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Preface

My life changed forever the day my eldest son, Cameron, died at age 26. The last several years of his life had been troubled and our relationship had been sorely tried and tested. His death left many things between us unresolved. The journey of grief and healing that followed this loss took a lot of time, a lot of tears and a lot of self-examination. It was my dark night of the soul, or what I've come to think of as my own personal Ground Zero—the shattering of my known world. Yet, over time, I've come to understand that the greatest tragedy in my life has also been the greatest gift.

Not for one moment do I want you to think that I didn't love my son when I tell you that his death has been the greatest gift I've ever received. Although his death shattered my heart, I know now it was a gift, either from him to me or from the Universe to both of us. And not for one moment do I want you to think that the loss was not the most staggeringly painful experience I've ever had or could imagine. It was. It is. And yet . . .

This is a story of transformation. Since Cameron's death, my life has been an amazing journey into new dimensions of understanding I never dreamed of before. I have journeyed into dreams, into strange and amazing experiences, even into foreign lands. And through it all, I have journeyed deeply into myself.

I believe we each come into this life having a plan for what we want to learn and accomplish. We map out life contracts before we incarnate and we make agreements with others who are coming into the world during our lifetime. Cameron and I surely had a contract with each other. No other explanation makes sense out of the pain and drama we experienced together.

In that other realm where we make these plans, it might be that we are a little overzealous about our goals. We don't always understand all the trials and tribulations fulfilling those contracts and agreements may entail. Our task is complicated by the fact that we arrive here with no conscious knowledge of the content of our contracts. It can be very challenging and difficult to do what we came here to do. That's why, I believe, we keep coming back to try again and again.

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For Cameron, I believe death was a release from a painful and no longer useful contract he chose in the time before time. Perhaps he had gotten so far off track that he decided to just start over. But who can say, really, whether he checked out early or simply fulfilled his contract in record time. Whichever the case, I know that he has been able to move on and to find the wholeness and happiness I always wished for him. In truth, despite appearances, he always *was* whole.

For me, his leaving became a gift that helped me to see my own path a little more clearly. Being released from our entanglement and shared drama gave me new freedom in my life. His death was my invitation or initiation into a journey I might otherwise have been too timid, or too preoccupied, to undertake.

This journey has shown me that the bond of love is never broken. We have walked together with those we love before and we shall walk with them again. I believe that although we have been together many times, developing unhealthy karmic connections along the way, we can break through the chains of karma if we choose. We can choose love over drama, love over karma and love over fear. We do not have to wait until our next lifetime together to heal our relationship with a deceased loved one. Death does not sever a relationship; we can continue to meet and interact with those we love even after they have died, especially in our dreams.

My purpose in sharing this story is to show you how grief can become the doorway to awakening. The breaking of your heart can, ultimately, lead you to greater wholeness. The Universe is constantly communicating with us and drawing us forward into better and truer expressions of ourselves. Sometimes it takes the shattering of our known way of being to open our eyes and ears to these messages of hope, healing and growth.

Imagine a leaf floating gracefully down to kiss the surface of a deep still pool, creating gentle ripples that radiate outward. The leaf may appear to be small and alone as it drifts along. But, in truth, it is supported by the vast body of water beneath it. Our lives are a little bit like that leaf. We skim the surface and are tossed about by life's currents. We rarely take the time to look deeper. We begin to imagine the flat plain of that surface existence is all there is, when all the while we are resting upon a deep well of mystery, magic and eternity. As long as we're living the life of a Surface Leaf, we may never tap into

our deeper Truth unless something comes along and shatters the surface, pulling us down into a deeper reality. That is the initiation of the Deep Water Leaf.

The death of my son and the personal journey it triggered in my life have allowed me to see, just a little, into the depths of that still pool, beyond the surface of life and death and into a deeper reality. Dreams have been my gateway and synchronicity my guide, while my trusty journal and art supplies have proven to be the most reliable traveling companions imaginable. All of these tools are available to you as well, should you choose to embark on your own transformational journey.

With dreams as my constant companion, amazing opportunities and experiences began to fill my waking life in the months before and the years after my son's death. The dreamspace began to spill over into my waking life. Or perhaps it had always been there and I was just now beginning to notice.

Synchronicity met me at every turn. My life took on the quality of a waking dream at times. And what is synchronicity but a doorway to the dreamspace? Synchronicity allows us to operate within the multidimensional structure of the dreamspace while wide awake.

Somehow Cameron's death broke open a door for me between dreaming and waking, between the living and the dead. It left me standing in a new space with one foot in each world. It opened my eyes to the eternal nature of the soul and the boundlessness of love. Philosophically, I had always understood that death is merely a transition to another state of being, but the loss of Cameron provided a venue for experiencing that truth first hand.

Sharing stories is an ancient human practice. We create and recreate ourselves constantly by the stories we tell. We build community and overcome isolation when we connect to each other through story. When I found an online grief support group¹ about a year after Cameron's death, I became acutely aware of how healing it was for me to hear other people's stories of loss and grief and to share my own story with them. It helped me to see that I was not alone on this journey. Nor are you.

If you are grieving, I wish for you the same kind of healing and transformation that I experienced. It may not be that you lost a child, but everyone experiences life-altering loss and grief at some point in their lives. Even the loss of a job, a home, your health or way of life

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can trigger immense grief. Yet always, the ending of one stage of life leads to the beginning of the next. If we can recognize even the possibility that within every tragedy a hidden gift awaits our discovery, we can begin to engage meaningfully in the transformative process of grief. Any experience that triggers the shattering of your identity provides you with the opportunity to create a new and better you.

Whatever your journey, whatever brought you to be reading these words today, know that it is no accident. Synchronicity is inviting you to join the Deep Water Leaf Society and embark on your own journey of healing and awakening. If anything in my story resonates within your own heart and soul, consider yourself a member.