

# SANITY

## LOST & FOUND

A TRUE STORY  
OF BRAINWASHING AND RECOVERY

TARRA JUDSON  
STARRIELL  
LMFT

Copyright © 2018 by Tarra Judson Stariell

Published in the United States of America by Ranch House Press.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information contact:

Ranch House Press

PO Box 241

Escondido, CA 92033

FIRST EDITION

Cover and interior design by Gwyn Snider, GKS Creative, Nashville, TN.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-9992955-0-2

ISBN 978-0-9992955-1-9 (ePub)

ISBN 978-0-9992955-2-6 (mobi)

Printed in the United States of America

## DEDICATION

Life brings us both vicissitudes and gifts, and among the most precious gifts are the people who positively impact us. This book is dedicated to my Mother and Father who gave me life and my first taste of love; my Brother who supported that life; my Grandmother who saved it with her unconditional love; my cousin Donna who taught me the power of forgiveness; and to all the people who supported me in my recovery and subsequent growth.



## CONTENTS

PART I: THE RANCH	5
PART II—PILLARS OF LIGHT	33
PART III—A NEW QUEST	77
PART IV—THE PROGRAM	101
PART V—THE JOURNEY	239
PART VI: WILD WOMAN WILDEBEEST	321



## PROLOGUE

**Y**ou know you need to complete your mission. You cannot turn your back on God . . .”

The truck door opened, and a massive arm shoved aside the curtain separating cab from camper shell. Solar reached back and dropped a clear, pyramid-shaped amethyst crystal onto the mattress where I lived 24/7.

“Here. We’ll call this ‘Athena’. Smash it and make more combos with it. Now get to work, we have lots to do.”

He withdrew, and a moment later the pickup began to move forward.

The amethyst crystal was at least six inches in diameter at its base and covered the palm of my hand. Little piles of trinkets, pennies, and a roll of scotch tape—the raw materials of our “combos”—were tucked into crevices. Dark-brown curtains shielded me from the outside world; I would need to work quickly in the waning light.

I picked up the small silver hammer I had used previously to smash “Baby,” a massive clear crystal—but then I hesitated, admiring the beauty of this ancient creation of nature. I wondered where Solar had gotten it.

His shout came from the cab: “I don’t hear you working. Get busy. We don’t have that much time!”

I slammed the hammer onto Athena, then opened my eyes to see the crystal intact, only a small divot marking the wound I had inflicted. I swallowed the sickness welling up my throat and, with more pounding, soon broke off enough pieces to bundle together with the trinkets, creating several combos.

Solar and I would use these on the next stop of our journey as “vortex plumbers,” as we seeded crystals throughout the country to facilitate the cleansing of areas in history where humans have preyed upon each other.

*I wonder where we are now? God, please help me complete my mission. How can I warn people that life as we know it will change dramatically if humans don't stop living the way we are? I wish I hadn't been given that message. But Solar's right. I can't stop until this quest is complete; I can't turn my back on God.*

The truck stopped, interrupting my thoughts. Looking down at the pile of combos, I breathed a sigh of relief with how many I counted.

“Come on, get out!” Solar ordered. “I need a witness to this. Don't look around, do you understand? Give me all the combos you made before you get out.”

I piled them into his open hands and then slid onto the front seat, pushing bare feet into my flip-flops waiting on the passenger side. Scooting over to the open door, I staggered on legs that had not stood upright the entire day. As I hurried after Solar, snow crunched under my steps. My bent head proved that my gaze was glued to the ground.

“Come on, hurry up before anyone comes around!”

Dwarfed by his six-foot, 300-pound body, I meekly gazed into the depths of the Grand Canyon as shadows settled onto the peaks below. *Cold! My clothes are still wet from our last cleaning ritual. I'm freezing.*

Solar raised his voice to the great chasm. “One Heart, One Mind, One Spirit. We leave these combos to help cleanse and purify this vortex and release it of all negative energies and vibrations. Let any trapped spirits be freed now to return home, out of this illusion. One Heart, One Mind, One Spirit, and so it is.”

He repeated this prayer for each of the four directions. As he pivoted in place his hands started at the center of his chest, moved up past his forehead and outward each time, before finally flinging the combos far into the canyon.

“Did you see them?” he demanded. “Did you watch them fall into the Canyon?”

“Yes, I saw them go into the Canyon.”

“Don’t look around, but make sure we didn’t drop anything.”

“I don’t see anything.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, there’s nothing here.”

“Look again.”

“There’s nothing.”

“Okay, fine. Let’s get going. Sit in the front because it’s almost dark and I’m going to take you somewhere to pee. Make sure we didn’t drop anything.”

As he backed the truck out, I peered through the windshield.

“I’m watching where we were, and there’s nothing.”

“Look again.”

“Okay, free to go, there is nothing on the ground.”

“Are you sure? Look again.”

“Nothing.”

“Okay, let’s go. One Heart, One Mind, One Spirit, please release all our energies and vibrations from where we just were and don’t let any negative entities use them against us. One Heart, One Mind, One Spirit, and so it is. Close your eyes and don’t look around.”

“Okay,” I emptily replied.

A minute later the truck stopped. “Get out here. Go quickly, do you understand?”

“Yes, thank you.” I held my pants around my thighs as I squatted to urinate. It had been twelve hours, and I was bursting.

“Stop! There’s someone coming. Stop right now! Put your pants back on!”

“I’m hurrying!” I could not stop my urgency and continued to relieve myself.

“I said stop. Come here now!”

By then I had forced my bladder to empty and was walking back towards him.

“Get in! You’re in big trouble! See that car, they could have seen you!”

I scurried back into the cab but did not dare look in the direction he indicated. Instead, I held my hands aloft to be sprayed with cleaner. I rubbed the disinfectant and sea salt solution on them.

And then my head exploded as he slugged the side of it.

“That’s for not obeying me when I said stop! You should have stopped immediately!”

“Yes,” I whispered.

*How much longer, God? How much longer do I have to do this?*

## PART I: THE RANCH

People are like stained glass windows: they sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within.

—*Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, psychiatrist and author (1926-2004)*



# ONE

Conceived on Christmas Eve in 1948, I was a surprise pregnancy to young lovers attending college. Named Sandra Linn Judson, I lived the first week of my life in a hospital incubator.

Two months before I came into this world, my maternal grandmother died, and five months later my maternal grandfather died as well. My twenty-year old mother, an only child, had cared for both her parents as they succumbed to cancer.

Death continued to haunt my depressed mother who miscarried two babies, one right after another. My father attended veterinary school at the University of California, Davis, caring for me while he studied until I was three, when we abruptly moved to Southern California. His father had suffered a heart attack and needed his son back on the ranch, located in a rural section of Northern San Diego County.

Before I was four years old I was hospitalized twice with life-threatening gastroenteritis. On the second occasion, I watched from the ceiling as medical staff rushed around my body lying on a gurney below me.

“We’ve done everything we can; the rest is up to God,” the doctor said to my mother.

I awakened strapped to the hospital bed with tubes in my arms. “Mommy, where am I?”

“You’re in the hospital. You were very, very sick, and now you’re going to get better and go home soon.”

I went home with a heart murmur.

Soon after that my brother Bruce was born with the aid of forceps, but otherwise a healthy baby. Our mother delivered a stillborn baby after him. No one ever discussed the children who did not come home from the hospital, and my parents distanced themselves from their grief by moving further away from each other, my brother, and me.

Like members of previous generations, my father had been born and raised on the family farm. He had left it twice—first during World War II, when his desire to become a fighter pilot ended along with the war, and later when he went to college. That dream also ended in disappointment with his return to the life of a dairyman. Not able to be his own man, he began withdrawing from life and, most notably, his family. The close relationship I had enjoyed with him until that time evaporated.

My parents were an attractive couple. In his day, my father was quite handsome, with thick, dark hair framing his clear blue eyes set in the softness of his kind face. With her glamorous beauty and many talents, my platinum blond mother was out of place on the ranch. A protégé at four years old, she had been groomed to be a concert pianist.

They both soured with unhappiness when we moved to the farm.

My brother and I grew up surrounded by extended family on land that had been homesteaded in 1872 by my paternal great-great-grandfather. My father’s parents lived in a farmhouse at the center of the dairy, surrounded by an extensive yard, acres of orchards, pastures, and field crops. Large pens held dairy cows and those soon to calve. Our grandfather managed his ranches, the workers, and their families with the care and control of a benevolent monarch watching over his kingdom. He was extremely hardworking and a strict disciplinarian. Although his heart was soft for his grandchildren, his son did not fare as well.

Trees studded the ranch I roamed as a child. I was forbidden to enter the dairy by myself due to the constant movement of tractors, heavy machinery,

and the bulls. Instead, I found my own amusement since neither parent seemed to have enough time for me. Squishing bare feet into fresh cow patties, I shoved dry ones into the air, watching them fly like pancakes through dust clouds of dirt and powdered manure.

Sitting very still in the heifer pasture gained me entry into their herd. Slowly circling around, they nuzzled and licked me with curiosity. I welcomed their contact; although wet and goopy, it was better than nothing.

My mother hid her frustrations behind housework, chores, and anger. Given to frequent outbursts, she often frightened me. One day I was in our small house when she came rushing inside, yelling and crying. Their bedroom door slammed shut behind her.

“Mommy, Mommy, are you okay?” I cried, leaning against the door.

“*Goddamn it! Leave me alone!*” she shrieked, and I jumped back when she abruptly opened the door, her tear-streaked eyes blazing red with anger and hurt. Afraid and not knowing what was wrong, I felt helpless and empty. Later I was told that she had accidentally run over the family dog.

Death was a common occurrence on the ranch, and from an early age I worried about what happened afterwards. Sometimes in my wanderings I saw stillborn calves lying in the pasture, or those that had died in their pens. Snowy, a calf I had befriended, disappeared one day with no explanation from my caretakers. Non-producing cows were butchered while we ranch kids watched with curiosity. But when a sick cow was dragged outside the corral and left to struggle toward her demise, I felt sickened and had even more unanswered questions about death. No one offered explanations; it was simply a part of life. My questions without answers bothered me at night, and my unease deepened.

*What happens when we die? Where did we come from? If we came from God, what is God? Where did God come from? Why can't anybody tell me answers?*

My spiraling angst ended only after fear gripped me so painfully I would plead to God aloud—and then feel calmed until the next time. These questions usually haunted me in a four-to-five-month cycle. I even

slept on the floor once, thinking that if I gave Jesus my bed, the sacrifice would gain me enough worth to receive answers to the questions that plagued me. Even though I was cold, I didn't climb back into bed until I felt my sacrifice sufficient to merit Jesus's love.

## TWO

**W**e lived in one of the tiny ranch houses my grandfather had built for the farmhands after he and our grandmother had stopped boarding workmen. Ours was in the corner, nestled up against a eucalyptus grove.

“Help! Help me! Help, he’s going to kill me!” I ran around the perimeter of our house, desperate and scared.

“I’m going to chop you up!” Danny, a neighborhood boy, was swinging a hatchet behind me. He trained his eyebrows to look like the devil’s, and delighted in torturing the neighborhood cats as well as me until his family was asked to leave.

I had trouble with another neighborhood boy who kept taking my bike. Skewing up my courage one day, I challenged him.

“Quit taking my bike without asking! You left it out and I got in trouble.”

“Oh yeah, you going to make me?”

A short time later he walked home, humbled and out-wrestled.

With no fences separating our yards, we led fishbowl lives. One day, the family station wagon saved my mother as she gardened. The steel frame of our 1951 Plymouth stopped the rifle bullet our neighbor shot at his wife. They were also asked to leave, as was the family whose son beat up my brother.

At five, I gave up dance lessons for a surgery to cure my squinty eye, which eventually would have gone blind. Children’s Hospital in San Diego

had the only surgeon capable of performing the operation.

After I was wheeled into a large, brightly lit room, a cloth-covered face leaned over me and asked, “Do you want one of these masks too?”

“Yes.”

A rubber device reeking with a disgusting smell was instantly slapped on and held tightly against my face.

“No! No! No!” I kicked and fought to rip off the mask with its foul odor, but my arms were held down. I awoke with my left eye patched, the muscle stretched to correct the problem. It was common practice to trick children or mislead them about surgery. From then on, I was terribly frightened of doctors, and cried whenever I encountered them or needed a medical procedure.

Our lives changed for the better when the Smith family, with four boys and one girl, moved in. For the first time that I could remember, my mother and father were happy, and became close friends with our playmates’ parents. Life was good as our families enjoyed time together.

The Smiths’ lawn wrapped around their entire house. Joe, the father, delighted in swinging us kids until we got dizzy and tumbled against one another. Aerial acrobatics were also a favorite; Joe launching us into the air for a soft landing on the lawn. Our father never engaged in such playful activities.

For a while, the Bakery Truck made weekly visits to our farmhouses clustered tightly together. Barefoot, shirtless, and scruffy, we huddled around his converted vehicle.

“Now stand back and give me some room,” the deliveryman chortled as we crowded in. With a push or tug of his hand, each drawer silently glided open and closed, teasing us as we breathed in the sweet aroma of freshly baked doughnuts and bread.

“Oh, I want that one!”

“Me too. I want one too!”

If we were lucky we had money to buy something. Otherwise, we had to settle for dreams of sinking our teeth into sweet fantasies.

I was a frequent visitor at my grandparents' home on the ranch. Always welcomed, I often tagged along behind my grandmother as she labored inside or worked in their yard.

"Here are the eggs, Gramma." The chicken pen was extensive. Hens that stopped laying eggs were served for dinner.

Standing on a bench pushed against the cupboards on the other side of the sink, I watched my grandmother scowl and wrinkle her brow as her hand tugged at something inside the chicken cavity.

"Gramma, are you mad at me?"

She looked over her glasses, fogged with perspiration. "Why no, I'm not, you poor dear. I'm just disgusted with this chicken I'm trying to clean."

I sighed gratefully as she continued gutting the chicken for dinner. I was accustomed to anger, but my grandmother never directed hers at me.

As a six-year-old, I would soon be joining five other children in first grade.

"When is school going to start?"

"Not yet, but it's getting closer."

"I want to learn how to read better."

"Um hum. Now go outside and play."

The yellow school bus slowed, and I stepped into my first day of school. We were first to be picked up since the river crossing was flooded. There were only two main rooms in the school with bathrooms outside. It was the same building my father had attended many years before, with one teacher managing four grades at a time. There were fewer than fifty students in all, and kindergarten and preschool were unknown entities then.

Miss Kennedy's slender form glided through our room, stopping to answer questions or offer encouraging words. Jet-black hair bounced against her pale skin as she approached me.

"Why don't you go show Mrs. Trussell how well you're reading? If you'd like, you can read to her from your book."

I followed her across the hallway and proudly demonstrated my newly acquired ability.

“That’s great, Sandy.” My aunt grinned down at me. She taught grades five through eight in the “upper room.”

Reading opened my world. Miss Kennedy was a wonderful teacher who was helped on the days the Book Mobile and Shop Truck visited our rural school.

Every Thursday, Mr. Barnes parked his white utility truck behind the school building. Dressed in his tan uniform and black utility boots, he slipped an apron over his head before his beaming smile and deep voice beckoned us to stand back while he opened his treasure trove of tools. The groundskeeper’s son, Chris, was a lanky teenager who helped his father and us children on Shop Days.

“Chris, will you help me move the tables out now?” Mr. Barnes asked.

We stood back while the two of them situated wooden tables in between the truck and Quonset hut where our projects would take form.

“Sandy, would you like some help with that?” Chris offered.

“Sure, thank you,” I said as he held the thick cutting board in the shape of a pig I was smoothing off with sand paper.

“You’re doing a good job there.”

“Thank you.” I loved making things, and Shop Day was pure fun. School was remarkably different from the raw life I had witnessed on the ranch, with birth and death occurring on a regular basis.

Even so, I was not prepared for the shock I soon encountered.

In days past, housing was provided for the teacher of rural communities. Straddling the boundary between our school yard and farmland, a small house called the “teacherage” sat about five hundred yards away from the building housing our classrooms. Now it was home for the groundskeeper and Chris, who lived there with his parents.

One day as we sat quietly working in class, Miss Kennedy opened our door after hearing a knock. She spoke briefly with Chris and then stepped back, turning to face us.

“He wants to know if anyone knows where the shop class left his screw-driver after using it.”

I raised my hand to speak. "I know where it is."

Miss Kennedy nodded for me to show him, and I got up from my desk and walked towards the open door.

"I thought you'd know." Chris smiled. "You're so helpful and I've seen you keep good track of the tools on shop day."

I warmed with his compliment as we walked into the Quonset hut; Chris was behind me.

"It's up there; see it?" I pointed to a shelf and turned to face him.

He grabbed me, trapping my arms in his as he sat down hard and forced me onto his lap. I struggled to free myself but he tightened his grip and I froze. Reaching up my dress, he shoved my panties aside and forced his finger deep inside me. I drifted away until a strange and confusingly pleasant sensation brought me back. Thrashing at him, I broke free.

Bursting out of the Quonset, I ran back and stood in front of the classroom door, immobilized, shaking with terror. *I mustn't tell anyone or they will get angry with me and Miss Kennedy will get in trouble; it will all be my fault. They wouldn't believe me anyway; and would only get mad at me for making up stories.*

Smoothing my dress, I stiffened by body to stop the shaking so I could knock and be let in. Gritting my teeth, I silenced any thoughts of telling someone as I walked back to my seat.

Not long after this, my world crashed again when the Smith family moved away from the ranch. Without our friends, my brother Bruce and I roamed the hills, using the ranch as our refuge.

## THREE

As a timid eight-year-old, I rode bareback on one of the numerous mustangs brought from the cattle ranch in Nevada. Neva was an exquisitely trained cutting horse and very capable of outsmarting me.

“If you can’t handle her, just take off the bridle and let her go,” was my father’s sole lesson on horsemanship. “She’ll find her way home.”

Down the road and far from the ranch, Neva started rearing and carrying on. Scared, I got off and slipped off her bridle. Away she ran. Twenty minutes later I walked up the driveway to find Neva patiently waiting for me.

“Maybe she’s too much horse for you to ride,” my father offered. I was humiliated and noticed my grandfather smirking behind him. My mother and father were excellent riders, as were both grandparents. My grandfather had won several awards with his prized horse Cedro, and until my grandmother was eight months pregnant with my aunt, she rode to help round up their cattle.

Stubbornly, I bridled Neva again, climbed onto her back and rode through her next attempt to buffalo me.

I rode her every chance I had. Daily jaunts on horseback in the unspoiled terrain was my means of survival. Family gatherings, my grandparents, nature, and animals—both domestic and the wild ones Bruce and I rescued and raised—were lifelines in my turbulent youth.

I was a misfit in grammar school. “Here comes Little Miss Know It All” was a favored greeting from the other girls. Soon I discovered that dropping my panties behind the bus barn for some of the older boys got me the positive attention I craved. Ignoring the yucky feelings this gave me, I was easy prey, as the attention made me feel special.

An older boy from school invited me to meet him at a local barn. His bike was on the ground when I pedaled up, but he was nowhere to be seen. I took a few steps inside the hay barn and stopped—it was dark and felt dangerous. I turned around, jumped on my bike and rode away as fast as I could. This was another escapade I did not share with my mother, fearing she would lash out at me in anger. She did that so frequently, I didn’t want any more.

My father remained an elusive swatch of blue with his standard work shirt tucked into 501 Levis, a red bandana hanging from a hip pocket. A yellow straw hat completed his wardrobe on the ranch.

Unlike my father, who was stocky, our grandfather was tall and lanky. His work shirts were tan; pockets bulging with little notebooks meticulously filled with data on each of the cows, when they were bred, how many calves they had and how much milk they were producing. Stetsons covered his head, one for the ranch and his “town hat” for good occasions. In charge of everyone, he monitored us grandkids by threatening a “tin ear” if we broke his rules.

“Ow!” Bruce and a cousin howled each time they faltered in keeping up with Grandpa’s long stride. His grip tightly held the top of each ear closest to him. They had been chasing chickens inside the pen when he caught them.

Usually, our grandfather was very loving and entertaining. He produced malted eggs from the knots in the wooden ceiling or delighted us with stories about his old dog Roscoe. Enraptured, we stayed to the inevitable end, enjoying being tickled as he demonstrated how Roscoe “grabbed and shook and shook and shook those rascally crows eating the corn.”

In 1960, our grandfather fulfilled his promise to my folks and built them a home perched on the hill overlooking the dairy. It had been their dream to live in an adobe house.

Barely a year later, our parents gathered Bruce and me together one morning. As we sat on my bed, they stood before us and announced: “Grandpa died in his sleep last night.”

I was crushed. Despite his garbled speech from a recent stroke, I had enjoyed conversing and sharing time with my grandfather. I admired his strength in managing his disabilities. His right arm was paralyzed and hanging uselessly in a sling. Needing a cane to walk, he had a brace wrapped around his right leg that he could only drag. I could feel his frustration—I no longer able to work, being helpless and dependent.

We visited him before the funeral. As I gazed at his body lying in the casket, grief welled up inside me and escaped in loud sobs. My father wore dark glasses to hide his eyes, and from then on, he grew increasingly more detached as he fell into a deep depression, using food and alcohol to numb his pain.

With my grandfather gone, I felt the rejection from my parents even more acutely. I was not at ease and would spend time trying to figure things out for myself while gazing at the hillsides across from us. They framed a long, cascading rock waterfall. Stories that the Indians had used it for ceremonies fascinated me. Several times, my eyes deceived me as the landscape shifted and I saw the same mountains in different versions of themselves, like watching a slide show of progressive changes. Puzzled by these images, I shrugged them off as I could not make sense of what I was experiencing.

To ease my restlessness, I started doing yard work for my grandmother. Not long after that, at the age of twelve, I decided instead to work on both family-owned ranches along with a trusted employee.

For several years, we planted and irrigated countless fields of crops, bucked hay, fed cows, and trimmed the horses’ feet. He taught me how to drive a stick-shift truck, bulldozer, and all the tractors on the farm. I enjoyed his mentoring until he touched me in the crotch with a corn root one day. We were resting in the middle of a cornfield, and there was a small rip in my

pants, revealing my upper thigh when I sat down. Frozen, I watched him inch the long, spindly root up through the hole in my Levis.

“Can you feel that?” he asked.

Waking from my stupor, I stood up and bolted through several rows of corn to get away. I finished my jobs that day but never returned to work on the ranch again. I did not offer my father an explanation for suddenly quitting and, sadly, no one ever asked.

Although my parents had repeatedly reminded me that I would have to pay for my college education if I wanted one, I was never paid for my ranch work. It now occurred to me I needed to start stockpiling money. My grandmother’s brother, Uncle Franklin, lived down the road with his wife (my teacher) on part of what used to be their father’s large dairy farm. He could grow anything. Well ahead of his time, he raised organic fruits and vegetables to sell. He was a kind man with a generous heart, so I approached him for a job, and enjoyed working for him and absorbing his wisdom.

My father was mostly absent from our lives, but woke us for school every morning.

“Good morning, sunshine.”

“Okay, Dad. I’m getting up,” I mumbled before drifting back to sleep.

“Time to get up.” My snooze alarm had returned. Up at five, he was cheerful in the morning but came home exhausted at the end of his day. Caring for the cows, farm equipment, ranch hands, and the problems each presented left him grumpy and elusive, with little energy for us. Some nights, even his sleep was interrupted with an emergency call from the ranch.

“Where’s Dad going?”

“The wind blew down a power pole, and he has to start the generator,” my mother explained. We knew that without electricity, thousands of gallons of milk in the storage tank would spoil before the truck arrived to transport it.