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Lead the Way

I've always considered myself an old soul. Even in my childhood, I was highly interested in old artworks, stories, and antiques. Years ago, my mother and I made plans to spend the entire day together and go shopping. There were so many different things that I could've wanted but what caught my eye was a random compass placed on a shelf with a bunch of scattered items. This compass was hardly the size of my palm and opened like a sea shell or a locket. On the outside it was purely gold as if it came from a treasure chest. On the inside, it had a caramel shade as the background with a picture of a sun in the center where the black arrow laid. Instead of buying a toy or a new pair of shoes, this compass was what I asked my mother to gift to me.

I carried this compass around with me every day to every location I went. Each time my family and I got into the car, I'd serve as a navigator and announce to everyone whether we were going north, south, east, or west and what the coordinates were. I'm sure it got incredibly unnecessary and annoying for my parents, but at the time I didn't care. Something about the compass made me feel confident, like I was on track and I knew where I was going. As I got older, heading towards my teenage years, carrying it around became a hassle and it spent more time on my nightstand than it did in my pocket or my hands. Soon enough, like every teenager, I found myself in a phase where nothing seemed to go my way, and for the first time, I had no idea who to trust, who to go to, or who I was. It was probably the first

moment in my life where I wasn't the optimistic, cheerful girl I was before, and I only saw darkness. I was truly lost. This stage went on for weeks and it was a living nightmare where I was trapped in my own thoughts and confusion. I didn't know what to do to make it better and what direction to turn.

Just another Saturday night came around, and I spent most of it tossing and turning. Because I was so restless, I decided to just stay up. I tried reading, drawing, or organizing my room, but somehow doing those things made it worse. I ended up ripping my papers in half, and I started throwing in no particular direction random items around my room. My room was now a complete mess with broken items and all my belongings scattered across the floor. Huddled by the wall, I wrapped my arms around myself and silently cried for a while. When I stopped, I lifted my head realizing it was already sunrise. Then I turned my head and observed my room and all my things scrambled around it.

Suddenly, I noticed a sunray that shone through my window curtain pointing directly at a small, unexpected item. I leaned far enough forward to reach it and realized it was my compass that I hadn't picked up for years. I rubbed my thumb against its metal feeling the cold smooth texture. With a quiet *click*, I opened it up, taking in all the intricate details that I hadn't seen in so long. Instantly, like a time portal, I was brought back to the different moments I used it as a little girl. I remembered everything like it was yesterday. I also remembered the kind of person I was: hopeful, excited, and jubilant. I knew I had become different, but not until that moment looking at my compass did I realize how far off I'd strayed. Seeing its beauty glow in my hands brought some kind of peace into my mind and somehow gave me the energy to stand up.

I threw on my sweater and shoes before heading outside where the sun hovered over the mountains decorated with a myriad of cumulus clouds. I walked nowhere in particular, just around my neighborhood, while carrying the compass and referring to it every now and then. I hadn't felt this kind of calm for weeks. As I approached my house after an hour or two, something inside me clicked. All my senses and emotions instantly turned back on, and at that very moment, I realized that I couldn't continue my life this way; this person I'd turned into was not who I really was. Looking at the compass, I remembered my old self and wanted to become that excited and lively again.

That Sunday was the day I decided I was going to pick myself up and keep walking. At last, I had the urge to engage in conversation and activity. I mended my relationships with others, and created goals for myself. The darkness at night wasn't something to scare me, but something that soothed me. Slowly, I was healing, and becoming that better side of me again. I was able to achieve what I thought was unattainable: happiness.

In general, a compass is something people use to find the right way. Although I've used it for this reason as well, it represents something much more than that. The compass represents my recovery, and how I had to go through that awful time in order to get to this better one. It's been almost a decade since that period of my life, but my compass still sits on my desk, reminding me every day that things get better, and no matter how far I may wander off, God will lead me in the right direction. Sometimes, becoming lost is the best way to be found.