

THE BEINGNESS PROJECT...

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Rita stood at the check out stand with her cart full of groceries. She felt the ache in her shoulders, the tightness in her lower back and the throb in her feet. As she patiently stood there waiting for her turn, she reflected on the long day at work. She felt fortunate, in that she did not hate her job, however, she definitely did not love her work. Like most people she knew, it paid the bills and kept her health insurance affordable. As she adjusted her weight to shuffle back and forth between feet, she glanced up at the magazines lining the rack near the conveyor belt which awaited her food items.

Reading the headlines, she chuckled quietly to herself, it was always the same, so and so ended their relationship, cheated on their partner or got married, 7 ways to achieve the perfect abs, 21 days to lose the unwanted pounds, blah..blah...blah.... "*Sensationalism at its best,*" she thought. They all marketed to the change people hoped for or gifted people with escapism by getting wrapped up in a celebrities personal life. Rarely did Rita pull one of the magazines off the shelf, for she knew it was a waste of money and none of the silly stories truly intrigued her. Sometimes the travel magazine, or People's magazine would catch her eye.

Only two more people in front of her, she was joyfully almost there. Soon she would be heading home to make dinner for herself and two teenagers. It had been ten years since her divorce, the weeks the kids were with her it was busy, yet she loved it, for she knew that in a few short years she would be experiencing what people called, "*empty nest syndrome.*" Thus, she embraced all the

time she could get with them, even though at their ages spending time with their peers was way more important than mom and dad.

Interrupting her thoughts she looked back up at the magazines, casually glancing across the bold words on the covers. Just as she was about to look away, a headline caught her eye, she did not recall seeing it before - "*Are You Content? Why Not?.*" The question hit her, what was her true answer? "*I don't know,*" she thought. Curious she picked up the magazine. Opening the front cover with the intention to find the contents page, so she could go directly to the article which had intrigued her, she was shocked as the page before her blurred. It was like a fog slid across the page, wiping it clean. Before her eyes big bold words wrote themselves across the top of the blank page - "*Are you happy?.*"

She gasped in reaction, calling the attention of the people near her. Quickly she pretended to cough, smiling politely at the glances, flipping the pages of the magazine, so as to look normal. As soon as everyone went back to what they were doing, she opened the front cover again. Just like before the page washed out and the bold words -

"Are you happy?." appeared again.

"Not really" she responded quietly in her head.

"Why not?." typed itself across the next line.

Rita almost dropped the magazine, again all eyes looked her way. Closing the magazine and smiling she moved ahead as the front person completed their transaction.

Appearing "normal," Rita looked at the front cover of the magazine, now stunned by the title which was completely different - "***The BEingness Project, Your Personal Journey Home....***" What was happening?! Transfixed she stared at the cover, almost afraid to open it again. Looking around she searched for a hidden camera or someone watching her, was this a joke? Was a YouTube

celebrity filming unsuspecting people? How could anyone make words appear and disappear like she was experiencing? It was almost her turn with the cashier, quickly she opened the cover again. The last question stared at her from the blank page -

“Why not?”

“I’m not sure why. I guess there are lots of reasons why” she replied.

“Are they truly the cause for your unhappiness” appeared instantaneously underneath the last question.

“How are you today,” queried the cashier, breaking into Rita’s suspended disbelief. Jolted out of her shock, she shut the magazine quickly, responded kindly to the cashier and finished putting her groceries on the conveyor belt. Trying hard to act normal, she placed the magazine as the last item she would purchase that day. She made sure it was upside down, the title hidden from the person behind her. Oddly enough the back of the magazine was completely blank, except for the light blue color which seemed to gently wash the page. She could not find the price for the magazine on the front or back cover. The cashier picked up the magazine, sliding it across the automatic scanner, a normal beep rang out, then *“free publication”* lit up the cashier’s scanned item screen. The cashier who was just going through the motions of her job did not even hesitate about the magazine being free, she placed it in the bag and turned to Rita to finish the payment process. Rita found herself grateful for once that the cashier and the people around her were in their “self-absorbed detached robotic go through the motions of life” space.

Rita thanked the cashier and quickly walked her cart out to the car. She couldn’t wait to load the car, so she could pull the magazine out to verify she was not crazy. Glancing at the cover again, she was comforted to see the same title **“*The BEingness Project, Your Personal Journey Home...*”** Flipping the page she secured the truth of this experience by rereading the three

questions already asked, recalling her inner two replies. Looking at the last question -

“Are they truly the cause for your unhappiness,” she responded out loud this time.

“Well, yes, for if I had more money I could have more freedom. I could start exploring what I really enjoy, have time to start dating, do more for my children, travel, pay off bills, maybe even buy a house that we really like. Then I would be happy.”

“So, you need money to be happy” lit up the page as the fourth question.

“Well, not just money, I need more time too” she stated quickly.

“So, if you had more money and more time, you would be happy,” the page responded.

“Okay,” she stated, *“maybe not just money and time, I also want to lose 15-20 pounds, have more time to myself, work a job I really enjoy and find someone who really loves me as I am”* she rattled off, as though she was talking to a friend in an empty car.

“Ding,” her cell phone chimed, pulling her back into the cold reality of the car. Looking at the text message from her son she realized she better get home, it was getting late fast and he was hungry. Reluctantly, she closed the magazine and put it back in the bag. As she drove home, she found herself anxious to be alone, for then she could continue her *“conversation”* with the magazine. Shaking her head, she laughed out loud as she hit the gas to turn the corner onto her street. *“Crazy, this is absolutely NUTS! Magazines don’t write themselves and definitely do not have conversations with people! No one would believe her,”* the inner dialogue rambled on and on as she turned into the driveway of their rental home.

To be continued... 1

After the dinner clean up and making sure everything was set for the next day, Rita hugged her kids goodnight and headed off to her bedroom. When she unpacked the groceries earlier, she had quickly put the magazine on her night stand by her bed. Upon entering the bedroom, she passed it with a jumble of emotions, heading to the bathroom to brush her teeth and wash her face. Standing at the sink, she stared at her reflection while the sonic toothbrush buzzed and vibrated throughout her mouth. Quietly she stared, noticing the fine lines around her eyes, feeling the dryness of her skin, assessing and contemplating her looks, her happiness, and the questions presented by the magazine. As the warm water rinsed off the cleansing cream and makeup from the day, her mind wandered, “*Was she crazy?*” “*Did this magazine really hear her?*” Drying off her face gently, she decided it didn’t matter, no one had to know and maybe miracles do happen, after all, anything is possible.

Climbing into bed she situated her pillows, making it comfortable for her to sit up while she interacted with the magazine. Carefully, she opened it to the first page, the previously asked questions stood in a neat little row along with the next question in response to her long answer before the phone interrupted her.

Are you happy?

Why not?

Are they truly the cause for your unhappiness?

So, you need money to be happy?

So, if you had more money and more time, you would be happy?

What I hear you saying, is that if you had more money, more time, lost weight, found a job you enjoy and met someone who loved you, you would then be happy. Is that correct?

“*Yes, that’s what I am saying,*” she stated out loud, while shaking her head in agreement.

“*Are you waiting for these things to happen in your life, so you can then be happy,*” inquired the magazine

“Well no, I’m kind of happy now, some days are better than others,” she whispered.

“Why, are some days better than another,” quipped the magazine
“Because some days I like who I am, or I feel good about what I do, or my kids share something special, or I’m not worried about money, it all depends on what is happening and how I feel,” she responded in exasperation.

“Do our questions upset you,” asked the magazine

Now she really began to feel uncomfortable for the magazine could not only hear her responses, it could also feel her emotions. This was getting really bizarre! A part of her wanted to shut the magazine and pretend none of this happened. However, the other part of her just couldn’t, she felt pulled to the page, fixated with what it might say next.

“No, your questions don’t upset me. Well, maybe just a bit. I’m confused by all of this and well honestly, I can’t believe this is happening. Who are you anyways,” she asked.

“You,” answered the magazine

“What? I’m not asking myself these crazy questions. You are!” She almost yelled in reply.

“Mom, are you calling me,” her son yelled out to her.

“No, I’m sorry, just blabbing to myself,” she embarrassedly responded.

“Yes, it is you, it is your Inner Being, your interconnection, to that which is and always has been,” typed the magazine.

“How is that possible,” she quietly asked.

“It just is, why do you question it being possible,” inquired the magazine

“Because why would my Inner Being not just speak within me, how could it possibly type words upon a blank page that I found in a store,” she stated with deep questioning and a desire to understand.

“Your Inner Being is always sharing, you do not listen and anything is possible,” the magazine gently presented.

“I’m so confused, uncertain, struggling to believe,” Rita responded in tired humbleness.

“Close your human eyes and sleep, allow yourself to feel and remember the truth from within,” the words softly landed on the page, like a soft caress that beckoned her to sleep deeply.

A loud ringing jolted Rita out of a very deep peaceful sleep. Recognizing her alarm, Rita rolled over to turn it off. Stretching delightedly beneath the warm soft covers she replayed the unbelievable experience from the day before. *Did it all really happen? Was it possible? Did her Inner Being always share and she didn’t listen? If that was true, then what guidance had she missed out on?* The bathroom door shut downstairs, that meant her son was likely in the shower to begin getting ready for school, she better get out of bed. No time to waste in such meanderings. As she passed the magazine on her way to the toilet, it was all she could do not to pick it up to see if all the writing was still there or if it had all been a silly dream.

As the coffee dripped into the pot, Rita’s thoughts drifted to childhood. She smiled as she remembered pretending to be a famous artist. When was the last time she played with her paints, opened her sketch pad, took out her camera? Pouring her coffee she tried to recall where she had put her art supplies, they must be in a box someplace buried in the garage. Heading back to her bedroom for a shower, she peaked in her daughter’s room to make sure she was up and getting ready. She knew better than to say anything, for her daughter was not a morning person.

As the shampoo lathered in her hair, Rita played through her mind all the art shows, the pieces she had spent hours creating, the immense joy she had felt watching her art come to life. Art wasn’t a practical way to make a living her dad told her over and over

again. “*You can’t make money as an artist,*” he said. She listened and believed him, giving up on her dream as the years ticked by.

Looking in the mirror to put on her mascara, she froze. Staring intensely into her emerald eyes, the best feature she had, a sadness floated into her heart, for in that moment she realized, it was her, she was the one who had given up on her dreams. Allowing someone else to tell her what was and was not possible.

Passing the magazine she raced downstairs to help the kids prepare their lunches and get out the door to school. Thankfully her son drove them both to school, which freed her up to have a few moments before she headed off to work. Hugging the kids goodbye, she dashed to the bedroom to grab the magazine, placing it in her purse she headed off to work. Thank goodness it was Friday, she could relax this weekend and if the magazine was real, continue to investigate her happiness. Maybe she could find her art supplies.

To be continued... 2

Rita found herself completely distracted, driving to work like a robot, oblivious to the traffic around her, the time or anything else. She felt exposed, raw and vulnerable, as though someone had taken a can opener to her life and pulled back the lid. Squirming physically in her seat, she looked at the other drivers around her, were they looking at her, could they see, did they know? Shaking her head and laughing out loud at herself, she wiggled her body back into the present moment. “*Okay Rita, let’s get back into the game. Remember, you are on your way to work, time to turn on the brain to the here and now,*” she stated out loud to herself.

Turning on her blinker, she waited in the turning lane to pull into the parking lot of the nine story business building. Her thoughts drifted to her boss and the day before her. A rush of emotions

gurgled up as she momentarily reflected on her discontent with her job.

Rita actually felt really good about the company she worked for, it was a budding international agricultural commodities business that focused on safe, fresh, year round healthy vegetables and eventually fruit. It was definitely a company in line with her values and beliefs around the availability of organic sustainable agriculture. YouXin (sounds like Yoe - Shin in English) was based in Hong Kong, with offices in Europe and the United States. Her office was very small, her boss, a project manager and herself. Her desk sat strategically in the center of it all, the hub which kept the flow going. What was her title, oh yeah, “Administrative Assistant”, four years in college to answer phones, make travel arrangements, handle accounts receivable and payables, etc... If she was honest, she could not complain, they treated her well and it was a schedule that worked good with the kids needs.

Putting her car in park, she climbed out, gathering her packed lunch and purse, hitting lock on the door. She marveled at how funny she felt today, how had such a silly thing as a magazine upset her so? Why was it eating away at her mind and heart?

“Hello Rita,” her boss called as she passed his office door. *“Good morning Ken,”* Rita responded. Rita went directly to the break room where she put her lunch in the fridge and then returned to her desk. Placing her purse in the large bottom drawer to the right of her chair, she turned on her computer, to let it warm up while she went to check in with Ken. Sharon, the project manager was presently on a trip to visit some possible farm sources.

The morning dragged on, for Rita was anxious to get to lunch, she couldn't wait to see if the magazine still worked. It felt alive down in the drawer, like a living breathing entity. She chuckled at herself for thinking about if it could breathe or not. *“Oh my, she really was losing her mind,”* she thought.

It was a beautiful Spring day, so Rita grabbed her lunch from the fridge and went out on the patio to find a quiet spot that sat away from anyone else who might come outside. There were other businesses in the building, so sometimes the patio space could get quite full. Today she really hoped it would stay quiet. Since it was Friday, there was a good chance it would, for most people seemed to go out to eat on Friday.

Organizing her lunch in front of her and placing a napkin in her lap, she pulled out the magazine. Delighted the cover still looked the same, ***“The BEingness Project, Your Personal Journey Home....”*** Inhaling, she opened the cover, quickly looking around to see if anyone had come outside. Looking down, she gasped, for the page was blank. Just as she was about to shut the magazine in shock and confusion, new words, floated across the page.

“Hello Rita, it’s a brand new day,” flowed the black ink.

“Where did yesterday’s conversation go,” she asked out loud, surprising herself.

“That’s the beauty of a good nights sleep, everyday is a fresh start, a blank canvas, a new opportunity,” responded the magazine.

“So, let me get this straight, everything we share today, will be gone tomorrow,” she said in her head, remembering to not talk out loud.

“Yes,” came the simple reply.

Then, *“you seem upset,”* inquired the page.

“No, yes, well a little. I guess I’m actually a bit sad, for I am not sure that I remember everything we talked about yesterday. I don’t want to forget,” she exhaled.

“It’s okay, your inner being, or soul as humans like to call it, always remembers,” responded the magazine.

Rita took a couple of bites of her salad while she pondered this new information. In some ways she was grateful, yet, she also was

upset. What a strange paradoxical sensation to feel. The page interrupted her thoughts.

“Are you happy,” appeared in bold letters across the page. *“We discussed that yesterday, why are you asking me again today?”* she retorted.

“See, you do remember. We ask again because that’s what everyone is seeking, that’s why you are here, that’s what life is all about,” typed the page.

“Then why do I feel like such a mumble jumble of emotions all the time,” she exhaled in sad thought.

“Because you forgot how to choose the things that bring you joy. You forgot to please you, to do things you want to do, to create, to dream, to play, to be,” floated the response.

“No one can live life that way,” she exclaimed out loud, forgetting where she was. Frantically she looked around the patio to make sure no one heard her. Damn, I must remember to do this in my head!

“Yes they can,” lit the page.

“How,” she asked

“By listening to your heart and soul. Living from that space instead of from your programmed mind,” replied the magazine.

Rita glanced at her phone to check the time. Whew, she still have fifteen minutes. She set her timer to go off in ten minutes, so that she could go to the bathroom before returning to her desk. While she had been looking away from the page, new words had floated across the clear white space.

“Tell me about a time that you were really happy,” asked the words

Rita inhaled quietly, closed her eyes for a moment to feel a time when she was really happy. Moments with her children floated across her mind. She loved watching them engage in life, they truly filled her with such love and joy. However, that was their

journey. Searching still, she traveled back across her life. Landing at a time in her mid-twenties when she was working on a large art piece for a competition.

To be continued... 3

With her eyes still closed, she shared the story in her head, smiling with pure delight at the sensations the scene stirred within her.

“I was in my mid-twenties in a small apartment I rented in Seattle. I had just finished my bachelors degree in business and was looking for a job. A friend of mine convinced me to enter an art piece in a local art museum competition. I promised I would do it. I had music blaring, the window was open with a nice gentle breeze blowing in, carrying sounds from the street below. I was so caught in a time warp, purely in the zone of creating. Oh my, it was heaven. The paint brushes floated across the canvas as though they guided themselves. The colors burst forth, inspiring me, infusing me with their joy and effervescent play. It was heaven,” she trailed off, sitting quietly in the memory, stuck between passionate joy and deep sadness.

The alarm vibrated the table, shocking her into the present day. Reaching down, she quietly turned it off, glancing at the page quickly before she closed it. She did not want to give the magazine time to respond, she didn't want to know why she had given up on that path in her life. The scene had stirred such a longing, almost an ache in her belly.

Standing up, she packed up what was left of her lunch. She had not eaten much, too engrossed in the conversation and all the emotions it stirred up. Placing the magazine in her bag, she headed back up to the third floor. Stopping at the bathroom on her way to her desk, she passed the mirror glancing sideways at her reflection, *“where had the young spirited woman gone, when did she let the passion in her die,”* she mournfully contemplated.

Rita was quite relieved when the clock finally presented quitting time. The afternoon had been very long and she found it extremely challenging to focus on her work. Shutting down her computer, she grabbed her purse, making sure the magazine was tucked in place. Quickly she snagged her lunch container and headed to the parking lot. It was uplifting to walk out into the sunshine, to feel the gentle breeze on her face, it seemed to clear the day's disgruntled sensation.

While driving home she thought about what excuse she could give the kids for going to bed early. Chiding herself with guilt, for she always held the time with them precious, not wanting to waste a single moment. However, today was different, her ability to truly be present with them was going to be a real challenge and she definitely could not tell them why she was distracted. They would really think she was crazy!

Going to bed early was going to be easy after all, Francine, her daughter was working on a big project for school and Frank, her son asked if he could excuse himself after dinner to play video games with friends. Normally Rita would balk at Frank's request, but tonight she welcomed it. Putting the last left overs in the fridge, Rita kissed them both goodnight, making them promise to go to sleep at a reasonable time.

Shutting her bedroom door, she walked quickly to the sink, so she could brush her teeth and wash her face. The magazine seemed to vibrate an invitation for more as it sat quietly on the night stand. Settling in under the covers, Rita picked up the magazine, noticing that she held her breath while opening it.

"Hello Rita, it's a brand new day."

"That's the beauty of a good nights sleep, everyday is a fresh start, a blank canvas, a new opportunity."

"Yes."

“You seem upset.”

“It’s okay, your inner being, or soul as humans like to call it, always remembers.”

“Are you happy.”

“See, you do remember. We ask again because that’s what everyone is seeking, that’s why you are here, that’s what life is all about.”

“Because you forgot how to choose the things that bring you joy. You forgot to please you, to do things you want to do, to create, to dream, to play, to be.”

“Yes they can.”

“By listening to your heart and soul. Living from that space versus your programmed mind.”

“Tell me about a time that you were really happy.”

There they were, the magazines words from earlier in the day, minus her responses. No wait, supposedly they were actually words from her inner self, she still found that hard to believe.

“Good evening,” freshly showed up on the page.

“Hello,” she replied, pleased that she remembered to talk inside herself.

“It was very fun to remember with you today. The memory you shared of your art creating was happy, vibrant and contagiously alive,” shared the page.

“I’m not sure I like this exploration or discussion,” she quipped at the magazine

“Why,” it asked.

“Because it is stirring up a lot of forgotten feelings, lost dreams, and unfulfilled desires,” she sadly shared.

“Why are you choosing for this to feel bad,” inquired the fresh words.

“I’m not choosing, its just what I feel when I think about the dreams I had when I was younger,” she retorted.

“Yes, you are choosing,” floated the words.

“I am not,” she exclaimed out loud. Sucking in air as she realized how loud she had spoken. Thankfully her daughter had on music and she was sure her son had on his headphones. A relieved sigh escaped her lips.

“Okay, how would you have me see and feel it,” she asked.

“Every day is a new day, every breath is fresh, it is never too late and anything is possible,” came the gentle response.

“Even as you read the words upon this page, you choose how you will feel about what is expressed,” continued the magazine.

“I am too old now, I have too many responsibilities, debts, people to answer to, children to care for, the list goes on and on. I can’t just run away and be an artist,” she replied, not even digesting the words just offered by the page.

“Who told you that? Why do you believe it? What is life without dreams, adventure, exploring, learning, growing, becoming,” inquired the words.

To be continued... 4