



SHAUN PROULX

SPIRIT & THE CITY

How Oprah changed my life

Call it flirting — and then, committing — to the universe: Once upon a time, I was in my late twenties and in my eighth year of a heady finance career. I made six figures, travelled extensively, and owned a house in Leslieville.

One stormy day, in Halifax on business, I was undressing at day's end in a hotel room. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* was on.

Oprah spoke to the camera, to me: "When you take one step towards the universe, the universe takes nine towards you."

I was transfixed, my hand froze at the knot of my Armani necktie.

Despite my material success from the finance industry, I knew I wasn't doing what I loved with my life, what I was good at. I had zero success at what mattered.

Oprah's wisdom hit my internal struggle hard. There and then, I took her word ... I stepped towards the universe. I bought a sketch pad, markers, and coloured pencils from the hotel gift shop, charging it all to my expense account, and on my hotel room bed, I audaciously doodled and wrote down all the things I believed I could be, my heart's fondest desires: Writer ... speaker ... author ... I wrote out the feelings I wanted in my daily life: Freedom ... satisfaction ... joy ... adventure ... bliss ...

And then, in the bottom right-hand corner of that page, in the last blank space left, I drew my boldest idea for me in the form of a crude stick figure of myself, with a huge crap-eating grin, holding a microphone. And on the mic flag I wrote in careful lettering: *The Shaun Proulx Show*. I wanted to host my own talk show. I love to talk. I'm curious about people. Everyone is fascinating; we all have a story.

Last March, I was able to thank Oprah

personally for encouraging that first step, when she was a guest on my talk show.

"Full circle moment," Oprah marvelled after I shared with her that tale. The topic of our interview was — of course — the immense power behind taking a first step towards your dreams.

"The biggest step is the first one," Oprah said in our interview. "Everything happens when you decide. And once you decide, the universe arranges itself with that decision. And everything that happens aligns itself to support you in that decision."

That's truth I know intimately after 15 years of living a life of my own design, a life birthed by a sketch pad and markers. When it comes to first steps, I know this much is true, too:

- **Never wait until you're "ready,"** or you'll live the rest of your life waiting.
- **No Plan B.** Plan B indicates a disbelief in Plan A. You must believe. I quit finance, sold my house and went broke I believed so much. Whenever anyone asks my exit strategy, I say 'dying.'
- **Speak your dreams.** Draw them, doodle them, tell people. It signals the universe that you mean business. When I let my Oprah scoop out of the bag after our interview was in the can, dozens of people said to me, "I remember you always said you would do that!" Yes, I did, unabashedly. And I journaled I would, imagined I would, posted, tweeted, meditated I would; I had that woman's face on my vision wall for years and still subscribe to O. Declare your dreams and watch the path light up. But to begin, take one first step. Even a baby step — like doodling yourself with a crap-eating grin, while watching Oprah on TV — has life force within it that'll knock your socks off.



Oprah

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