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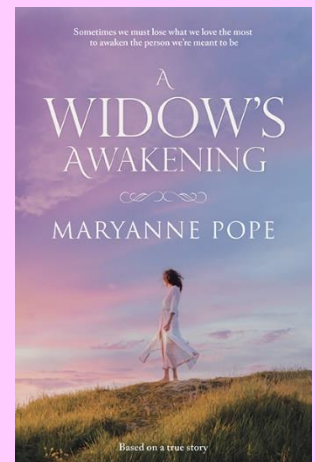
Reese Witherspoon
Reese's Book Club
Hello Sunshine Productions

May 13th, 2022

Dear Reese,

Hello! My name is Maryanne Pope, and I am the author of “A Widow’s Awakening.” I am writing you because I think my book would be an excellent choice for your book club. As evidenced by the title, it is based on my personal experience of coming to terms with the death of my husband when we were both 32. Candid, heartfelt, and highly engaging, the story captures the incredibly difficult challenge of learning to accept the unacceptable while transforming loss into positive change.

The book is also a poignant reminder to readers about the danger of waiting for tragedy to awaken them to the importance of achieving their dreams. I firmly believe that the more people who find, and share, their life’s purpose – by following their heart, listening to their soul, and doing the work – the better our world becomes. Your life is a powerful example of that.



“A Widow’s Awakening” was originally self-published in 2008 as creative non-fiction and sold over 2000 copies. In 2018, the book was picked up by a publisher ([BHC Press](#)) and released as a novel based on a true story. Very minor edits were made, and the book was given a new cover.

Over the years, many readers have expressed their gratitude for my honest portrayal of the grieving process. My candour (particularly about my rather unorthodox psychological and spiritual journey) has served as a reminder that regardless of where someone is at in their own grief, they are not crazy nor alone – even though it may seem that way at the time.

The book, however, does not only resonate with readers who are navigating grief, but also with women of all ages and stages of life. It is a compelling and authentic story that creatively explores difficult subject matters (such as death, suicide, grief, depression, mental health, purpose, destiny, God, spirituality, soul mates, and the afterlife) while serving as a vivid reminder that regardless of what happens to us in life, we get to choose how to respond.

More than ever, women need to a) be encouraged to choose the path they want the rest of their lives to follow and b) have the courage to envision a better world – and believe in the integral role *they* can play in helping bring that vision to fruition. Real-life stories of resilient women are an effective way to inspire others to fight for change. We learn from each other. But we also need to help each other. Which brings me to my story.

In September 2000, I had an argument with my husband, John, a police officer. During the 12 years we had been together, he had patiently listened to me talk about wanting to write while complaining about not having the time, space, or money to do so. I told him how scared I was of waking up twenty years later and *still* not have finished writing a book.

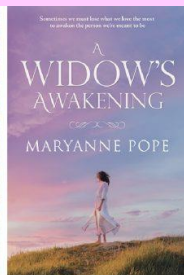
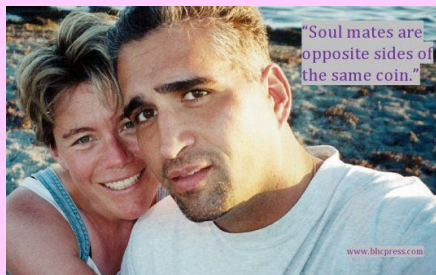
“You’re probably right about that,” was his reply. “Just as long as you know that will have been *your* choice.”

Ouch. Clearly, he had run out of patience. And time. That was our last conversation. He went to work that night and, while searching a warehouse for a break and enter suspect, stepped through an unmarked false ceiling, fell nine feet into the lunchroom below and died of a brain injury. There was no safety railing in place to warn him – or anyone else – of the danger. It ended up being a false alarm: there was no intruder in the building after all.

My wake-up call, however, was devastatingly real. I *got* John’s tough-love message. Two weeks later, I began writing what would become “A Widow’s Awakening.” It took me eight years to get the manuscript – and me – where it needed to be. But I did it. I **had** to. Why? Because my life’s dream of becoming a writer was handed to me on the same silver platter as my worst nightmare: the death of my soul mate.

In the years leading up to John’s death, I had read Virginia Woolf’s book, “A Room of One’s Own,” many times. Woolf believed that for women to write fiction well, they must have a secure income and a room of their own. John and I used to argue about this, as he believed that intrinsic factors (motivation and good habits) were more important than external factors such as money and space. I disagreed. I felt that *if* I had a secure income, I would write.

When John died, this theory was put to the test. Because of his on-duty death, I was entitled to receive his salary for the *rest of my life*. Now, more than two decades later, I can safely say that we were both right. Financial security *is* extremely beneficial, as it permits one to write what she chooses to, versus what she is paid to. However, without the motivation and good habits in place, all the money in the world won’t make her write.



I know full well that if John’s parting words to me weren’t as tough as they were, I likely wouldn’t have taken my writing seriously after he died. John gave me everything he could in life and what he couldn’t, he gave to me in death: a harsh wake-up call *and* the income to do the work I am here to do. Which is exactly what I’ve been doing for the past two decades.

In addition to being an author and public speaker, I also write screenplays, playscripts, and a weekly blog. I am the founder and CEO of Pink Gazelle Productions Inc, as well as a co-founder of the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund, a charity that raises public awareness about why and how to ensure workplaces are safe for *everyone*, including emergency responders.

I also care deeply about environmental issues, climate change, and wildlife conservation. For the past fifteen years I have been developing a multi-film project entitled “God’s Country,” which is another project you might be interested in – because of the strong historical female figure at the helm: Nell Shipman. Nell was a silent screen star, independent film pioneer, and an early advocate for the ethical treatment of animals in film. Nell’s films reflected her belief that people need to work in harmony with nature versus conquering and exploiting it. Sadly, Nell has been all but forgotten by Hollywood. Yet her story needs to be heard, today more than ever.

Over the years, I have worked closely with Nell’s family on developing this project, and optioned Nell’s autobiography in 2020. Spending fifteen years developing “God’s Country” is but one example of the many opportunities I have been given because of my financial situation. As grateful as I am, I am also acutely aware that very few female writers have the gift of time that a secure income can give. Which brings me to your “Lit Up” program.

If you think “A Widow’s Awakening” would be a suitable choice for your book club, I would love to direct a portion of book sales to this program. And I would be thrilled to be a mentor for an emerging writer! Sharing what we’ve learned with other women and helping them succeed by giving them practical tools, such as an all-expenses-paid retreat and mentorship, is an incredibly important gift...one I understand all too well.

To view the “A Widow’s Awakening” book trailer (3.5 minutes) that I created for you, [here is the link](#). The password is: AWAtailerReese

Thank you, Reese, for all you do to encourage, inspire, and empower women.

Take care,

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“My heart is beating harder and my breathing shorter. I am hugging Russ tighter and kissing him longer. I have burnt supper while reading “A Widow’s Awakening”! I have read books until wee hours of the night, but I have not felt this much about a book before. You are an incredibly gifted writer...I feel like I am right beside you and that I am getting to know John and your relationship together. I love how he loved you. I love your writing style, how brilliantly you tie everything together and how you authentically share your soul.” — Kim W.

“I LOVED “A Widow’s Awakening”! I cried, I laughed, felt your anger...and was willingly drawn into your opinions on Christianity, the transition from life to death, your feelings about the environment...it was really an amazing read. I selected your book for our choice for our book club, as I think it will spark so much interest and conversation in your experience.” — Linda M.