

# PREFACE

**E**very one of us beats ourselves up in the privacy of our own minds. We think that we are supposed to be better in some way: wealthier, stronger, more successful, thinner, smarter, a better parent—you name it. We cannot stand the fact that we are flawed, imperfect, human, so we spend our entire lives hiding our shortcomings, apologizing for them, blaming others for creating them, and hating ourselves for having them. By the time we hit adulthood, most of us have created such a false sense of self in an effort to cover up our inadequacies that we cannot even remember who we naturally are.

The only way to true joy, to true bliss, to true freedom, is to begin the work of uncovering our real selves—to chip away at the parts of us that are false, the façade we created to please our parents, the mask we built so the world would approve of us. Only when we are willing to stand tall in our own uniqueness, with our own idiosyncrasies, will we be able to do the work we came to do, to build the life we always dreamed of, to excel beyond our wildest dreams, and to live in true joy and abundance. When we finally tap into what we naturally are, we discover we already have the exact right skill set to become everything we have always secretly wanted to be.

Every saint—of all the religions—tells us that our differences are beautiful and are given to us for a reason. Every

## 16 THE BURN ZONE

fairy tale and superhero movie shows us how our flaws make us unique and special, that owning our perceived defects makes us powerful, that our difference *is* our destiny. Yet somehow, we still live in a world that yells at us constantly to be like everyone else, to be “perfect,” to blend in.

It is our work to not blend in, our work to stay true to ourselves, and our work to unravel and eventually understand the Divine purpose in the parts of ourselves that are not “the norm,” to discover the incredible power and wisdom that lies hidden in the owning and forgiving and healing of our wounds. The following Chinese folktale depicts this beautifully. Each one of us is designed differently—and *perfectly*; each one of us is damaged differently—and *perfectly*—in order to fulfill our own unique destiny:

An elderly woman had two large pots. Each hung on the ends of a pole, which she carried across her neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the whole pot delivered a full portion of water, while the cracked pot arrived only half-full. For a full two years, this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water.

The perfect pot was proud of itself and its accomplishments. The cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do. Finally, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.”

The old woman smiled. “Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path but not on the other pot’s side? That’s because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk

back, you water them. For two years, I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.”

---

If we ever want real peace inside our minds (and subsequently in the world), we must understand that each one of us is unique, that there *is* no carbon copy. Only then will we stop expecting other people to see and do things the way we would. Only then will we stop expecting ourselves to be further along than we are, to be somehow “better.” Only when we can truly accept and embrace our own flaws will we be able to accept and embrace each other’s.

Life dealt me some pretty heavy blows early on. I was introduced to death at a young age. Overly sensitive and very small, I never fit in with other kids and I was constantly teased and beat up until I became mean. I was raised by an unbalanced mother and was told continuously that virtually everything about me was “wrong.” I began searching for the meaning of life before I finished high school and was always desperate to find someone—anyone—who understood and appreciated me. I spent almost all of my young adulthood lost and searching. From the outside, my life looked perfect: I travelled the world as a model and professional dancer, but inside I was soul-sick. I felt incredibly alone.

After a lifetime of trying to be perfect, after subjecting myself to emotional and psychological abuse in an effort to become Enlightened, and after paying a small fortune for therapy, I have finally accepted that being flawed is part of the deal of being human and that getting damaged is an integral part of the journey—that when we expect ourselves to be somehow “further along” or “more successful” or in any way different than we are now, we cause ourselves unbearable suffering. After allowing myself to be brainwashed in extreme and seemingly unhealable ways, I have discovered that life wounds us in order to break us open so that our hearts may finally be exposed to the sun, so

## 18 THE BURN ZONE

that we soften, so that the Divine seed within gets awakened and begins its true journey towards its full magnificent bloom.

Dr. Maya Angelou once said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” I believe she is right. I wrote my story as a catharsis—a way to get it out of me so that I could heal and move on. It is my sincere desire that somewhere in the depths of my story you see your own and that my journey into, through, and out of the dark may help shine light on your own rocky path. If you have been struggling to forgive others, maybe my story will help you recognize that everything that has happened to you has happened *for* you. And if you have been struggling to forgive yourself, maybe, just maybe, my story will let you give yourself permission to love all parts of you and all parts of your history.

Embrace your skeletons in the closet. Pull them out and paint them pink. Celebrate them. Your skeletons are probably the most interesting part about you. *Your difference is your destiny.*

*“You were wild once. Don’t let them tame you.”*

—Isadora Duncan