

WHY YOU NO SCREAM? Viva?!

My Big Mexican Adventure
that taught me how to
Live, Love, and Laugh Again

Brooke Martellaro



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INTRODUCTION

W*HY YOU NO SCREAM VIVA?! LEARNING TO LIVE, LOVE, AND LAUGH*
Again is a tale of life interrupted... or so it seemed at the time. There we were, Brooke and I, progressing along with our lives as planned, fulfilling the roles that caused our paths to cross. I was pulled into the story by a number of magnetic forces, not the least of which was the vulnerability and need of the main character herself.

Before this tale began, I did not know Brooke well. Our contact was primarily professional. On the days that I saw her, she was a genuine pleasure to work for, but she was frequently absent—conscientious in her role as the most dedicated workaholic that I have ever met. I often found myself wondering if she had many friends outside of work and Marc. She was always either working or traveling. Always.

Little did I know that I would end up stepping into the role of companion in a big way. With her sudden, startling break-up, I somehow landed myself the privilege of her friendship and trust... and I began to uncover one of my favorite people.

You see, Brooke has a way of winning one's heart, disarming one. She is a combination of your favorite, slightly naive high school pal, and the hot redhead that all of the guys are too shy to talk to. Somehow she still retains that sense of innocence combined with a spirit of play, making you think that whatever caper you're in the middle of is the most exciting thing that you've ever done. She's refreshing in a way that few people are—able to offer advice backed up with a frank, no-nonsense do-the-right-thing attitude. She's got a brain the size of Texas, and yet she's willing to drop everything and act as an accomplice to the most ridiculous of antics. She's the kind of person you want on your team.

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But I get ahead of the tale. Herein lies the series of events that helped to build a change in this spectacular individual.

I invite readers to immerse themselves in this story of lost love and found self. Many of these events and the lessons therein apply to all of us women. If you've been through it, you'll relate.

Do read on and join our journey! Seize the day!

Kim Magee

May, 2013

FOREWORD

AS MY GREAT FRIEND KIM SAID IN THE INTRODUCTION, I WAS A workaholic at the beginning of this tale, but due to the events depicted in this true-to-life book, I have moved beyond “holic” to “holistic”—a balanced life of creating meaning, growth and joy; whether in work or play and in all relationships and life endeavors. Perhaps it is my foremost purpose in life to find and keep this balance and to help others find their ideal balance at any given time. So, while I am still a finance professional in Colorado, I also lead custom-made, life-enhancing workshops in my beloved Playa del Carmen, Mexico, where most of this book takes place. This magical place served as a catalyst for my regaining the excitement and magic of living fully, authentically and with great joy.

At age thirty-nine, I became devastated by a traumatic break-up with my life partner of eleven years and my world shrunk to the size of my navel—(at which I was spending too much time staring and contemplating.) In the recovery process I learned so much and had so many grand adventures, I just had to write this book.

Why You No Scream Viva?! is a book of my simple stories based on the escapades, adventures and events taking place (mostly) on the Mayan Riviera and the “characters” that peopled them. This book not only reveals my recovery from the harrowing break-up—a retrieval of self that began in Playa del Carmen, Mexico—but also highlights all the risks I decided to take to regain, develop and expand my sense of self and to find my place in this world with more self-awareness and love.

With a little help from those rascally pals serendipity and synchronicity and the friendship of one trusted friend, Kim, I was able to become

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more and more alive, more and more me, instead of shrinking back from life after loss and disappointment. I had to connect with my intuition and common sense, my courage, insight and innate generosity of heart to get out there and make things happen in ways that surprised and challenged me. In short, I had to redefine myself. For me the process required grieving, opening to serendipity, finding my healing place, taking new risks, taking massive, decisive action, getting back in the game, getting grounded and moving on. I had to learn not to flinch from the negative but to embrace, understand and deal with it while learning how to always *choose* the positive way to resolve and rise above it.

While this book is mostly memoir, I call it a book “based on real events” because although about ninety-five percent of the events did occur; a very few were invented to flesh out a thought or feeling that did occur to me. Some of the dialogue was also invented, but the intention behind the words is true and real. I changed most of the names, except for Kim, Cindy, Sarah, River, Meko, Dexter the Dog, Marc, Mark and Mark (yes, there are three with that name). I honor each “character” in my story. I am grateful to them for what I learned because of their presence in my life.

Life is ironic. Sometimes the most tragic events in your life can end up being the biggest blessings of all. Life is also comical. In reflecting back on everything that happened during the “recovery” years, including all the pain, I found humor in almost every little thing that happened. Part of my recovery necessitated embracing my sense of humor, however quirky it may be, and it threads through the book. I want to persuade my readers and workshop participants that it’s so important to be able to laugh at yourself and find lightness in your life’s journey—even if you have to wait a few years to see the humor and hidden treasure in it all. We really should stop taking ourselves so seriously. Seriously!

I’ve written this book for women in all stages of relationships with others and with themselves. For all you women out there who don’t yet see that your past heartbreaks are really gifts; opportunities for you to grow into the amazing, strong, compassionate women that you are at your cores, I invite your transformation into gratitude and happiness.

Foreword

For those of you still stinging from loss or betrayal, my story may offer perspective and some workable ideas about moving on. Perhaps you are not stuck in the depths of despair but have just given up a little on finding the joy of living, loving, and the magic of connecting with people. I hope my book will encourage you to find delight again.

I also wrote *Why You No Scream Viva?!* to speak to anyone who finds herself at a crossroads in life and is looking for inspiration to charge forward again and create her life anew. Risk-taking can be surprisingly rewarding, I found.

In writing my stories of this time period in my life, I wanted to capture some of the enchantment I found—being, living and working in Playa del Carmen—even if I could not define exactly what it was at the time. That enchantment continues to impact and give meaning to my life. At the same time, the challenges I faced while living in the Riviera Maya, involved considerable pain and loss of innocence without which I would not have learned some of life's most important lessons and messages.

Finally, this book is a love story. A story about falling out of love with a persona I built around a particular man and a particular lifestyle. And a story about falling in love with a new persona built around the spiritual being I truly am. I fell in love: with me, with friends, with other men, with my life and with all the beauty and wonderment of this world.

I wish I could say that I thought up this brilliant strategy on my own and executed it flawlessly. But the fact is, I stumbled into this journey—at least at the beginning. I now genuinely feel I was being guided by my own inner voice to take this journey so that I could come out the other side a stronger, more vibrant woman and then share my experience with the world to help others find their own necessary journey.

The ethereal is part of the Mayan Spell, believe me, but there is a grounded reality that comes along with it. In my journey to Maya, I found both the highest natural high and the most down-to-earth realities ever. Both of these elements make us strong and certain, and don't we all want those things? I hope you will be able to connect to a place within you that is beyond laughter and tears; a vast, wondrous space wherein you find treasures of your heart and soul as yet undiscovered.

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I'll leave you with my new, favorite motto: "Be the kind of woman that when your feet hit the floor each morning, the devil says, 'Oh, crap, she's up!'" Anonymous.

Brooke Martellaro

May, 2013

The most beautiful things in the world

cannot be seen or even touched.

They must be felt within the heart.

~ Helen Keller ~



PART ONE

Grieving and Opening to Serendipity - Discovering Playa



*Challenges are what make life interesting;
Overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.*

~ Joshua J. Marine ~

Chapter 1

THE BREAK-UP

“BALNEARIO; THAT’S WHERE WE’RE GOING FOR CHRISTMAS,” MY faithful friend Kim declares, as she once again assures me I will survive the break-up.

BAHL-neh-AH-reeh-OH. Where’s Balneario? I think. I’ve traveled all over the world and I’ve never heard of it. Maybe that’s a country in the Indonesian islands, near Bali. Kim loves that part of the world. Yeah, I’ll bet that’s where we’re going. “Cool, I’ve never been to that country,” I respond. “It’s not a country, silly. *Balneario* is the word for a Latin American seaside resort. We’re going to Playa del Carmen, Mexico.”

“Oh, okay. Why didn’t you just say so?” I scoff. Having been equally well-traveled around the world, she is obviously expanding my travel horizons and improving my vocabulary at the same time. (Note to self, look up *Balneario* on Wikipedia.)

If I can muster the energy, this will be the latest attempt to run away from what has become my life.

Okay, deep breath, Brooke. You see, I have recently found myself dumped by my boyfriend. What a concept, “dumped.” Who invented that term, anyway? Dump is what you do with the garbage. Grrrr. Why can’t we say “released” instead? Would changing the word soften the blow?

Anyway, I’m figuring out who I am as a single woman for the first time in twenty years. Marc and I have been in a committed relationship for the past eleven years and prior to that I was in a nine-year relationship

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with my ex-husband. I know this sounds pathetic, but being “released” from a lifestyle of traveling first-class around the world seems to be way worse than being released from a lifestyle of traveling road-warrior style around the state. I’m just sayin’..

Okay, so I’ve decided. The word “released” does *not* soften the blow. I think about Marc’s new girlfriend who now resides in *my* house. “Dumped” by the curb like a pile of last month’s magazines is definitely how it feels. Oh, and did I mention that I’m about to turn forty in a few weeks? Grrrr.

The thought of starting my life over and dating again at age forty is S-C-A-R-Y. I was a very different person at age twenty—a mischievous, adventurous college student with no life experience. Dating was just a party. But, for the last decade or so, I’ve created my identity as part of a worldly couple on the go, way more than as an individual. At my age, we all have more life experience, more loss, and more baggage. And I wonder, *regarding dating, have the rules changed?*

Not only are all my future dreams with my ex shattered, as I said, so is my jetsetter lifestyle of globetrotting around the world. If this sounds materialistic to you, let me point out some positive intangibles to that lifestyle: freedom to move, to see, and to connect with an immense part of this amazing planet. My world, over the past eleven years, had become huge (literally and figuratively).

On the other hand, money does not buy happiness, or should I say, joy. The last six months of our relationship were not as blissful as the other ten and a half years, despite the luxurious vacations. Even in the best Paris penthouse you can find, if the connection with your lover is gone, the scenery can look rather bleak and the Eiffel tower can look like just a pretty heap of metal.

Kim is ever to the rescue, offering physical space and probably hoping upon hope that I will free up my mental and emotional space. She’s offering time out from my rapidly shrinking life and introverted mental state with plans to go to Mexico.

The Break-Up

If it wasn't for my caring friend, I might stew in this forever. So, I'll do this for her. I talk to myself (as I do a lot these days.) *Okay, Brooke, time to get off this pity party merry-go-round and start living again!*

Chapter 2

THE GREAT ESCAPE

IT'S 7:00 A.M., ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, JUST SIX DAYS BEFORE Christmas. We are flying on a chartered air-bus down to Playa del Carmen, Mexico. I'm exhausted, having been up drinking adult beverages until 2:00 a.m. at a Christmas party the night before. I try eating a breakfast sandwich from the airport McDonald's, but my body is having no part in that. I lost my appetite two months ago, when "The Tragedy" occurred. The good thing is, I shed twenty pounds in two weeks. No joke. Best diet I've ever been on.

I ask Kim, who has been my constant companion since that shocking day, "Is this what single women in their forties do for fun these days? Stay out half the night drinking and then head off to unknown foreign locations in a large metal tube that could be mistaken for a cattle car?"

She frowns, "Cattle car? Brooke, you are clearly either delirious or still inebriated. Get some sleep." She herself looks physically and emotionally drained, having taken care of me over the past eight weeks and also working like a dog just before the holidays. She turns back to her pile of magazines as if whatever she's looking at is the most interesting thing she's ever read.

Am I whining? I've got to stop that. Take a nap, Brooke.



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Several hours later, we arrive at El Dorado Royale, the all-inclusive resort just outside of town we will call home for the next week. Wikipedia said that a *balneario* is: “A Latin American seaside resort offering recreation, sports, entertainment, food, hospitality, retail and cultural events - characterized by being flooded by masses of tourists during the summer seasons.” Well, okay, even though it is winter, this is what we’re getting.

We walk into the resort on wobbly legs. But, my God, it’s love at first sight! The resort is all white marble and tile. The air, while balmy, is fresh and smells sweet. As we climb the stairs to the lobby, I notice the grounds are impeccably landscaped with palm trees, agave plants and aloe vera. The huge lobby is an indoor/outdoor setting with big, red bromeliads strategically placed. They have also decorated with red and white poinsettias everywhere which reminds me that it is Christmastime, even in Mexico.

As we look out from the lobby toward the ocean, there are two spiraling staircases leading down to the heart of the resort. In between the two staircases are more palm trees, cacti and my favorite plant of all, bougainvillea. They have intertwined both white and bright pink bougainvillea. I breathe in the sweetness of the flowers and taste the salty air on my lips. A feeling of comfort and familiarity washes over me. A familiarity of that cherished feeling of freedom I had in my travels with Marc.

Will I ever find a partner as adventurous as Marc again? Or is there a reason why they give you black balloons when you turn forty?

I drift back to the present, taking a deep breath. I am breathing less shallowly here, that’s good. What is it about this air? The breeze wafting in and out of the buildings is unencumbered by screens or window frames or even walls—posts and columns hold up the rooftops for the most part. Everywhere I look I see fantastic flora.

I roll my suitcase over to a giant, exotic arrangement of birds-of-paradise mixed in with the most startling flowers and succulents not even a parrot could outdo in colors. I just stand there admiring them, breathing them in, feeling suddenly about five years old because they

The Great Escape

tower above me and I'm lost in wonder. The flowers seem to whisper, "You are vibrant, vivid and beautifully colorful just as we are."

Before I can shut down that optimistic voice with my own negative view of getting older, I feel a tiny opening in my heart and am surprised by a sudden, if fleeting, feeling that I am ageless. *I'm experiencing chills and a kind of thrill goes through my body then is gone. Interesting... I just vacillated between ages five and thirty-nine in a matter of moments. What a weird out-of-body experience I am having. I want to have that ageless feeling again. Can we choose our age, no matter how many years we've been on this earth?*

Chapter 3

SLEEPING BEAUTIES

AFTER CHECKING INTO THE RESORT AND CHECKING OUT THE grounds, Kim and I both lie down to take a little nap. Ever experience lying down for a nap and suddenly feeling like your body weighs one thousand pounds? Our sighs of relief could have set off an alarm if there was such a thing as a sigh detector.

Yes, we are both physically and emotionally exhausted. Me, from weeping and blubbering twelve out of sixteen waking hours of the day, every day for the last two months. *How is the body able to manufacture that much water? Poor body—no wonder you're so wrung out.* And Kim, I'm guessing, must be exhausted from being my emotional crutch for the last sixty days, while still maintaining some semblance of her own life. Imagine someone calling you every couple of hours every day for two months just to sob about every little thing which reminded that person of their now defunct life. It was actually hard to find anything that *didn't* remind me of Marc. But poor Kim, listening to my pity parties must not have been an easy job, for sure. I'm amazed we actually remained friends until this day.

Note to self: I am going to have to elevate Kim to the status of "Saint Kim."



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Some six hours later, it's dark outside, not a creature is stirring, and we awaken to discover that we have officially slept away our first day of vacation! Crap! We didn't want to miss out on anything.

Since we are both still feeling a little sleepy, we decide to order room service—*Nachos, por favor*. Room service discreetly knocks and a young Latino man presents us with a little tray and then slips out again.

“What's this?” we both exclaim in unison. Their version of nachos looks nothing like my beloved heaping mound of chips, cheese and all the toppings. We stare down at the plate of twelve chips, beans and a smidge of some type of indistinguishable cheese, look at each other and just laugh! There's no meat, no salsa, no jalapenos, no guacamole, no sour cream. Nope, just some triangles, beans and that teensy bit of cheese. I would not recommend room-service nachos unless you are a minimalist type of eater—which we become this night because we're still too punch-drunk to dress up and go eat someplace to fill our famished bellies.

We watch a little TV and then I crack open my chosen reading for the trip, a book titled *Narcissism*. I've been suspecting that my ex is a narcissist, and I'm determined to understand what makes a narcissist tick. That way, maybe I can understand him better when we get back together, which I'm positive will happen. *He's just having a temporary fling, right?*

We agree to have lights out at 9:00 p.m., for a good night's sleep to get an early start on the next day, since we slept away our first day. For some reason this reminds me of summer camp as a young girl. I remember how we were forever trying to break the “lights out” rule by staying up as late as we could, whispering and giggling. Then the camp counselor would give us the talk about how we had growing bodies and needed lots of sleep to enjoy the vigorous activities of camp. Well, I didn't need the “talk” now. My last hazy thought was, *Will a bugle blast wake us up in the morning?* Then I sink once again into a dreamless sleep, happy my best friend is already snoring as sweetly as a saint!