he says, "This is for the goritsi" - the girl. I've gone back in time. I'm a girl again. This is wonderful.

It's morning. Church bells ring across the valley and wooden wind-chimes join the birdsong gently prodding me awake.

But I won't have it... just five more minutes please, let me sleep a moment longer,

Let me finish my dream.



*Open Your Eyes  
To Something  
Beautiful ...*

*like a blossom outside your window*



# BLOSSOM

... Blossom, clouding all the tree  
With thy crimson broidery,  
Long before a leaf of green  
On the bravest bough is seen; -  
Ah! when winter winds are swinging  
All thy red bells into ringing,  
With a bee in every bell,  
Almond bloom, we greet thee well.

- Edwin Arnold

I know what it's like to wake-up to a 6.00 AM alarm. That was me. Beep, beep, beep. Press snooze for fifteen minutes. Snooze again. I'd sit up in bed, face a beige wall and sigh in dread before jumping out of bed, frantic. I'd throw down a coffee, get dressed in my suit, grab a slice of toast with Vegemite and then I was out the door to face the bumper traffic.

I dreamed of a slower, more deliberate morning, but it just seemed so unattainable at the time. My life has changed so much since those exhausting days.

Big dreams are arrived at through small steps. One of the first things that needed to change was the way I did mornings.

One small change I made, that made a great impact, was to make sure I rise to something beautiful. If it can't be a view of the ocean, or the valley of a mountain, it will be a favorite flower or work of art.

The first thing you see, when you open your eyes can set the tone for your day.

## **What's the first thing you see in the morning? Do you like what you see?**

### **MORNINGS BY DESIGN**

There are many simple changes you can make to your morning routine - easy adjustments that are **guaranteed to bring more balance, joy and peace into your life.**

If you want help to create your own morning by design, please email [info@dailyinspiredlife.com](mailto:info@dailyinspiredlife.com) for further information.





# One Day When The Wind Was Perfect

BY AMY THOME



"On a day when the wind is perfect, the sail just needs to open  
& the world is full of beauty. Today is such a day" ~ Rumi



“

*...“Sailing The World  
... I have never felt a  
peace like I do when I’m  
in motion, when the wind  
is lashing my body, when  
the boat is heeling over on  
its side...”*

Never in my life have I felt at home living in a house, a solid unmoving structure. Most girls grow up desiring a beautiful house, a successful career perhaps, a husband, white picket fence, a pet and maybe those 2.5 children. I have never desired any of those things, but somewhere along the way into adulthood, I curiously started following that construct; that path that everyone seems to think they have to take, which for me personally I kind of view as a trap.

#### **There Has To Be More To Life Than This ...**

I always drove nice cars. I had a loving German Australian shepherd, and even had a ten-year relationship going at one time, as well as a very high paying corporate finance job in management. A job that let me take killer vacations to places like India and Brazil.

I attained the degree and a handful of financial licenses in the Wall Street world. I had it all, from the looks of it. But NONE of these things made me happy, nor at peace. Something was always off, amiss... these things didn’t sustain me, feed me, or make me feel content whatsoever. There was always a nagging ache for more. I felt chained by these THINGS.

I have always been a seeker by nature for as long as I can remember back into childhood. I questioned organized religion when I was 16. I’ve always asked why. I’ve always looked at society like something was askew. **I’ve always known there was far MORE to this life. I didn’t want to follow that conveyor belt of uniformity, of lifestyles around me that all seemed to be fabricated from an eerily similar mold.**

# I SOLD MY HOUSE & EVERYTHING IN IT ...



It wasn't until I finally grew the balls after years of deliberating in my head, to take the plunge and say goodbye to it all. I sold my house including everything in it. I quit my job and left my relationship. Around 2012 is when it all began to shake, and in hindsight in the most eloquent way.

I discovered the world of yoga and meditation, and it was all uphill from there. Well maybe not uphill exactly, but yoga has a very interesting way of seeping into your every pore and making it so there is now no way BUT to start shedding. It starts to make you have very little tolerance for those things in your life that no longer feed you.

You begin to simplify. It can feel like the earth is actually crumbling beneath you, but in fact, it's causing you to become alive again, to begin to realize your true self, your true essence. The person that has been there all along, but it was buried beneath all the clutter from the conditioning that started back when you were a child.

Yoga and meditation, whether you like it or not, begins to show you the cage you've been living in and you begin the process of rattling those bars. The lenses that you used to view the world via are now being wiped clean of: the debris of a lifetime of other people's expectations, the norms society places on us and the fears that our media and government have put into our psyche.

You truly begin to gain more clarity than you could ever have imagined. It's chilling, but herein begins your own glorious personal climb out of the playpen. Which would you rather have ~ a lifetime of robotic living or the newfound ability to chart your own way?



Photo by Syd Sujuaan | Unsplash

I finally let go of the career that I had been chasing for over eleven years. I went into work one day, wrote a long email and left an hour later with no notice. My soul could not take another day. Since then I began one of the most beautiful chapters of my life. I finally found a place that I truly feel is 'home' to me. And that is on the water.

I just happened to start taking a curious interest in sailboats.

For no apparent reason whatsoever, I was now being drawn to them. Taking up sailing lessons has begun to show me that what is 'home' is so vastly different from person to person.

For me, I have never felt a peace like I do when I'm in motion, when the wind is lashing my body, when the boat is heeling over on its side. It's a rush I have never experienced. The water rocks me to sleep at night and welcomes me into her vast maternal benevolence again each day. This is home, this is home.

I have no idea what is to come, but I don't regret a thing, except wishing I had done it sooner. Follow Amy's Journey On Instagram: @Amy\_Thome

# *The Tunnel of Life*

BY MONICA HUNOLD

**Living on the streets of Ecuador, only  
garbage bags for luggage.**

Monica shares her inspiring story of how hope coupled with hard-work led her from homelessness to living her dream in Tuscany

I've been told I could never afford an education. I've been told great jobs are for the few. I've been told traveling the world and finding the man of your dreams is for Hollywood. I've even been told 51-year-olds shouldn't wear bikinis. Guess what? They are all wrong!

My name is Monica Hunold, I'm 51, I live in Tuscany AND I wear a bikini! I am sharing my story in hope that if you or your children ever dream of achieving something wonderful, it's all possible. When life and the people closest to you tell you to believe otherwise, know that most opinions usually belong to those who have never even tried. If your life seems filled with misery, failures, losses, and obstacles, know that there is a light at the end of every tunnel.

You must arm yourself with tenacity, endurance and sacrifice. These elements will act as the very flashlight you need when making your way through the darkest moments of your tunnel. That's right, your tunnel.

## **Born in Ecuador, Dreamed of Traveling The World**

I was born in Ecuador to a politician father and a mother who married very young and dedicated her life to care for her husband and her two children.



As a politician, my dad traveled the world and upon returning from every trip he brought souvenirs and pictures from cultures far away. He loved telling us about unique experiences that were strange to us. We loved it.

I thought that if I could only see through my father's eyes, I could travel and experience all of those magnificent things. I developed an undying belief that there are beautiful places in the world and someday I belonged there. I was five when my father left us.

### **Life Takes a Dark & Dramatic Turn**

Life has its surprises and sometimes a mean sense of humor; life as we knew it changed dramatically and instantly. My father, the politician, had to flee the country to the USA as political revolution broke out in Ecuador.

My older brother and I were left in the care of a young and inexperienced mother to fend for ourselves. The comforts of a middle-class were over. Dad was soon incommunicado with us and slowly, but surely, what once was a life of comfort and security, became a nightmare.

Money was limited. Our house was gone. Many of our friends disappeared as quickly as our social status. My oldest brother at the age of 16, the man of the family, decided to migrate to Venezuela in hopes of a better life for himself. Then life, at its lowest point, reached bottom; my mother met a man that not only took the little bit of money remaining, but left us homeless, literally on the streets, with my mom expecting my baby sister.

As my mother tried to reconcile with the father of my baby sister, I was left for two days with an uncle and his wife. Sitting alone on a beach with feelings of hopelessness, abandonment and rage at the age of ten is still raw in my memory today. The pacific ocean in its beauty was haunting, swallowing up all my dreams and aspirations to travel like my father did. In the background, the song "If You Leave Me Now", by Chicago, was apropos. If I were an adult, it would have been almost laughable.

### **Garbage Bags, Our Only Pieces of Luggage**

Armed with garbage bags as our only pieces of luggage, we found ourselves staying with family and friends until I was thirteen years old. I swore to my mother and sister that I was taking over family responsibilities.

At the tender age of thirteen, I began working for a living to support us and began making decisions for the three of us. I was determined to get out of our dark hole. It wasn't someone else's tunnel, it was my tunnel and I owned it! Someday it would be my bitch!



### **The Fifteen Year-Old, Self-Appointed Tour Guide**

At fifteen, I became a self-appointed tour guide for my uncle, who owned a travel agency in Ecuador which managed tour buses to Colombia and Peru.

Since I've always loved history, it was a fun way for me to work during the non-school season, travel for free, and earn money. The experience taught me that I could make a living doing anything.

I also graduated from a beauty academy, as I knew I needed to make money in order to finance further education for me and a better life for my mom and sister.

And that I did.

At seventeen, I found work cutting hair and doing manicures and pedicures at a 5-star salon located in a commercial district.

Next to the salon was a gorgeous "first in the city" 5-star hotel that was still under construction. Little did I know at the time, that a connection was forming a lifetime of opportunity for me.

Somewhere in there middle of all that, I managed a college degree.

### **Seizing a Life-Changing Opportunity**

I finagled my way to meet the hotel General Manager by offering her the best haircuts at good prices. As I became her permanent stylist, she got to know me and the work ethic I had. I now had a new goal! I saw all the beautiful people, in beautiful clothing working in air conditioning.

I wanted to work at that hotel. I wanted to be near people that traveled and lived around the world. I wanted to hear their stories. I wanted to someday do the same; to travel the world and stay at a beautiful hotel and tell people my story.



It wasn't going to be as easy as I thought. When the hotel opened, I was certain I could work the front desk (what young lady doesn't love uniforms and high heels?).

The General Manager looked at me up and down and said, "You're smart and pretty but you need to work in all the departments before earning your spot at the front desk." I thought to myself, 'Wait, I have always worked hard for things! Nothing has ever been handed to me!'

And so, another valuable lesson learned. I began a love affair with hospitality. I started literally scrubbing toilets as a housekeeper.

I worked every job asked of me with no questions. From hospitality to sales to operations to maintenance to human resources, I let nothing get in my way. For 30 solid years I proved my value and worked my way up in the business.

### **My Move To The United States of America**

I lost my father "literally" when he left us in April of 1972. He was allowed to return to Ecuador when I was 19 and I had so many things I wanted to say to him, both good and bad, but he had come back to amend mistakes.

It was here that I taught myself to listen; that there is always more to the story. He had just been given 3 months to live before dying of cancer.

My fondest times with him were during his final hours. When I came to the USA to care for him, I couldn't fathom that my American dream would come true at such a price.



### Meeting Kent, My Travel Partner

I also couldn't imagine that the death of my Father, which led to me living in USA would eventually lead me to meet Kent. Kent and I met in Dallas, TX.

Can you imagine a boy from the farms of Iowa and a girl from the big city of Guayaquil, Ecuador having the same values? Together we have traveled to some amazing places; from Cairo to Bora Bora to France to Italy to name a few. He's my traveling partner in crime.

Both of us have had different paths, but we have both worked equally hard our entire lives to get to where we are today. Kent's family and I are a lot alike.

### Falling In Love With Tuscany

Kent and I have always dreamt of retiring somewhere beautiful. Our travels brought us to Europe several times and we fell in love with the countryside of Tuscany.



In September of 2017, after selling our home, furniture, and gifting a lot of our possessions, we purchased a Villa in Brucciano, Province of Lucca.

Leaving close friends and family behind wasn't easy.

But if you want something so bad, there is always a way. We hope our sacrifice (as we call it) will pay off with friends and family visiting Italy for the rest of their lives.

Now our Villa is a B&B. We call it "Papa's View" named for my father-in-law. We live in it and love serving our guests.



So, for those that come from less than perfect circumstances. The ones that have been told they can't get an education, that they just have to accept what life throws at them. I hope I have inspired you today.

Yes, there were dark times as I was traveling through my tunnel of life, but when I look back at that long, dark tunnel, it only gets a head nod and a nasty stare as a stark reminder that I'm never going back there again.

Now, I look out my window, and I see the view ... no more tunnel just rolling green hills and the vineyards of Tuscany. Come and visit us here at Papa's View Villa, Tuscany, Italy



**Walking a different  
path, doesn't mean  
you've quit walking ...**



# HORSES LED ME TO TRAVEL THE WORLD

BY KRYSTAL KELLY



*Do you have a dream to travel the world? Meet Krystal ... a woman who trains horses, travels the world and empowers other women as she goes*

Back in 2010 I made a choice. I wanted to risk it all in pursuit of my dream to compete internationally as a show jumping rider. I left behind my life in America and booked a flight to Belgium where I would start my first job overseas—working with an Olympic rider! This opportunity hadn't come easily and I knew I would regret it if I didn't take the chance.

Now here I am, eight years and fifty countries later. I have worked abroad as a solo woman in India, Romania, Egypt, Bhutan, Italy, and many others.

So, what has my connection with horses taught me about empowering myself and others? Let me share **three key lessons with you ...**

**LESSON ONE: We Can Teach Equality Through Cultural Sharing & Connection**

Horse Riding is the ONLY sport in the Olympics where men and women compete EQUALLY.

While working in India and Egypt I was often the ONLY woman working in the riding clubs. I had to manage a staff of mostly uneducated males with very limited understanding of horsemanship.

Horses were predominately used for the military and in many countries, they still believe that horse riding is a "man's sport." I had to fight for my right as a woman IN CHARGE of a team of men.

I had to prove that my uterus wasn't affecting my performance to get the job done and I would often train extremely difficult-to-ride horses as well as run the entire riding club. I worked hard and eventually won many of the hardened men over to my side. Some of them even dedicated themselves as my personal shadows, eager to learn natural horsemanship training techniques.

**LESSON TWO : We Underestimate How Powerful We Are**

The more I was recognised as a lone woman around the stables where I was working, the more women started coming to me. They would invite me to their homes and cook for me. They would offer me tea and talk to me about their lives. They often admitted they had never realized a woman could do such a hard-physical sport such as horse-back riding, show jumping and polo - all of which I did.

They also shared their fears about being around horses. Many felt it wasn't possible to follow in my footsteps. That is where I proved them wrong! I showed the women that horses are gentle creatures having the power to heal.

They communicate, not with words, but with body language and facial expressions that seem merely whispers. Because of this, horses communicate mostly on energy and since women naturally have very maternal vibrations, we often underestimate how powerful we are. Women are perfect at mastering horsemanship. Helping the local girls to ride was an absolute honor for me.



### ***LESSON THREE : We Are Never Too Old To Learn***

Riding can be learned at any age. Two years ago, I took a solo drive in a crappy car from England to Mongolia. Along the way, I met my-now-German husband, Christian, whom I met in Azerbaijan. He had never ridden a horse before but always dreamed of it. When he and I moved to England last year we invested in a young horse as a training project, a mare named Lilly.

My husband now rides her nearly every day! At age 30, my husband started to learn horse riding and now the two cannot be separated. Lilly follows him around in the field like a puppy. They have won ribbons at their local Dressage shows, have trail rode out across the English Countryside and Christian has even attempted a bit of polo.

Horses are wonderful creatures with a lot of love to give. I never realized when I was young how many doors of opportunity these wonderful animals would open up for me.

Because of horses, I travel the world, I found myself, I help others and I've watched them heal souls and bond with people around the globe.

Follow Krystal in her journey around the world: [www.kraskolumbustravel.com](http://www.kraskolumbustravel.com)  
Krystal's safety course for women travelers: <https://kraskolumbus-travel.thinkific.com/>





# “ I QUIT CORPORATE America to Teach English in Thailand

BY JOCELYN POLLAK

Everyone told me I was crazy when I quit my glamorous, high paying job, but it was the best decision of my life.

I was 27 years old. Working corporate, making other people rich while doing something I had no passion for. I had spent five years working in enterprise sales for a company in downtown Chicago. My life didn't look anything like I wanted it to be.

I dreaded going to work every morning, and every evening I could feel the next day looming. I felt like my natural talent for sales and connecting with people was trained out of me. The more “training” I got, the more I struggled with my job and the more I resented being there.

Don't get me wrong, the trainings did teach me a lot, but I could feel myself slipping further and further behind in my quotas the more I was forced to fit into the mold.

It was time for a change.

I looked back on my life to discover my true interests. While my sales job taught me a lot about business, I always had a passion for academics, culture and exploration. I had graduated with a triple major in International Studies, History and Anthropology and a minor in French. I knew I wanted to live abroad and be free to discover more of the world I live in.

**What could I do to earn an income while living abroad?**



I started researching alternatives. I registered for a 120-hour TEFL course. What's TEFL? It stands for "Teach English as a Foreign Language". I decided to pick up and move abroad to teach English.

It was scary at first. In my corporate world, picking up and moving abroad to be an English teacher was not something people just did, especially when the economy wasn't particularly stable. But I trusted my instinct and went for it anyway. As I (nervously) suspected, it was the right path for me. Taking the leap has been so much more rewarding than I could have ever imagined.

It's said that the dream job is when you find something that you would do for free. I found it in teaching.

If I am having a lousy day and then go to teach my afternoon class, I am more energized and happy leaving work than when I arrived there.

I have the opportunity to give, which is so different from my last job where I just felt like I was taking all the time.

I have helped people make their dreams come true.

I can't count the number of times people have come to me and said, "I got my dream job because you helped me practice for my interview". "I got into college in America because you taught me how to write". "I got a promotion because my English is good enough now."

I spent time teaching in Cameroon, Luxembourg and at an ESL community center in Chicago.

For the past six years, I have been teaching English in Thailand and loving every minute of it.

*"I got my dream job because you helped me practice for my interview".*

*"I got into college in America because you taught me how to write".*

*"I got a promotion because my English is good enough now."*





### Helping Others Score Their Dream Teaching Job and Lifestyle

After several years of teaching English in Thailand, it became clear that there was a disconnect between what new teachers learn in their TEFL courses and what actually happens in the classroom.

My co-teacher, Whitney, and I formed TEFLPros in order to give new teachers the real tools that they need to begin a successful TEFL career. TEFLPros is the only accredited online course that focuses most of the course hours on practical skills (i.e. lesson planning, classroom management and self-reflection).

We are really excited that all of the teachers who have graduated from our course are working! And the thing that's been even more rewarding is that because we personally interact with all of our students, we keep in touch. We get regular updates when they score that dream job or have an awesome lesson or have a kid come to them and tell them that they are an inspiration.

One of our first students, Kate, has become a good friend of mine.

She moved in across the street and we hang out all the time. She's working at a great private high school in Bangkok now. We go out for dinner/drinks and the occasional \$5 Thai massage and talk about what a small world it is that we became such good friends.

Another grad, Bridget, joined a volunteer program that we administer together with the Thai Ministry of Education. She registered for two courses prior to finding us and said ours was the only one she felt engaged enough to complete.

Bridget is going to start volunteering in underprivileged Thai classrooms this November. Another grad, Joan, is an older woman and she recently sent us a handwritten note about how our course is going to help her serve the refugee populations that she works with so much better.

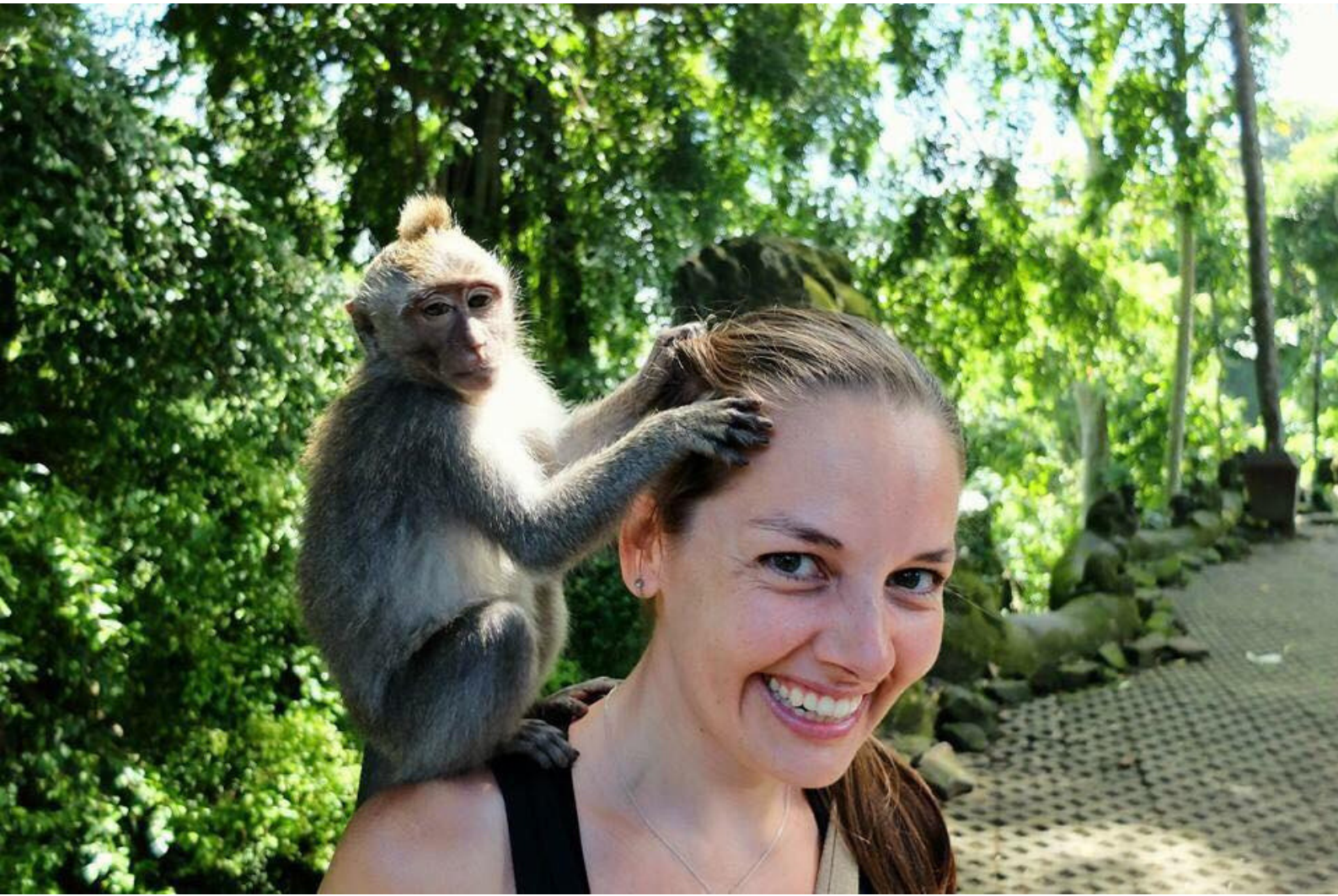
Stories like these are why I love what I do now.



The most full-circle moment in my journey was when one of our graduates came to Thailand and started working with me as a teacher at the school where my journey started. There is so much satisfaction in helping someone else reach their dreams.

There is no amount of corporate America money that could buy that kind of fulfillment.

I love my work. As a teacher and trainer, my work life balance is amazing, I can travel and I learn something new every single day. I've been to over 40 countries on 6 continents, taught thousands of students, and tried some really weird foods.




I'm passionate about teaching and helping new teachers feel comfortable beginning their TEFL career with all the knowledge that they need to be comfortable, skilled and successful.

TEFL is not for everyone, but if you are the kind of person who wants to have a more fulfilling life, see the world and learn, there is no better job.

If you'd like to try our course out, you can go to [www.teflproscourse.com](http://www.teflproscourse.com).

We unlocked a module to show people a little bit of what we have to offer. Don't take my word for it, you can also check out the link to the third-party review site to see what our grads have to say. Or feel free to contact me directly and I can answer any questions that you may have about the TEFL journey.

It may seem like a leap at first, but in reality, it's just one foot in front of the other. There is literally a world of opportunity out there waiting for you!

Daily Inspired Life 

# *Kenyan Light Shine-On* **My Journey from Corporate Worrier to Confidence Coach**



**Annika Inken Kähler**

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