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TRANSFERABLE . . . TO OTHERS, PART ONE

TRANSFERABLE . . . TO OTHERS, PART TWO

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THING ONE

THING TWO AND THING THREE

THING FOUR

THING FIVE

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M E A N I N G J F E A N H O H  
 P T S G N A K S C R W I B O T  
 Z E F L X G N O K I O G P X A  
 R N O I T S E U Q U N E V S P  
 J O U R N E Y L N Q D B M C L  
 E I T F N D E O N N E T S I L  
 G T C R B A I A K I R W F A S  
 D R A P A S M N A H Y E P S T  
 E U F B U E I H G T H K E C L  
 L T A L E H H M I L C A N I H  
 W H L R T D N L V A R O N E D  
 O I E C P F A I T H A G T N P  
 N U N S E E N J A F E S I C B  
 K Q I N R G O D W P S M K E H

ANGST

ASK

BEGIN

DEBATE

FAITH

HEART

HOPE

ILLUSION

INQUIRE

JOURNEY

KNOWLEDGE

LIFE

LISTEN

MEANING

MIND

NAME

PAIN

PATH

QUESTION

REALITY

SCIENCE

SEARCH

SOUL

THINK

TRUTH

WONDER

*See solution on page 174*

P  
 A  
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**ON THE RCH**  
**DOORSTEP**  
 G Q N R W R I  
 J U M L  
 SHATTERED  
 H V

Truth was dead.  
 God had never lived.  
 Life was filled with pain.  
 And death was the end of life.

These beliefs formed my worldview as a young woman: I sincerely believed that there was no God. God had not created man. Man had obviously created God.

Most of life's truly painful problems were never going to be answered by science, reason, or experience. So it was understandable that individuals and entire cultures would create mythical beings—call it God or call them gods—to fill in the gaps and calm

their fears. As a young Atheist, I simply considered myself a realist who preferred unanswered questions over fairy tales.

That was the end of the matter, at least in the beginning. Over the years, I transitioned from quiet confidence in my choice to a vocal critiquing of others' choices. I found it perplexing that intelligent humans would engage in the self-deception required to birth and feed faith. Observing people fabricate (or inherit) a culturally customized version of a supreme being, assign deity to their construct, and then claim that their invention gave them "peace" was disturbing for sure, but not devastating.

After all, everyone had coping mechanisms for living. Some buried themselves in work or a cause. Some turned to drugs or drink. Some focused on fitness or fixated on chocolate, and some consoled themselves by hoping for a better afterlife or deferring to a benevolent designer. All were attempts at managing the unresolved.

As an emerging adult, however, my Atheism gained momentum and developed a less tolerant edge. Faith did seem to empower some to be more optimistic, but what did it matter if it was not based in reality? I would rather be sober than sappy; discouraged than in denial.

Look around.

Innocent children are being abused globally in record numbers. Some will never know healthy love. And the religious claim that there is a godlike being that holds power over the affairs of mankind? Try telling *that* to the children: "I'm sorry that the vilest of beings bearing the name human are committing atrocities at your expense. But be encouraged, God lives and he loves you!" Please. Self-medicate on religion if you must. But do not offer it

## ON THE DOORSTEP

to me or the less fortunate in this world as some cruel placebo for unexplainable pain and unabated injustice.

Then one day, without warning and without invitation, my Atheistic worldview was shattered like fine glassware on a concrete floor, leaving me bloodied, stunned, and speechless. It was as though something you were absolutely certain existed only as the stuff and fluff of fairy tales knocked loud and clear and then stood there offending all your senses on the doorstep.

But perhaps it would be helpful to rewind the journey a decade or two, and start a thread closer to the beginning.



UPK  
 ALH WK  
**UNSINKABLE**  
 JOYDFL  
 IRDOCTOR  
 CHOICE  
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 L

“This is going to be hard to hear. I think you should consider terminating the pregnancy.”<sup>1</sup>

Angie was stunned. “Why?!” she demanded, gripping Lou’s hand.

“Your Rh factors are incompatible. Angie, your blood is Rh-negative. Lou’s is Rh-positive. If your baby inherits Lou’s Rh factor, you could develop antibodies that cross the placenta and attack the baby’s blood.”

The weighty words were an unexpected assault on the happiest season Angie had ever known. Months earlier, when Lou expressed his concern that she seemed sad, Angie surprised both of them with a flood of tears and an agonizing cry of “I want a baby!” Angie knew she was pregnant well before the tests made it official. Her joy was unsinkable.

The doctor continued, “Your baby will most likely suffer brain damage and perhaps be physically deformed. He or she will need a transfusion at birth and you may lose your life in the delivery room. I’m sorry to have to give you such news. This is why people have blood tests before they get married. You should have never conceived a child together.”

*Roe v. Wade* was still eight years away from that cool spring day in Las Vegas, Nevada. But the doctor knew that a woman’s life was at stake. In his professional opinion, terminating the pregnancy was the most reasonable medical option he knew to propose.

“It’s your choice, Angie,” Lou offered.

Angie’s mind was fixed. With anger disproportionate to her small size, she answered: “This baby is ours. I don’t care what it looks like. I don’t care what it can or can’t do. I’m carrying my baby!”

R  
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**S U D D E N L Y M E J**  
 V N H E R T C  
 U N H E A R D P  
 W O T  
 F **A W A K E**  
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*The natural rush of breathing crisp, fresh, morning mountain air. The cool clarity of wading in pure, green island waters. The creative anticipation that arises from savoring a cup of organic peppermint tea.*

I can only offer images in my attempt to capture the hours and days immediately following the encounter. In a period of minutes, I had abruptly transitioned from being completely certain that god-concepts were self-medicating illusions of the masses to being confronted mentally, physically, and emotionally by tangible confirmation that God is.

Not remodeled or restored. I felt *new*; suddenly alert and awake in a way I had never before experienced, as though life—true life—had taken its first deep breath.

Stunned by the encounter, it took me some time to readjust

to the presence of others in the room. Turning to my friend Susie and her mom, I saw tears falling from faces that were more serious than celebratory. Quietly, we walked together by the pastor, who said softly, “You do realize that something has just happened to you.” I nodded but was still too overwhelmed to speak.

Taking a few steps down the center (and only) aisle, I exited the small building and walked on chalky white gravel toward the car when someone called to me. “I have a word from God for you,” a man said, running to catch up. Turning around I thought, *A what from whom?* Then he spoke:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.<sup>2</sup>

“Okay,” I replied, without the faintest idea of what these words would mean to me in the days to come. We drove back to the house in silence.

Thirteen years later, my husband and I found the little white building on a drive through Illinois. Knocking on the door, a man answered and immediately recognized me. “People still talk about that day,” he explained. “It meant more to them than you could know.” Ushering us inside, he walked over to a file cabinet and pulled out a few stapled pages. “This is the message I spoke that day. You can have it if you’d like,” the pastor offered. Having never heard it the first time, I was now grateful for the opportunity to read it. “Thank you,” I said. Then, unheard message in hand, I walked into the room where the encounter had occurred.

The room’s simplicity was soothing. Wood pews, fading carpet, four walls. This was my sanctuary. Stillness was my offering.

## SUDDENLY AWAKE

Back in the foyer, Barry learned about the history of the little white building. The church had been in trouble that sacred day so long ago. People were hurting, some had left, and others were leaving. Shortly afterward a painful migration would scatter the members to other places. Later, the little white building would open its doors again with a new name. Though no longer standing beside one another week after week, the faithful were still united in spirit by their memories, one of which was the day their God interrupted the life of an unsuspecting young Atheist.



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**S O H B L U E** P K O L  
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Lou and Angie left the doctor's office that day and never looked back on their choice. Weeks later, when the doctor called to let them know their baby was a boy, they began buying everything blue. Louis Allen—the name they gave their anxiously awaited son—would be born to parents who wanted him desperately; to a mom who was willing to die so that he could live.

In his earnest and educated prognoses, the doctor had been right—but only about one thing.

The Sheet Metal Workers Union was still on strike October 29, 1965, when Angie checked into the hospital. Lou had found much-needed work in Utah, but when he heard that Angie had gone into labor, he chose to leave (and lose) the job and drive back home to Las Vegas. Two new grandmothers phoned while

he was rushing through a shower to get to the hospital: “Tell Lou the baby’s here and it’s a . . .”

Angie lay unconscious in intensive care when Lou arrived. As the doctor had predicted, she almost died giving birth. Six days later, Angie would be released from the hospital, but it would be four months of bed rest before she would be strong enough to hold her baby.

The unneeded transfusion cart had already been rolled away when the nurse placed a perfectly healthy baby in Lou’s arms. It was love at first sight. “What’s the baby’s name?” the waiting nurse asked, pen in hand. The pink cap confirmed the phone call: A new name was needed. “Her name is Alicia, named after Angie’s mom,” Lou replied. “Alicia Lynn Britt.”

Lost in the wonder of holding his dreamed-for girl, Lou had no idea that the name he had chosen for her meant “truthful one.”<sup>3</sup>