

Let
Me
Die
Laughing!

*Waking
From The Nightmare
Of A Brain Explosion*

Megan Timothy

Crone House Publishing

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form, whatsoever, without permission, except for brief quotations where the author is cited. For written permission for partial reprints, contact the publisher at the location listed below.

Copyright © 2006 Megan Timothy

Crone House Publishing

PO Box 1856
Idyllwild, CA 92549-1856
951.659.1938
www.cronehousepublishing.com



ISBN: 1-932905-06-5

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Book and cover designed by Rachel McMaster

Cover art by *Jennifer J. Jones*

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs and article reprints are courtesy of the author.

FOREWORD

by the Publisher

SERENDIPITY

***The faculty of finding valuable
or agreeable things not sought for.***

You might argue that it's possible to lead an entirely serendipitous life – simply don't expect or seek anything in particular and most of what happens then appears to be the result of serendipity. On the other hand, having almost no expectations might also lead to a stagnant life – one with little depth or meaning. The trick, I believe, is to find the balance between being without expectations of any sort and having such strong, overwhelming desires that life constantly disappoints you.

The author of this book, Megan Timothy, has had a life that has been anything but boring. She was born in Rhodesia, in Southern Africa, and came to the U.S. when she was 20. Megan's done things like owning her own turn-of-the-century B & B in N. Hollywood, for which she went to culinary school and became a chef specializing in fantasy wedding cakes. She rafted down the Mississippi and traveled along much of the Amazon. She biked 10,000 miles around Europe (when she was 56!) and worked for a number of years as an actress and screenwriter in Hollywood. Not boring!

Megan cared for her very ill mother until Mum's death, which left Megan in financial ruin. A close friend offered her a cottage on a small ranch in return for Megan's help with the animals and gardening.

Let Me Die Laughing!

They both saw this as an opportunity for Megan to fall back and regroup, but nature had a different path laid out for Megan. The very day she moved to the ranch, Megan suffered an aneurism in her brain. This left her unable to speak or to read or to write. She was dropped into a prison of non-communication by a cruel joke of nature.

Her story of waking up in the hospital unable to convey to those around her what she was thinking is frightening. She further tells of spending a couple of weeks in “rehab”, actually a state mental hospital - terrifying! As you read this book, keep in mind that just a year ago the author could barely put a sentence together on paper.

With a deep sense of awe, I read the pages of Megan’s manuscript. In gratitude for the gift I’ve been given, I offered her a contract to publish this book. With peels of laughter she and I have shared our life stories over cups of hot tea and contraband chocolate candy during the months we’ve worked together to bring her story to you.

Megan and I both believe in miracles. We know that what our Minds and our Souls are determined to achieve will come to pass. We just have to stand still long enough for the miracles to occur and they will. Much of the time we have to get out of the way of our own best intentions and let the Universe work on our behalf.

Early in our working relationship, I sent Megan a small piece I’d recently written to help keep her spirits up as she struggled to complete the second half of the manuscript. She and I have both adopted this as our “Writer’s Creed”.



***The Power
Of The Written Word –
A Writer's Creed***

*Writing empowers me to be better today
than I was yesterday.
It can also create in me an obsessive need
for perfection.
When I write something
that totally connects with my Soul,
it's both the most healing and, at times,
the most terrifying experience I know.
I write because I live.
I live because I write.
This is not a paradox.
It's the rules of engagement for my life.*

N. Layton

Let Me Die Laughing!



An avid horsewoman from childhood, Megan used that skill to help land parts in Hollywood movies.

Megan poses in front of the Tower of Pisa on her 10,000 mile solo bike ride around Europe, the Middle East, and N. Africa



Photo by Jessica Busby

Megan loves gardening and has grown many flowering and edible plants around her cottage at the Hemet ranch owned by her friend, Jaki.

INTRODUCTION

For me, to follow just one road through life would be to suffocate. My lust for living demands a thousand paths leading to unexpected experiences. One great meal after another. Each tantalizingly different, for who wants to eat the same thing everyday, even if it's cake.

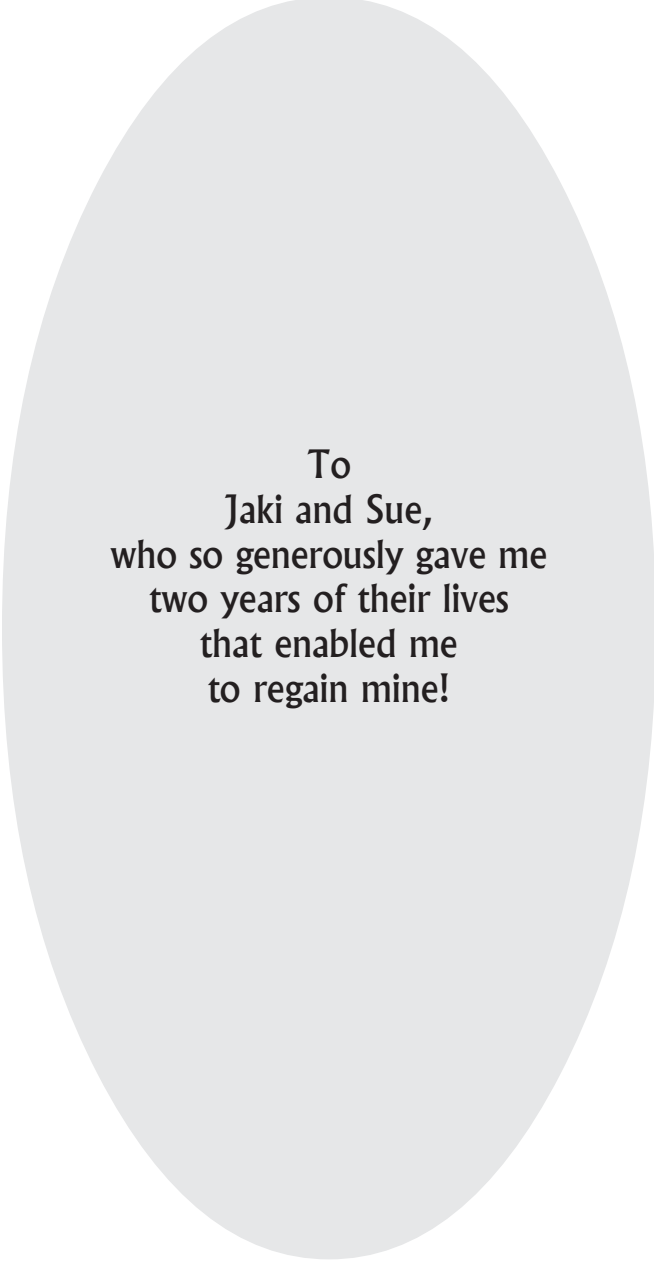
I'm accused of being a rolling stone since I fail to gather moss. If moss be money and material possessions, it's true. My stone rolls far and wide, and rather than being blanketed with moss, it's polished as smooth and shiny as a gemstone. It glows with experience, sparkles with adventure, dazzles with challenges to both mind and body, gleams with eager anticipation of the next quest. How much richer do I deserve to be?

My current journey is not one of my choosing but one that has been given to me. Two years ago I suffered an AVM (arterial venous malformation), a silent, hidden, congenital defect that triggered a bleed in my brain similar to a stroke. It robbed me of my speaking, reading, and writing abilities, and without communicative skills you are imprisoned within the solitary confinement of your mind.

My journey home has been, and continues to be, long, difficult and sometimes tainted with bitter fruit. But there are also sweet cherries to be found along the way.

The trick is to remember to spit out the pits.

Let Me Die Laughing!



**To
Jaki and Sue,
who so generously gave me
two years of their lives
that enabled me
to regain mine!**

one

Megan Timothy

2nd September 2003

I wake up sitting on the edge of my bed
How did I get here
Why does my head ache
A row of peculiar blue yellow and red
Labels stick to my left side
Who put them there
Why can't I peel them off or at least read
the writing
My head hurts
Is it a hangover
Can't be, I don't drink
I stagger to the kitchen for an ice pack to
relieve my headache and ease the
unrelenting desert heat
The colored labels remain stuck to my
head
I'm confused
The full moon offers no answers
I return to bed to sleep it off
Night disappears
Daylight comes and goes

Let Me Die Laughing!

Darkness brings anxious friends who
fail to understand anything I say
even though I repeat myself again
and again
What's wrong with them
While my head is still groggy it doesn't
hurt anymore
My friend, Jaki, calls 911 for an
ambulance
"What for?" I argue
She still acts as if she doesn't
understand me
Why is she being so difficult
If I'm going to the hospital then I must
put on my best underwear
I insist
And shouldn't I at least shave my legs
Jaki hasn't a clue what I'm saying and
demands I sit still
I only manage the underwear before the
paramedics arrive

Megan Timothy

The blinding hospital lights sear my
eyes

It doesn't matter

My eyes, and in fact my entire body,
are no longer of significance to me

Only my thoughts matter

Only they are important

I flutter like a caged bird desperate to
escape this heavy obsolete body -
desperate for the freedom to fly to
some far-off place

Jaki runs alongside my gurney barely
keeping up

Death is in a hurry

"Jaki," I cry out in surprise "I'm dying!"

I try to tell her she's welcome to all my
earthly stuff

But again she doesn't understand

And she's drifting away

So far away

A white door slams in her face

She's gone

Let Me Die Laughing!

I'm drifting too
Is this all there is to death
An odd floating sensation
I'm disappointed and annoyed having
expected drama excitement and an
impressive production
Who invited Death anyway
Not me
How dare he barge in
What about my book half-written
All the places yet to explore

And most of all friends I haven't taken the
time to say I love

Too late now

Where Am I?

Where am I?
Am I dead?
I see Jakí and my friend Sue floating
around
Maybe they're really angels only I never
knew it
A young woman holding a handful of
fruit asks me to name a banana
She won't give it to me because I call it
"chicken"
Why on earth do I call it "chicken"?
Too tired to find the answer I fall asleep

Where am I?

It appears Death has a sense of humor
He's dressed me up like a Christmas tree
I'm festooned with yards of streamers
and blinking lights
Jakí and Sue float around with the
woman and her bananas

Let Me Die Laughing!

And there's a man who asks me to recite
the alphabet and tell him the day and
date

I think he really wants me to sing a
Christmas carol

I try but the only words that come out are
"chicken" followed by a slew of
obscenities

I weep and swear and drift back to sleep

Where am I?

I hear Jaki's voice

She says something about me moving
Moving where?

Dead people don't move

I'm too tired and confused to understand

All I want to do is sleep

I'm startled awake

Two strange men drag me onto a gurney

I yell

Megan Timothy

They don't appreciate being told to do
something impossible and indecent
to a chicken

I try to sit up but find I'm restrained
It's impossible to move

Panic

I can't seem to breathe

Sweat streams down my neck

Survival kicks in

Missing pieces of my mind click into
place

"Untie me!" I demand

So, there is more to my life than
"chicken"!

Maybe

"Policy or not, I don't want to be bound," I
mean to say

But instead of words the obscene

"chicken" returns and the men ignore
me

I try to curb my panic and confusion

The softly lit hallways of a hospital are
empty

Let Me Die Laughing!

The elevator's glaring light is spearing
my head
I clamp my eyes shut but the light
pierces through
My bound hands are unable to protect
my eyes
To struggle is useless
To try to speak is useless
I choke back my screams and swallow
my anger

A single ambulance waits in the hot,
dark night
"Where are you taking me?" I cry out in
fear
But my words come out all wrong and
the men continue to ignore me

The ambulance door slams shut melting me
away to nothing

Zero

Along with me, everything and everyone I ever
knew disappears

Alisa

I'm not happy. It's been agreed, not by me, but by Jaki, Sue, and Alisa, and approved by MediCal-Pending that I'm to have speech therapy twice a week. I'd rather be shoveling horse poop at the ranch. I fret over the time and distance it takes to get to and from Moreno Valley. I don't know how Jaki and Sue, even alternating the trip, will be able to keep it up.

Instead of a couple of weeks to a month, I'm told to expect the therapy to take up to two years. Two years! How many frigging letters does Alisa think there are in the alphabet?

Sue and Jaki chat away in front of the car while I sit in the back and brood. I resent the very thought of this hopeless therapy stuff. Honestly, I'm getting on just fine by myself. I've almost memorized half of the alphabet and last night I read two sentences of a newspaper article to Jaki. Yes, it did take me nearly forty minutes but I'll be a lot faster once I've gotten the rest of the alphabet down pat.

We all crowd into Alisa's tiny office. My heart drops another fifty feet. She looks about twenty years old. What on earth is she going to be able to teach me? I just hope she doesn't bring up anything about bananas.

Jaki and Sue ask a lot of questions and make notes. I can't keep up with their rapid chatter.

Let Me Die Laughing!

Alisa congratulates both Jaki and Sue for the work they've been doing with me. "During the first days after a brain injury, stimulation is crucial to reactivate the brain," she says. "It's essential that the brain is not allowed further debilitation. If so, it risks its ability to recover sufficiently." This piece of information gets me all riled up again over Ratchett's lethargy and apparent indifference.

Alisa hands me a pencil and asks me to write a few simple words. I can't. Behaving like a sullen five-year-old, I tell her I've learned half the alphabet and will be reading and writing in no time at all.

"I know this is very difficult for you," she says.

"*How would you know?*" I grumble silently to myself.

Almost as though she reads my mind, she continues, "Four years ago I had a bad car accident that left me with brain damage similar to yours."

I stare at her.

"I know how impatient you are to get your life back together, but it's going to take time and there are no shortcuts." I sit up and push aside my five-year-old pout. Alisa not only has a college education, she has core experience. She has walked in my shoes, felt the pain, swallowed the anguish.

Megan Timothy

Some things only life experience can teach. The taste of an apricot, for example, can't be explained in words. To know the taste you must experience it. Verbal descriptions do not give the sensory sensation. Thus, learning will convey only part of the meaning. Alisa has both knowledge and experience.

I have found my teacher and it doesn't matter how old she is. I look into her eyes - really look. She knows! I'm with someone who has traveled my path.

Adrenalin pumps through me.

I dust off hopelessness and set out for a new beginning.