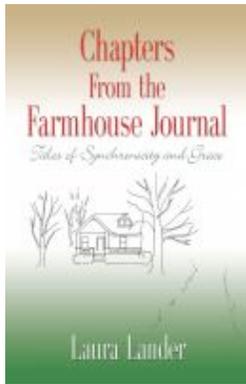


Chapters
From the
Farmhouse Journal

Tales of Synchronicity and Grace



Laura Lander



Chapters From The Farmhouse Journal is an encouraging and inspirational narrative of the process of decision, affirmation and providence surrounding the transition of divorce. The author describes her commitment to centering meditation, which led her out of uncertainty and gave insight on letting go with love. Emotional and practical challenges, when surmounted with balance and presence, become occasions of gratitude. Surrounded by loving support from others, she learns to truly love and value herself.

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**Chapters From the
Farmhouse Journal**
Tales of Synchronicity and Grace

By Laura Lander

*Chapters From the Farmhouse Journal: Tales of Synchronicity
and Grace*

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Chapter 2: Breathing Out, Breathing In

Each morning, I rose while it was still dark, wrapped myself in a jacket or sweater or shawl, and went outside to the meditation bench, as Carol and I began to call it. Breathing out, breathing in... I listened to a centering meditation on my iPod⁴. Sometimes, I walked myself through its rainbow meditation of chakra colors without the recording. Other times, I repeated my mantra from my Maui meditation: *Cradling embrace... Abiding Presence... Everything you need is given to you.*

Carol joined me after my meditation each day, and we drank our morning coffee together on the bench, talking, listening to the birds, watching the sunrise. Those brief morning times of connecting to my center and connecting with my sister were healing moments, ushering in a peace that set the pace for the coming day.

Many times in those days away, I felt the sadness of being apart from my husband and the pain of our disintegrated relationship. It was then that I would remind myself why I was there: To spend thirty days away, in a space dedicated to meditation and centering, in the pursuit of clarity. I did not drag up hurts of the past, avoided male-bashing in all its forms, and tried to steer clear of repeating my story about being confused and flip-flopped.

All of the positive affirmations that Carol had taped to her refrigerator and in various locations about

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the house kept reminding me that I would waste my power if I focused on the negatives. Instead of talking to concerned friends and family about my indecision and confusion, I affirmed, *"I am here to discern, and my answer is within and will be made clear. I have only to open up to it. And it will lead me to a better life than I have ever imagined for myself."*

My fourth day of what I now referred to as my "Thirty Days Away" began with the usual centering meditation and coffee on the back patio, then journaling. After that, since it was a day off work, I went for a walk/jog atop the floodwall by the river. It was a fine day for it, and walking/running along the river with new things to see was inspiring. There was plenty of nature around, even in Carol's city neighborhood. The river, the sky, the trees, the geese.... I found my heart filled with a newly revived inner joy and gratitude for the present moment.

Arriving home, I showered and went for my massage with Rachel⁵, a good friend and colleague. She presented me with a hug, a listening ear and the gift of a little plaque. On the plaque was a sketch of an open hand with a butterfly and the words, "Peace is at hand." Both the comforting words and the experience of receiving a gift brought tears to my eyes. It was a promise that peace would indeed be found after all of the turmoil.



Those brief moments of connecting to my center and connecting with my sister ushered in a peace that set the pace for the coming day.

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By day five, I was becoming accustomed to the rhythm and the effects of my daily centering. I discovered the amazing but true result that when I centered and called myself to be present in the now, I really did feel peace, wholeness and calm. I felt connected to love. Each day, I set off to my massage-therapy office with the certain knowledge that I would keep my eyes open and my heart expectant and at peace.

Many times, as I got ready for work in the morning or drove to Carol's at the end of the day, I would ask myself once again, "*Laura, don't you think you could make this marriage work?*" When I thought of my husband, his pain, my pain over his pain, I felt confused and tormented.

But mostly, I was becoming more and more at peace with the idea of leaving the marriage. Living apart from the emotional tendrils that had surrounded my heart and kept it in a state of confusion was helpful. During my centering meditation times, I felt strong and whole and ready to move on. I began to understand that by allowing my husband's pain to control my own decision about what was best for me—and, ultimately, for both of us—I was abdicating responsibility for my own thoughts, feelings and actions. That last sentence may need to be pondered for a while before it is understood, but I came to know it as a certain truth.

Subconsciously, I had kept myself prisoner in a state of back-and-forth confusion to avoid the unbearable pain of causing him pain. But the alternative—to stay

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with him to avoid the pain of leaving—would never really work for the long term.

Chapter 4: Finding the Farmhouse

I spent part of an afternoon driving to several different apartment complexes to see if I could envision myself living in them without being miserable. I picked up a realty catalogue to research houses for sale and for rent, to get an idea of what was available and at what price. After only one evening of looking through that and searching online, I became utterly demoralized.

My psyche felt threadbare. I was worn down from the years of stress and heartache caused by the decline of the marriage that I thought would last for life. I was exhausted from the long months of flip-flop indecision. I had had it. I could take no more.

It was then that I prayed a prayer unlike any other prayer I have ever prayed in my entire life. It was actually more like an expectant suggestion. Giving God directions. I shrink from using this word, but it was practically a *demand*. The saving grace of praying in this way was that it truly involved a total giving over to the genuine and humbling recognition that God is all-knowing and I am not.

I had a talk with God. Not beseeching, not asking, not requesting. I simply and firmly told him straight from my heart what it was that I needed.

My prayer went something like this: *“Okay, God. You know what I have been through, and how earnestly I have been trying to discern what to do. You can see how emotionally*

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wrought I have been. If it is truly for my higher good to leave my marriage and my home, my little piece of heaven in the country, my husband, my gardens, my labyrinth, everything that I have worked for all these years... If I really am supposed to go, then please, show me where. I'm going to need a place to live. I have no idea where the best place for me to go next will be. But you know. You already know right now where it is. And I don't have a clue. So instead of me searching all over Northern Kentucky, online and driving around, looking for a needle in a haystack, how about if you just show me? You already know where it is. Bring it to me. Lead me to it. I don't have the emotional energy to engage in an all-out search right now. How about let's make this part easy. If I am supposed to move on, please just show me where to go."

But, unexpectedly, I didn't stop there. Something within me urged this addendum:

"But it has to have these things about it: It needs to be a place that nurtures my spirit when I come home. It can't be a place that I hate to be, or that I feel afraid of the neighborhood, or feel claustrophobic and crowded in. When I get home from giving to others all day with massage, I need my own spirit to be restored. It needs to be a place that does that.

"I need to be surrounded by nature. I don't need to own the nature, but I need to have it around me. I just do.

"It needs to have a spare bedroom for my daughters to stay in when they come to visit me. A one-bedroom apartment absolutely will not suffice. So don't even go there.

"I need my hot tub for my own therapy. So it really should have a place for me to put my hot tub. I guess that pretty well rules out any apartment.

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"If I could bring my beehives, that would be perfect. I would really love that.

"And, oh yeah, I need a place where I can walk. Not one that I would have to drive to, but that I can walk to from right out my front door.

"Okay. Now show me where this place is."

I am not sure if I even remembered to say "Amen."

What possessed me to pray such an outrageous, seemingly arrogant prayer, I will never know. It could have been that the part of the Divine that resides within me, within all of us—what I call Inner Presence—inspired me with what to say, with the knowledge of how this prayer was to be answered in an almost miraculous way. My prayer must have had just the right mix of desperation, humility, certain faith and childlike trust, because this is what happened next.

Two days later, I was at work, massaging a client who I knew well and loved. For most of my clients, I suggest quiet, not chitter-chatter, during their massage sessions. I let them know that they will gain so much more if they remain still and receive, and not get distracted with conversation. But for some clients, conversation seems to be an important part of the session. I allow these clients to speak their stream-of-conscious thoughts aloud. On this particular day, this particular client was in that frame of mind.

So as she lay there talking about this and that, she began to express how thankful she was for her health. How at her age of 75, she had few complaints. She hoped that she would be like her elder sister, who was 87. Her

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sister lived alone, still drove, participated in senior aerobics three times a week. And her sister was, even now, busy helping her two sons with the cleaning and painting of *the farmhouse that she had for rent*. The former tenants had moved away, and they were getting the house ready to advertise for rent. The client was speaking of her and her sister's health. I zeroed in on the farmhouse that was for rent!

Casually, I asked her, "Where *is* this farmhouse that is for rent?" She told me later that she wondered why I had asked her about that. She had no idea that I was leaving my marriage and looking for a new place to live. But she told me enough information, without my having to pry, that I knew I could find the place mapped out on the Internet.

That evening, Carol and I took a drive to scout out the farmhouse. It was out in the country, down a long gravel lane, with speed limit signs that read 15 mph. We crawled along in the car, fields planted with soybeans on our left and three houses, spread out on huge lots, on the right. None of those houses fit the description that my client had given me. We drove through a little woods that made a tunnel of green over the lane. As we came out of the trees and headed up the hill, we saw it: a square, solid farmhouse at the end of the lane, on a little rise, overlooking the fields and the woods. I stopped the car, and we leaned to look at it out the window.

It was then that we noticed a pickup truck coming up the drive behind us. I began to feel a little nervous about trespassing as the truck pulled next to our car, but

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the friendly face of the man inside it smiled broadly at us as he asked, "May I help you?"

This was Will, one of the sons of the 87-year-old sister of my client, coming to do some more work on the house. I told him of my connection with his mother's sister, and of my interest in possibly renting the house. The rest unfolded naturally. Will was happy to let us look through the house and to answer any questions.

The house appealed at once. Its large, gracious rooms led from one to the other. Even though the house was empty except for the evidence of cleaning and painting in-progress, it had an unmistakably homey feel. It was light and bright, with many large windows, and with an expansive yard all around. When we stepped out onto the front porch, the peaceful and wide-open view looked out over the surrounding fields and woods, which secluded it from the road and any other houses. It was perfect.

Will told us that they still had two or three weeks of work to do before the house was ready. This was ideal, as I would not be ready to move for about a month.

After arriving back at Carol's house, I spent some time centering. I pictured myself in the house, all fixed up, living in it, sitting on the front porch in the mornings having my coffee, playing the piano, writing publishable articles and books, having my girls home to visit. It could happen.

The feel of the house immediately gave me a sense of coming home, of welcome, of nurturance. (Condition one: a place that nurtures my spirit.) It was, in fact,

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totally surrounded by lawn, fields of green and woods. It was like being on an island of green. (Condition two: surrounded by nature.) It had a spare bedroom. (Condition three: room to accommodate my daughters when they visited.) The back patio was just the right size for my hot tub. (Condition four.) And it was a farm: Of *course*, beehives would be welcome! (Condition five.) The house was located at the end of a half-mile gravel lane that led to a little traveled, winding country road—ideal for walks. (Condition six: Check!)

My prayer was answered in every respect. And along with this place came the blessing of a family living right down the lane who owned, loved and took good care of it. New friends for my new beginning! Most of all, finding such a perfectly suitable place gave me affirmation of God's continued care and providence in the new path that I had chosen. It underlined my newly hatching recognition that the third line of my Maui meditation was true: *Everything you need is given to you.*

Near the end of my Thirty Days Away, I arranged a special time to meet with my husband and let him know of my decision. Acknowledging that this would be a monumentally difficult and painful moment, I prepared with centering meditations. By faithfully centering, I consciously made provision for myself to be present to the situation with love, compassion and courage.

I also, with awareness, protected myself from any invasive energies of perceived neediness and the taking on of responsibility for another's emotions. This stance is

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countercultural to what so many of us have been conditioned to do, but it was an important shift I had learned, a new way of being that was at once freeing, empowering and much healthier.

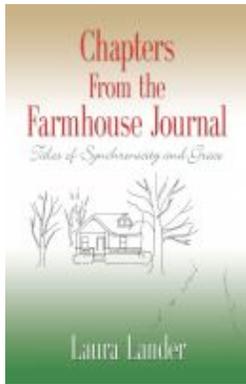


The feel of the house immediately gave me a sense of coming home.

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I chose not to plug into any drama around the actual event by keeping the meeting brief, to the point and respectful. I was kind to myself by making arrangements to spend the evening before and the rest of that day and an overnight with supportive friends. The very making of those plans ahead of time was not only a shift in learning to care for myself, but also a new permission to ask for help when I need it—another countercultural paradigm for me.

The meeting occurred and went as I had envisioned: painful but brief, respectful and without drama. I was keenly aware of the emotional pain we both were experiencing, but I was not flattened by it. I had succeeded in being able to let go, with love, when it was time to change. Now the healing could begin. Now it was time for change, no matter how tragic, to open the door to more.



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