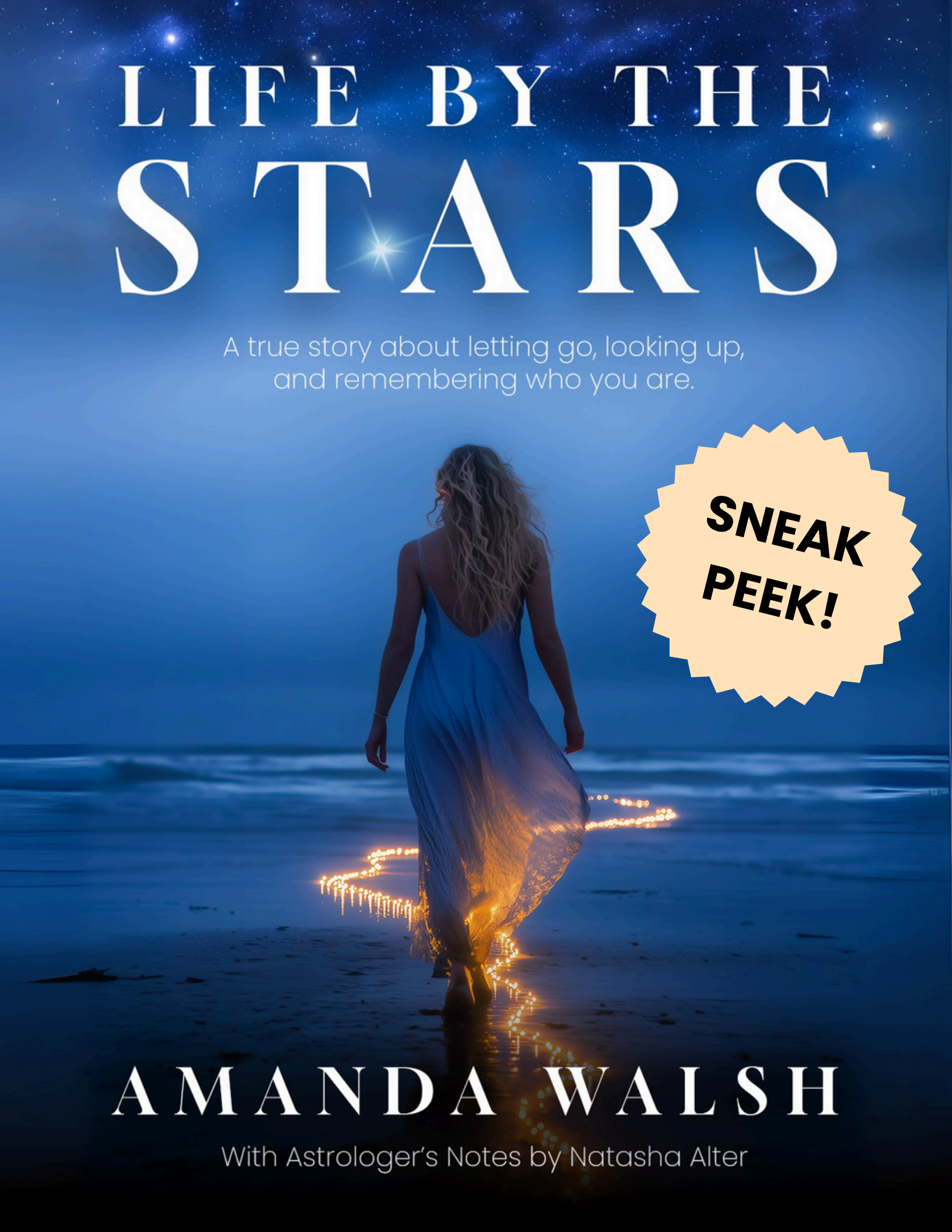
LIFE BY THE STARS

A true story about letting go, looking up,
and remembering who you are.



SNEAK PEEK!

AMANDA WALSH

With Astrologer's Notes by Natasha Alter

Prologue

It was a rare midday window of time when I had the chance to take my young daughter Madeline to the park. Our nanny had called in sick, and after being cooped up in the apartment all morning, it was clear—she needed to run, to breathe, to play. And maybe, though I didn't know it yet, so did I.

Bundled up in layers, we stopped at the crosswalk just below our apartment. As we waited for the light to change, the familiar crossing guard's face lit up at the sight of Madeline in her stroller. "Where's your mama today, Madeline?" she asked sweetly, bending down with a warm smile—but the words were meant for me.

It took a moment for the comment to land. And then it did.

She didn't recognize me.

She thought *our nanny* was Madeline's mother because that's who she always saw with her.

Not me.

Something hollow opened in my chest.

"Oh—I'm her mama," I said quickly, my voice thinner than I meant it to be, as the light turned green. I rushed us across the street, eager to escape the moment—my cheeks hot, my throat tight, my stomach twisting with a quiet shame I couldn't quite name.

At the park, Madeline took off joyfully toward the playground. She looked like a tiny fashion icon in her tweed winter coat, cream tights, matching hat, and ankle boots so stylish I wished they came in my size. Her delight was pure, unfiltered, radiant.

Mine, however, was divided.

Though I had stepped away from my workday, I hadn't really stepped away. I took a conference call as Madeline played, toggling my attention between her and the decisions being made in the background of my professional life. I noticed, almost with a sense of numb camaraderie, that most of the other adults were doing the same—heads bent to their phones, distracted, detached. And those who weren't were clearly nannies, being called by their first names, not "mommy" or "daddy."

For an hour, I played both roles—sort of. I answered questions from colleagues while glancing up to make sure Madeline wasn't climbing anything too high. I threw her a smile here and there, a half-hearted "Good job, baby!" from across the playground. My presence was fragmented. My body was there. My heart was somewhere in between.

Back at the apartment, I handed off the parenting baton to Jason and slipped back into work mode, immersing myself in the mountain of emails waiting for me. My Blackberry phone—my lifeline to the world I was desperately trying to keep up with—buzzed nonstop with incoming messages, meeting invites, and requests. It was essential. I relied on it to manage my job, my identity, my connection to everything outside the walls of our apartment.

Somewhere in the shuffle, I dropped my BlackBberry onto the couch without a second thought.

"Mama!"

Her voice startled me. I looked up just in time to see her tiny hand hurl my Blackberry across the room with all her might. It crashed onto the rug, then skidded violently across the hardwood.

I froze, horrified.

"Madeline!" I shouted, my voice sharp with outrage.

She stood still, her small body trembling, eyes wide and wet with tears. In that moment, defiance and heartbreak were intertwined on her face. Something profound and old stirred in me—an echo of a future I had once glimpsed in a vision, the Queen of Hearts: a mother and daughter separated by silence, resentment, and wounds left untended.

I saw the beginning of that story in her eyes. And I couldn't bear it.

I dropped to my knees and pulled her into my arms, her sobs folding into mine. My heart cracked wide open.

"I'm so sorry, baby," I whispered into her ear, rocking her gently, my tears streaming down.

"I'm so, so sorry. Things are going to change. I promise."

And for the first time in a long time, I meant it.

Chapter 19:
The First Astrology Reading

"You *have* to book a reading with this woman—she's absolutely next-level amazing," my friend gushed through the phone.

"Her name's Natasha Alter. She lives in Hawaii somewhere—I'm not sure which island? But look her up. I really think you'll get a lot out of it." The call was from a woman I'd met near the end of my Manhattan chapter—a successful, published author who had become both a mentor and a friend, and I trusted her instincts. So, I figured I'd give it a shot.

The truth was, life on this raw, untamed island had already begun to shift something in me. The slower pace, the ritual of the Full Moon Labyrinth walks, the willingness to try things I never would have considered before—it was all expanding my comfort zone in ways I hadn't expected. And deep down, I could feel it: I was standing on the edge of something big.

It was as if the version of myself I'd so carefully built—polished, capable, composed—was beginning to unravel. Not in a chaotic or destructive way (*at least not yet*), but more like a cocoon giving way to something new.

As most Capricorns are, I was "old when I was young." I thought of my mom introducing me to adults when I was a kid, and the way they'd often say, "Wow, your daughter has such a good head on her shoulders." My mom would beam, "Yes, she does."

I had taken that role seriously. I *was* the girl with the good head on her shoulders. I took pride in the steadiness of my life: no drama, no mess, just logic, efficiency, and getting things done. I was the capable one. The one who made things happen. I wore the role of "successful businesswoman" like a badge of honor, and it earned me praise. It made me feel valuable. Important. And for all of my life, that identity had served me.

But here, in this wild place, under the bright moonlight, beside the restless sea, something deeper was beginning to stir. Something primal. Unpredictable. Alive.

I often found myself caught between two instincts: surrendering to the pull of this unfamiliar energy within me, or retreating to the safety of the identity I'd so carefully constructed.

Who was this woman beginning to emerge from behind the polished mask? The one who wove flowers into her hair, danced hula with abandon, and walked barefoot through an oceanside labyrinth under the full moon?

I didn't know yet. But I had a feeling the astrologer my friend had mentioned might hold a key to understanding what was unfolding.

I looked her up online and was shocked to discover she wasn't just on the same island—she lived ten minutes down the road from me. There she was, practically in my backyard, and it was my friend in *New York* who had pointed me to her.

Even the logical part of me couldn't dismiss it. This was more than coincidence.

I don't know about you, but whenever I've had a life-changing experience, I remember exactly what I was wearing. On this particular day, I had on a short, bright pink dress I'd bought in New York City—one of the rare pieces from my former life that had made a seamless transition to the islands. I slipped on silver flip-flops and had attempted to tame my hair, which had grown much longer since we'd moved.

I had fought these curls my whole life—blow-drying, straightening, trying to manage the unruly curls into something sleeker, more "together," and "professional." But here, the humidity had its own ideas. The ocean air teased it into wild waves, and slowly, I'd begun to surrender. I let it grow. Let it curl. Let the sun kiss it a little lighter.

It was a small thing, maybe, but it mirrored the quiet battle within me—between the structured, polished version of myself I had always relied on, and this softer, more natural part of me that was beginning to rise. The primal and the conditioned. The known and the unknown. The woman I had been, and the one I was becoming.

I tied it back into a messy half-up, half-down style—my best attempt at "island polished"—and hopped into the car for my first astrology reading. I had no idea what to expect, but something told me this wasn't going to be just another appointment.

Natasha lived near the ocean, and I relished the rare opportunity for a solo drive down the road known locally as "The Red Road." It wound through hardened black lava fields—ancient remnants of past eruptions—stretching wide and raw under the open sky. The road rolled gently over lazy hills, offering sweeping cliffside views where the Pacific Ocean crashed violently below, wild and magnificent.

I pulled into her gravel driveway and took in the scene. A tasteful beige two-story home stood quietly on the land, a large circular window catching the light on one side. Lush greenery surrounded the house—lilikoi vines curling up and down a fence, their tendrils thick with passion fruit. In the middle of the property, a circular garden flourished, with a tall papaya tree standing like a sentinel at its center.

Natasha had told me her space was on the top floor. I parked in the carport and stepped out, my sandals crunching against the gravel. As I climbed the stairs, a quiet mix of anticipation and unease rose in my chest.

What if she tells me something bad? What if she sees that I'm not a good person?

The thoughts flickered through, but I didn't let them stop me. Curiosity had a stronger pull. I kept climbing.

Another circular window adorned the top portion of the door. I knocked, heard a cheerful "Just a minute!" from inside, and a few seconds later, the door swung open.

Part of me had expected the cliché—an older, heavyset woman draped in robes and beads, maybe wearing a headscarf and holding a crystal ball in one hand. The kind of mystical character conjured by movie scenes and novelty shops.

But the woman standing before me couldn't have been further from that image.

She was striking—a natural beauty with short, dark hair and soft bangs swept effortlessly across her forehead. Her large brown eyes sparkled with intelligence and warmth, and her skin had a kind of lit-from-within glow. She wore a loose-fitting white top and flowy tan pants that moved with her, understated and elegant. And her smile—open, radiant, completely at ease—put me immediately at ease too.

"Welcome! You must be Amanda—come on in!" she said with a warm smile and an accent I couldn't quite place. With a graceful sweep of her arm, she gestured me into a bright, airy room with gleaming wooden floors, a soaring ceiling, and expansive windows that looked out toward the ocean.

"Take a seat over there," she said, palm outstretched toward a wooden table nestled beside yet another circular window—this one framing a view of the distant lava fields and the volcano, Kīlauea.

I settled into a wooden chair with a soft, earth-toned cushion and took a moment to absorb the scene. The room was serene, sunlit, and filled with the rhythmic sound of waves in the distance.

A fluffy white-and-tan cat, perfectly matched to the natural tones of the home, rubbed affectionately against my leg, purring.

“Would you like a cup of tea?” Natasha asked, already making her way toward the kitchen.

“Sure,” I said, a little tentatively, idly petting the cat as I took it all in. This wasn’t at all what I had imagined—but strangely, I felt completely at ease. As if I’d been here before.

Moments later, she returned with two steaming mugs and that same radiant smile, placing one in front of me with a quiet confidence.

I noticed a piece of paper on the table in front of me. It was covered in symbols, lines, and a large circle divided like a wheel. In the top left corner, I saw my name, birth date, time, and location neatly typed. I assumed this was my chart—whatever that meant.

Natasha sat across from me and tilted her head slightly, a playful glint in her eye. “So… what brings you here?” she asked, her voice light, almost mischievous.

I smiled, a little sheepish. “Honestly? I’m not sure. Curiosity, I guess. My friend spoke so highly of you, I figured I’d give it a try.”

She nodded. “Have you ever had an astrology reading before?”

I shook my head. “Nope.”

“Do you know anything about astrology? How familiar are you with it?”

“Absolutely nothing,” I admitted with a laugh. “I mean, I know I’m a Capricorn—but I don’t even know what that really means.”

“Perfect,” she said warmly. “Then we’ll start at the beginning. Stop me anytime if something doesn’t make sense or you have questions.”

She pointed to the paper on the table and said, “This is your natal chart—a snapshot of the sky at the exact moment you were born. It’s a map of your soul’s journey.”

I glanced at the symbols and lines, trying to make sense of it. *Hmm… if you say so*, I thought, the old skepticism bubbling up again.

To my surprise, she began describing my early life with uncanny accuracy. She spoke of a big family, lots of siblings and a house overflowing with energy and noise—a busy, boisterous home with constant activity. She described my mother as vibrant, always in motion, the magnetic center of the household—full of conversation, nurturing, and care. My father, she said, had a strong masculine presence, but his love for my mother was unwavering. He would do anything for her.

Then she paused, tilted her head, and asked, “Were you in a family business? Maybe with your father?”

I blinked. “Yes,” I said slowly, my curiosity deepening. “We built one together along with my brothers and mom.”

Within the first five minutes, we were already miles beyond the surface-level horoscope blurbs I had once assumed were “astrology.” Natasha had described my childhood home, my parents, my siblings—even the family business—with such striking accuracy that I could feel my defenses start to melt.

Natasha then began describing the outer framework of my life—the carefully constructed identity I had clung to for as long as I could remember. She spoke of the accomplishments, the ambition, the relentless drive to succeed. But she didn’t stop at the surface. She gently guided me deeper—into the undercurrent beneath the striving. The belief that I was only valuable if I was productive. The fear of failure, the fear of embarrassment. The quiet anxiety that I might only be lovable if I was successful.

Her words sent a steady stream of shivers up and down my spine. Not because they were shocking, but because they were true. Uncomfortably, uncannily true. And instead of focusing on surface level attributes, she was able to pinpoint the *deeper why* for my outer traits.

How does she know this? How does she know exactly how I've always felt —things I've never even said out loud?

She was also naming fears I hadn't fully admitted to myself, much less shared with anyone else. And yet, here they were—reflected back to me with startling precision, as if she had been reading the quiet script I'd been carrying inside my whole life.

Then she paused, looked at me with clear, steady eyes, and spoke slowly —like someone delivering something sacred.

"You have a very specific mission on this planet," she said. "A lofty one. And the reason you don't feel entirely in control of your hunger for growth, for expansion, for more… is because it isn't coming from your mind. It's coming from your soul. This drive is part of the contract you made—before you decided to incarnate."

Wait… I decided to incarnate?

That was new. I'd always been told we didn't have a say in that.

And I have a contract? Hmmm….

And yet, what she was saying landed in a place deeper than reason. It explained that haunting sense I'd carried in New York—that if I didn't change my life, something essential in me would begin to wither. It wasn't surface-level dissatisfaction, it was a soul-deep warning: *stay on this path, and your soul will die.*

She continued, her voice calm, unwavering.

"You're here to deliver, create, build, and offer something to the collective field of humanity. It's beyond the realm of what you can even imagine. You are a cosmic messenger, and you're here to bring something through—through your words, through your presence. Not behind the scenes. It's your *beingness*, your radiance, your frequency. That's part of the plan. And you're here to share information that is on a universal level."

A cosmic messenger? Universal level? I had no idea what universal, cosmic message I might be carrying.

"It's not something you'll need to chase," she added gently. "It's part of your 12th house. Woven into your destiny. It will unfold through you—not because of your plan or effort, but because it's time. The details are yours to cover and your free will matters, but the map is there, you choose how to walk it."

She spoke of a new quality I was beginning to access—a feminine wisdom, a new kind of leadership. A way of gathering people, building community through resonance rather than control. My soul, she said, was well-versed in focus and determination. But now, it was here to learn something new: collaboration. Harmony. The power of collective energy.

And then she turned toward the parts of me that still felt raw and unresolved.

"You doubt yourself a lot," she said softly. "You rarely feel like you're doing enough. There's this almost constant pressure—like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. And with it, guilt. So much guilt. But you're here to bring awareness to these patterns… to master them. And to show others how to do the same. You're here to model what it looks like to move beyond the old, debilitating stories and step into true self-authority."

Her words bypassed the skeptical part of my mind and landed directly in my heart. Something inside me broke open. Tears welled up and began to spill gently down my cheeks.

Without missing a beat, Natasha handed me a tissue. Her eyes kind, steady. As if she'd seen it all before.

I don't know how else to describe what I was feeling, except to say that I felt seen—in a way I had never felt seen before. It was as if Natasha was looking straight through me, past the surface, into the depths of my being—and gently offering back the treasures she found there.

Despite my lingering fear that she might uncover something dark or unlovable, she was reflecting the beauty in my imperfect perfection. Through her words, I began to see my life differently. It no longer felt like a random collection of experiences or disjointed decisions, but something purposeful. As if every step, every twist and turn, had been part of a larger design—shaping me into exactly who I was meant to become.

At one point, overwhelmed by the intensity of it all, I excused myself and slipped into the bathroom to regroup. I was sure mascara was streaming down my face. And while my defenses were mostly down, I was still a Capricorn at heart—and couldn't quite handle the idea of appearing *too* messy.

When I returned and sat back down, she looked at me kindly. "Are you okay?"

I nodded, smiling softly.

"Would you like me to continue?"

Again, I nodded. And just like that, she picked up the thread and returned to reading the map of my soul.

I was amazed that so much information could be drawn from one small circle of symbols and lines—that Natasha was able to glean all of this insight from the simple piece of paper in front of her. Her understanding seemed endless, and still, she assured me: this was only the beginning. Just the tip of the iceberg.

When it was my turn to ask questions, I brought things back down to earth. Now that Sophia was born and we were more than a year into our adventure, the pressure to figure out how we'd make a living was intensifying. I was starting to have more middle-of-the-night anxiety than I cared to admit.

"Will we be making an income soon?" I asked, hesitantly. "And if so… are there any clues for how that might happen?"

"This isn't a time to be overly focused on your career," Natasha said gently. "I know it's unsettling not to have a plan—especially for you. And I understand how vulnerable it feels to not have financial security. But if you trust the timing, and stay focused on your family and the process of shedding old conditioning, the way forward will reveal itself when you need it."

I wanted to believe her. The idea of completely surrendering to the moment, tending to my family and my own transformation, sounded beautiful. But it also felt like a luxury I wasn't sure I could afford. Our savings were disappearing by the day, and her words, though comforting, didn't calm the growing urgency I felt inside.

As our time came to a close, I stood up—tears streaming down my face again—and said, without hesitation, "This is the clearest, most obvious evidence of God I've ever encountered." And I meant every word.

Because if this woman—this perfect stranger—could see me so clearly, speak directly to the nuance and complexity of my experience, all by reading the cosmic imprint from the exact time, date, and location of my birth… then there had to be something greater at work. Some Intelligence far beyond anything I could wrap my mind around.

And if that Intelligence could craft something so precise, so meaningful, so rich with purpose… then it had to be loving. How else could such care, such intention, be explained?

For the first time, I felt the full weight—and grace—of that realization. That my life wasn't random. That I hadn't been stumbling forward alone. I was being guided. Held. Nudged in just the right directions. Drawn to people, places, and passions that would eventually weave together into something coherent and purposeful.

It felt as if I had just caught a glimpse of the loving presence behind that soft inner voice—the one that had whispered to me at key moments throughout my life.

The same voice that asked, *"Who are you, really?"* when I was ten years old, staring into my own eyes in the mirror.

The one that nudged me to explore world religions, seeking the golden thread of truth running through them all.

The one that guided me toward psychology as I searched for answers in the human mind and heart.

The voice that haunted me in New York, whispering *"You're here for something more."*

The one that showed up each month as I stepped into the labyrinth, gently urging me to shed old beliefs and walk toward something unknown, but true.

And now, here it was again—illuminated through the stars, the symbols, the chart on Natasha's table.

I laughed to myself, thinking of my skepticism and dismissive attitude toward astrology. A little embarrassed about how self-righteously I had dismissed it as "unintelligent" and "woo-woo." I had no idea it went this deep.

"Why doesn't anyone *know* about this?!" I asked Natasha at the end of our reading.

She laughed lightly, “Well, *some people* certainly do.”

We hugged goodbye at her doorstep, and I stepped back into the sunlit afternoon feeling changed. Not in some dramatic, movie-scene kind of way—but subtly, profoundly rearranged on the inside. I hoped I’d see her again soon. I wanted more.

I drove home the same way I came, but I felt like a new person. There was a sense of magic in the air now, and possibility. The world hadn’t changed… but I had. And everything around me looked more sparkly and alive now.

Billowing clouds curled around the peak of the volcano, framed by brilliant blue sky. The glistening black lava fields stretched out on either side of the road—and then something caught my eye.

A small cluster of vibrant green and red, pushing its way through the hardened earth.

I recognized them—ʻŌhiʻa Lehua trees. Sacred to Hawaiʻi. Symbols of renewal and resilience. The first life to emerge through hardened lava after a volcanic eruption. A living reminder that even in the most scorched and devastated landscapes, life finds a way.

As I watched them sway gently in the breeze, I knew: this image would stay with me.

The ʻŌhiʻa Lehua would become a kind of lifeline—a symbol I’d return to again and again. A reminder that the same quiet strength, the same insistence on life, lived within me too.

And that one day, when everything fell apart, I would need to remember it.

The Astrologer's Note

Many of us have had experiences of fated meetings that were meant to profoundly impact our lives and even change the direction of our journey. The key players of our destiny's script appear oftentimes unexpectedly, yet years later we realize the importance of that meeting and the role it played in our becoming. Sometimes those meetings are accompanied with a subtle sense of recognition, or "remembering", other times we can intuitively feel that something special is about to happen.

The astrological technique of comparing two charts - called Synastry - gives an extraordinary insight into the nature of our connections, possible reasons behind the encounter, the lessons and potential that dwells within the synergy between two human beings.

The combination of Amanda's and the Astrologer's charts is beaming with powerful conjunctions where all the planets are mutually activated and engaged. It means that the energy and essence of one person is stirring the inner matrix of the other and vice versa. Moreover, the South Node of the Moon, representing our karmic past or previous incarnations, is activated in both charts, with the Astrologer's Jupiter (teachings, knowledge) on Amanda's karmic tail, and Amanda's Sun and Venus (creativity, identity, love) on Astrologer's South Node. Cases like this indicate an old and intimate soul connection, lifetimes of experiences together through the journeys of physical incarnations.


LIFE BY THE
STARS
OUT THIS OCTOBER
AMANDA WALSH
With Astrologer's Notes by Natasha Alter