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Prologue

ON FEBRUARY 25, 1969, Christina, a twenty-year-old administrative assistant in the department of political science at Pomona College in Claremont, California, went to the department's basement mailbox to pick up her employer's mail. As she touched a package in the mailbox a bomb detonated, hurling her across the room. Dust and soot filled the air; six-foot splinters of wood shot like arrows into the cement wall behind her. Flames from the explosion scorched Christina's face, leaving her temporarily blind. The blast severed two fingers from her right hand and ruptured both eardrums.

Christina planned this experience before she was born.
And she knows why.

Preface

IN MAY OF 2003, I was leading an unfulfilling life as a self-employed marketing and communications consultant. Although I enjoyed some of my work, I did not derive deep satisfaction from any of it. I often felt that if I were to fall off the face of the Earth, my clients would hardly notice; they would simply plug someone else into my role. More important, my life was not a unique expression *of my soul*. A spiritual but not a religious person, I longed to make a contribution to the world that would be “uniquely me,” but I had no idea what that might be.

I had exhausted the usual routes one explores to find meaning and purpose. I was lost and floundering. Then, an inspiration came to me: why not consult a medium? Although I had a strong belief in God, I had never (as far as I knew) directly experienced the metaphysical. I felt I had nothing to lose. I researched mediums and selected someone with whom I felt comfortable.

My session with the medium took place on May 7, 2003. I remember the exact date because on that day my life changed. I told the medium very little about myself, describing my circumstances only in the most general terms. She explained that each of us has spirit guides, nonphysical beings with whom we plan our lives prior to incarnation.

Through her I was able to speak with mine. They knew *everything* about me—not only what I had done but also what I had thought and felt. For example, they referred to a specific prayer I had said to God some five years earlier. At a particularly difficult time I had prayed, “*God, I can’t do this alone. Please send help.*” My guides told me that additional nonphysical assistance had been provided. “*Your prayer was answered,*” they said. I was astounded.

Eager to understand the suffering I had experienced, I asked my guides about the major challenges I had faced. They explained that I had planned these challenges before birth—not for the purpose of suffering, but for the growth that would result. I was shaken by this information. My conscious mind knew nothing of pre-birth planning, yet intuitively I sensed truth in their words.

Although I did not realize it at the time, my session with the medium triggered a profound spiritual awakening for me. I would later understand that this awakening was really a *remembering*—a remembering of who I am as an eternal soul and, more specifically, what I had planned to do on Earth.

For the next few weeks I continued with life as usual, although the information from my guides was constantly on my mind. I did not know what to do with it. One afternoon I took a break from work and went for a walk—and had an experience even more profound than my session with the medium. *I suddenly felt overwhelming, unconditional love for every person I saw!* No words can adequately convey the power of this love. It was of an intensity and depth I had never experienced and did not know was possible. For each person—the mother pushing her baby in a stroller, the cab driver waiting for a fare, the child playing at the corner, the barber cutting

hair behind the window of his barbershop—I felt pure, limitless love.

Though I had never before heard of such an experience, I knew intuitively what was happening: *I was in enhanced, immediate communion with my soul*. In effect my soul was saying to me, “*This love is who you are.*” I now believe my soul gifted me with this experience to facilitate the work I would soon begin.

I became obsessed with reading about spirituality and metaphysics. As I read I thought often about pre-birth planning. All my life I had viewed my challenges as nothing more than meaningless suffering and their occurrences as random and arbitrary. Had I known that I’d planned my challenges, I would have seen them rich with purpose. That knowledge alone would have greatly eased my suffering. Had I also known *why* I’d planned them, I could have consciously learned the lessons they offered. Feelings of fear, anger, resentment, blame, and self-pity would have been replaced by a focus on growth. Perhaps I might even have been grateful for the challenges.

During this period of intense study and inner exploration, I met a woman who is able to channel her soul and who agreed to let me speak with her soul about pre-birth planning. I had no knowledge of channeling and was taken aback when she went into a trance and another consciousness, one clearly distinct from hers, began to speak through her. I spoke with her soul for fifteen hours over the course of five meetings.

These conversations were thrilling. They verified and complemented my reading and study. Her soul told me in detail about her own pre-birth planning: the various challenges that had been discussed and the reasons some were selected. Here I had direct, specific confirmation of a phenomenon

of which very few people were aware. Because the pain in my life had made me extremely sensitive to—and intensely motivated to relieve—the suffering of others, I was excited by the potential healing an awareness of pre-birth planning could bring to people. I knew that the information I had discovered could lighten their suffering and imbue their challenges with new meaning and purpose. As a result I resolved to write a book about the subject and to share its significance with others.

My enthusiasm for my new path was, however, tempered by the uncertainty of letting go of the old. Though unfulfilling, it was at least comfortable and familiar. Nevertheless, I was sustained—indeed, compelled to go forward—by the importance of the work, the opportunity finally to express myself in unique ways that would be of service to the world, and the certainty of knowing that came from directly experiencing my soul.

At first I thought the idea for the book had originated in this lifetime. In truth, however, I had simply remembered my own pre-birth planning. By working with several gifted mediums and channels, I discovered I had planned not only to write a book on this subject but also to interview at least one of the people whose stories appear on these pages. In all I had dozens of sessions with mediums and channels, during which I spoke with many wise beings in spirit about my challenges and about pre-birth planning in general. In this book I offer to you what they have taught me.

I now understand why I had planned certain challenges for myself: I wanted to take the journey those who read this book may also take. I, too, at times felt victimized by the universe and blamed others for the “bad” things that happened to me. I saw my challenges as pointless, empty suffering and doubted my worth when I did not rise to them in the way

I would have liked. But with my knowledge of pre-birth planning, I now realize that an entirely different perspective on life challenges is possible. In writing *Your Soul's Plan*, I set out to teach what I had most needed to learn.

It takes a great deal of courage to live the plans you made before you were born. My desire, my most fervent wish, is that you recognize the tremendous courage you show in every moment of every day when, with each breath, you reaffirm your decision to embrace and learn from your own challenges. Within that recognition, you will find your soul.

Introduction

TO RESEARCH THE PRE-BIRTH PLANNING of life challenges, I collaborated with four extraordinarily gifted mediums and channels. Together we obtained information about the pre-incarnation plans of dozens of individuals, ten of whom share their stories in this book. In this introduction I will explain how I found these individuals, how the mediums and I researched their pre-birth planning, and mediumship and channeling in general. The conceptual underpinnings of pre-birth planning—that is, the reasons why we as souls choose to incarnate and experience challenges—are then presented in chapter 1.

Finding Interviewees

People replied to messages I posted to Internet news groups and bulletin boards. In some instances I asked specifically for individuals who were aware of (or at least open to) the possibility of pre-birth planning. On other occasions I expressed an interest in finding those who could talk about their challenges in a metaphysical context. At times I simply asked for people who wanted to discuss the underlying spiritual meaning of the difficulties they had faced. I sought variety and balance in their experiences and backgrounds.

Generally, interviewees said they were motivated by a desire to help others who face the same challenge. Of the ten eventually selected for this book, three used pseudonyms, and all said they would like to hear from readers. You will find their contact information in appendix A.

Eight of the ten interviewees planned their life challenge as a primary experience; that is, they sought the challenge from the initial stages of their pre-birth planning and they knew the challenge was highly likely to occur. One (Doris, chapter 2) planned her challenge as a secondary experience, meaning that its occurrence would be determined by her response to a primary challenge. Another (Bob, chapter 4) did not select his challenge during his initial pre-birth planning but instead created a new life blueprint at the soul level after an unexpected event at birth. Of the many pre-birth plans I examined, these were the only ones in which the challenge was not designed as a primary experience. I included these stories as important illustrations of how we as souls are aware of and use potential forks in the road for personal growth.

As you read the stories, you'll probably wonder whether you planned your own life challenges. My research suggests that the vast majority of life challenges are indeed selected. In general, the more profound the challenge the more likely it was chosen before birth. If a particular experience is important enough for you to ponder whether you planned it, then it is likely you did. One important exception, however, concerns experiences our intuition warns us to avoid. Unplanned challenges can occur when we ignore our intuitive promptings; therefore, internal "danger signals" are to be acknowledged and honored at all times.

It is not, however, my intent to suggest that all life challenges are planned, either as probabilities or as possibilities.

When we incarnate we have free will, and we can exercise our free will to create challenges that were not part of our pre-birth planning. The operative word is *create*. I believe we are the creators of everything we experience, and unplanned challenges occur when we vibrationally draw them to us because we need the wisdom they can engender. (In such instances intuition would not guide us away from the learning we need.) Our growth derives from the experiences themselves, regardless of whether or not we planned them. Therefore, this book will be most helpful if you focus on *why you might have* planned a particular challenge in your life, not on *whether* you did.

The question of *why* will be addressed as you read the stories of others' pre-birth planning. In their planning you may hear echoes of your own. I would suggest you not limit your reading only to those stories dealing with challenges you or your loved ones face, even if you are in crisis. Challenges that appear to be quite different from one another may have been planned to teach similar lessons or result in similar growth. You may find your *motivations* as a soul in the story of someone whose life is, at least on the surface, nothing like yours.

The Stories

Each story begins with an interview in which the individual and I focus on a specific life challenge. These interviews should be read carefully. Often, they contain details that appear at first to be unrelated to the challenge but that in the sessions with the mediums prove to be essential for a full understanding. I have not related complete personal histories; therefore, there may be no reference to certain blocks of time in the person's life.

To make this book as helpful as possible, I focused on common life challenges and organized the chapters by type of challenge. In some respects the stories build on one another, and the first stories provide basic information about metaphysics that will help you better appreciate subsequent stories. I therefore encourage you to read them in order.

Of the many mediums and channels with whom I have worked, I consider the four on these pages—Deb DeBari, Glenna Dietrich, Corbie Mitleid, and Staci Wells—to be among the most talented. Each has conducted thousands of readings over the course of their respective careers. Their contact information is presented in appendix B. I have had personal sessions with all of them, and they were extremely accurate in providing information about my life they could not have known without true psychic abilities, abilities that are different for each. As Corbie explained to me, mediums and channels are like professors at a university: each has a particular specialty. If you attend a faculty cocktail party, you would not approach the biology professor with a sociology question, nor would you ask a scholar in the English department to solve a mathematical equation. Rather, you would recognize their various areas of expertise and appreciate what each has to offer.

Each interview is followed by one or more sessions with the mediums. I had told the interviewees that I would like to begin by asking the medium, “Was this challenge planned before birth, and if so, why?” They had agreed that this was a sound starting point, and further inquiries grew out of the response to that question. In some instances they permitted me to handle most, if not all, the questioning during those sessions.

Generally, when medium Staci Wells did not conduct the primary reading, I asked her and her spirit guide to do a

supplementary reading. This reading served three important functions. First, it provided another confirmation that the life challenge had indeed been planned. Second, it offered additional information about that planning. Third, because Staci has the rare ability to visualize and listen to our pre-birth planning sessions, all her readings (whether primary or supplementary) provided *actual conversations* from them. This dialogue afforded a remarkable glimpse into the nonphysical realm, one in which we were privy to the hopes, feelings, and motivations of souls. As you will see, these conversations focused exclusively on the planning of life challenges—not because souls don't plan other aspects of their lives, but because Staci and I asked her guide to bring us only the most relevant portions of the discussion. Interviewees were present for primary but not supplementary readings, though supplementary readings were always done with the person's consent. Before each reading I provided Staci with the interviewee's name and birthdate, which her spirit guide needed to access information about that person.

In the pre-birth planning sessions that Staci hears, souls speak in the first person; however, in two channelings not conducted by Staci, a soul refers to itself as “we.” Staci's spirit guide explained that the souls saying “I” are focused on the one life that is being planned, whereas the souls saying “we” are focused on their many previous incarnations.

Following the sessions with the mediums, each story concludes with my commentary. In these commentaries I draw upon my study of pre-birth planning and metaphysics, including the many conversations I had with nonphysical beings like spirit guides and angels, to expand upon the sessions.

Both the personal interviews and the readings with the mediums were edited for clarity; syntax was amended to enhance readability.

Mediums and Channels

Mediums and channels receive information in a variety of ways. If they are *clairaudient*, they hear the thoughts of nonphysical beings. (I use the term *Spirit* to refer to such beings; by contrast, I use *spirit* to refer to the nonphysical realm.) When a medium or channel “tunes in” to a nonphysical consciousness, it is much like setting the dial on your radio. Just as every station is at a particular wavelength, so, too, is each being with whom they speak. At such times true telepathic communication takes place. If mediums or channels are *clairsentient*, they have the ability to feel the emotions of others. *Clairvoyance* is the ability to visualize things that have happened or will happen; *claircognizance* is an inner knowing, often in the form of a feeling. Channels are adept at “stepping aside” so that another consciousness may speak directly through them. Deb, Glenna, Corbie, and Staci have combinations of these abilities, which elicited valuable information about the interviewees’ pre-birth planning.

Certain words have particular significance when used by mediums and channels. When they say, “I get,” “I sense,” or “I feel,” they may be picking up information through one of their psychic gifts. People often say “I feel” when expressing an opinion. Mediums and channels, however, may use the word *feel* to denote perception beyond the five senses.

Mediums and channels communicate with a variety of beings, including spirit guides. A spirit guide is a highly evolved, nonphysical entity who in most (but not all)

cases has had many physical incarnations. Through these incarnations, they have acquired great wisdom that now allows them to act as guides to those of us on the physical plane. Spirit guides speak with us in the same way our souls do: through inspiration, feelings, ideas, and intuition. When we have a “gut” feeling about something or when we “just know” that something is so, these are often communications from either our guides or our souls (also referred to as the “higher self”). One example is the person who decides not to board a plane because he or she has a “bad feeling” that something will happen and thus avoids a fatal accident. Spirit guides, who are well aware of our life plans and whether or not they include plane crashes, can create such feelings in us. It is said that Spirit whispers to us; meditation is a powerful way to quiet the mind so we may hear those messages. Experienced meditators are able to hear the inflow of nonphysical energies into the body, something they describe as sounding like the wind.

Soul Planning

Prior to birth, we have in-depth conversations with our spirit guides and the other souls with whom we will share our incarnation. We discuss the lessons we hope to learn and the ways in which we will learn them. When Staci accesses these discussions and the places in which they are held, she sees certain commonalities: a room in which the incarnating souls gather to talk; a smaller, adjoining room from which the guides monitor the planning, coming forth when called upon for advice; a black-and-white “chessboard” or “flow-chart” used to map if-then scenarios in the life to come. The squares on the chessboard are developmental stages in the individual’s life.

When Staci and I first began our collaboration, I incorrectly assumed that these images were metaphors placed in her mind by her spirit guide for concepts and processes beyond human understanding, but her guide later told me that these things exist. He explained that in the non-physical realm, thought is literally and instantly creative. There is agreement among all involved that the pre-birth planning will be conducted in a certain place and will use certain tools like the chessboard. This mutual agreement, expressed in thought, brings into being the items and locations Staci sees.

In one session, Staci provided the following information about the place in which souls conduct pre-birth planning:

In this particular building, there are eight floors and eight planning rooms on each floor. I am told [by Spirit] that this is because eight is the number of karma and destiny. The eight vibration was planned for this building so that it would best serve its intended purposes.

This building is one of eight laid out like flower petals in a circular shape. The buildings are rectangular. They are each eight floors, eight planning rooms within each floor. They tell me there are twelve such groups of buildings on the other side, most of which are used for planning lives on Earth. They say that many souls prefer to come back to the same building, the same floor, and the same room if possible. It gives them a feeling of comfort and stability, and from that one place they're more able to sense their involvement in each lifetime and the time in between lives.

When Staci's spirit guide conveys to her conversation from pre-birth planning sessions, he is accessing the Akashic Records, though he prefers the term "Book of Lives." This is a complete record of our every experience, act, word,

and thought. When mediums provide their clients with information about past lives, they are often tapping into the Akashic Records. The great American psychic, Edgar Cayce, used these records in the thousands of readings he conducted.

As mediums see and speak with beings in spirit, they often describe them as male or female, but souls are actually a combination of male and female energies. When Deb sees an interviewee's "deceased" loved one the way the person appeared in physical life, it is because that consciousness chose to appear that way. When Staci sees a male or female soul in a pre-birth planning session, it is because that soul is creating—in a sense trying on—the energy of the upcoming incarnation (which Staci and her spirit guide refer to as "the cloak of the personality"). The same is true when a spirit guide appears as male or female. Guides have both male and female energies, but they may identify more strongly with one or the other and, therefore, choose to appear in that form.

In the planning sessions, nonphysical beings use some distinctly modern terms. Following one session with Staci, I asked her spirit guide if he had actually said *self-esteem* or if it was the closest approximation available in Staci's mind. He confirmed that he had. At times spirit guides and other nonphysical beings spoke without using our rules of grammar. Staci's guide told me, "We do not always speak in ways that you would consider to be grammatically correct."

The realm of spirit, in which we plan our incarnations and to which we will return when they are complete, is accessible to us now through mediums and channels. The equivalent of spirit guides in human form, they are compassionate, sensitive, and insightful pathfinders to the other side.