

CHAPTER 1



The Shit Hits

There is no such thing as ego. It's only data, data, data.

—Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len

I turned in the manuscript for *Zero Limits* to the publisher during the second Zero Limits seminar, held in Maui, at the end of 2006. It was a fun time for me. The book basically wrote itself. I penned it in two weeks, which is astonishing. Other books of mine took months to years to complete. Two weeks? That's a miracle. Dr. Hew Len, my coauthor, approved it after reading only a few pages. He said, "Divine says it's fine." I was proud. Why shouldn't I have been? I had no idea the worst was yet to come.

During that second event, Dr. Hew Len told me that when the book came out, "The shit would hit the fan." I didn't know what he meant, but I wasn't worried. I felt guided and protected. My spirit was shining, and my confidence was high. I would keep cleaning. No shit would faze me.

I was wrong.

The first evening of the seminar, just before the meet and greet dinner, I received an angry phone call from an author and spiritual teacher I idolized. She had given an endorsement for the book manuscript I had sent her but apparently hadn't read the book. After she did, she objected to a few things in it, one of which was including her, although unnamed. When she recognized herself, she hated me for it—and called to read me the riot act.

I'd meant no harm. The section was about how even successful people have blind spots and attract chaos. I used her as an example but did not name her. I was surprised by her outburst because she often used her life challenges as teaching lessons in her own books. That wasn't a secret. But people project their insecurities and meanings onto everything, including books. She saw something she didn't like, and instead of taking full responsibility for what she saw (which is the entire point of Ho'oponopono and *Zero Limits*), she lashed out at me.

Because I was (and still am) a fan of hers, it hurt badly. I rewrote her out of the book, but the pain remained. Later, I called her and resolved the issue, but it shook me. How could this happen? If this was what Dr. Hew Len predicted and the book wasn't even published yet, what was I in store for? If only I knew. The shit was clearly hitting the fan—and once the book came out, the shit *really* began flying.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, people who hadn't read the book (because it wasn't published yet) condemned it and me. They said I made it all up, both Dr. Hew Len and the story of how he helped heal the patients at the mental hospital for the criminally insane in Hawaii. Some condemned the book as incomplete, and others slammed me for not revealing all the secrets from a Ho'oponopono seminar. They accused me of just trying to plug my other products in the book. Some said that if Dr. Hew Len was real, he was certifiably insane.

It was mind-boggling and disturbing to say the least. How could one book set so many people off like so much dynamite, especially a book that not only was written in love but also taught love and forgiveness?

At the same time, thousands of people who read the book were being transformed. I received calls, letters, and e-mails from truly grateful people. They found hope, healing, and salvation. It was gratifying, but the arrows in my back still hurt.

It was going to get worse before it got better.

I had a dear friend, a man I had coached, assisted, helped, advised, and inspired, who had been suffering financially. He had few online business skills, but I liked him, his creativity, and his sense of humor. I saw potential in my helping and working with him.

I gave everything, at no charge, to help him so that he could get on his feet. I helped him create an online business and an e-mail list. I helped him with products and marketing. I paid him for helping me at special events, even when I lost money to do so. He was grateful and showed it,

often kissing my cheek when he left my presence and saying, “I love you, Joe.”

In 2009, I was heading to Russia for a series of speaking engagements and invited him to come along. He got a free first-class trip, and I got a companion. He also agreed to help me onstage because speaking for days at a time can be exhausting. It was a win-win. Although we both had fears about Russia (from all the stories of nuclear attacks we heard when we were growing up—talk about data), we packed our bags, took a deep breath, and flew to the other side of the planet.

Russia was no picnic. The schedule was cruel, nearly torturous.

The moment we landed, I was taken directly to a television show in Moscow without time to shower or shave. I was so stunned that I was speechless. Because of the contract I had, I knew I had to do everything the Russians asked of me. I went on the TV show. Later that same night, I signed books for hours at a bookstore. The itinerary was relentless for the next two weeks. Although my friend was there to support me, he often stayed in his room and slept, while I went out and continued to speak, present, do interviews, sign books, and more. It didn’t bother me. I was relieved that he got some rest. He deserved it.

Even leaving Russia was an escape from hell.

We discovered our visas were expiring before our trip ended. Someone had screwed up our paperwork. Our travel documents were not in order. I felt like we were in a world war movie. It was unreal. The American consulates told my friend to “do whatever it takes to get out of the country by midnight.”

It was harrowing. We were taken through backcountry roads, were driven through military checkpoints in Russia, were constantly showing our passports, and were finally dropped off in the woods in Finland—right before midnight, just minutes before our visas expired. We still had to get to Helsinki and find new flights back to the United States (at great financial cost to me), and good Lord, it wasn’t easy.

But that wasn’t the real shit.

Once we returned home safely, my friend had a meltdown of some sort. Within 72 hours of getting home, he sent me an e-mail with an unexpected and totally fabricated bill for the prior two years. Everything he had done gratis as my friend, or because he felt indebted to me, was on the invoice. He said I owed him money and lots of it. I couldn’t believe it.

Although it was never part of the agreement to pay him for going to Russia, I had told him while there that I would give him something. I never got paid fully for my work overseas, and it cost me \$10,000 to fly us both home at the last minute. However, his support in Russia helped me survive what was asked of me. As a surprise gift, I'd planned to sign over a car I knew he loved, but his expressed anger at me, fewer than three days after our return, stopped me in my tracks. I was appalled. I was shaken to the core. I couldn't make sense of his behavior.

I tried to meet with him. I called him. I left voice mail. I thought that if we just sat down and talked, we could figure out what was truly wrong. At one point I offered to pay him, just to bring peace to our relationship. Angry, he wrote, "Forget it." He continued to vent, writing terrible things about me online. He privately wrote to people I knew—even my own staff—trying to get them to side with him against me. His actions were devious, vicious, insidious, and darkly underhanded in his drive to undermine my reputation.

There is no way to convey fully the pain of this experience. It was like waking up and finding your spouse or best friend gone or dead. I was grief-stricken. I was traumatized. How could my best friend act with such devilish behavior and coldness? I couldn't comprehend it. Was it all about money? Was he throwing away a friendship, a business partnership, a spiritual pact, all over *money*? Where was spirituality? Where was the Ho'oponopono I'd helped him learn? Where was his *heart*?

The irony is that it's because of him I became interested in Ho'oponopono. He'd heard a story and seen a booklet, and he told me about it. He had no idea what Ho'oponopono was. I found the whole topic riveting and wanted to know more, so I started researching where the story came from and who and what was behind it all. Eventually I was led to meeting Dr. Hew Len and writing *Zero Limits*.

I thought my friend understood the principles of personal responsibility, love, and forgiveness. After all, I'd paid for him to attend his first Ho'oponopono event, yet when his buttons were pushed, whether from the trauma of Russia or from something else, he didn't take responsibility. He blamed me and went beyond that. In Ho'oponopono they call this kind of retaliation *ino*, which means acting to do intentional harm with hate in mind. It's one of the heaviest transgressions imaginable.

And he did that *to me*.

There's some shit for you.

I cleaned . . . and cleaned . . . and cleaned.

I looked at my own involvement in this drama on an energy level, trying to understand how I attracted it. I know our lives are intertwined. We are a dance of energy. Nothing happens in a vacuum. My friend and I were sharing a program—a virus of the mind. I did my best to recall everything Dr. Hew Len ever taught me, right down to knowing that the only way out is to clean, clean, clean.

I began to feel sad for my friend. I began to understand that somehow he had acquired a program that was taking over his mind. I knew he had had blowups with family and friends before. I had seen them happen. I just never expected to see it in our relationship or have it directed at me. It truly felt like a program possessed him and was directing him. I wanted to help him, to heal him somehow. I did clearing nonstop to erase this from me, hoping it would be erased from within him, too.

In the reality of authentic Ho'oponopono, it wasn't about him. It was about me.

If anyone had justification in feeling like a victim, it was me. If anyone had evidence that my friend betrayed me, I did. I still have our e-mail correspondence and the e-mails from people he contacted, proving all he did in public and private. Another person might use all of it against him. I won't.

As Dr. Hew Len often taught me, "There's nothing out there." It's all inside. I had to force myself to accept complete responsibility for everything my friend had done, looking for the program in me and in us that created, attracted, and manifested this entire drama.

My friend moved away, something I sense he wanted to do all along. Did he create this nightmare scenario to break from his business relationship with me? I guessed he had money problems. Did he need a scapegoat? If so, I was certainly handy. This isn't to blame him, because blame is not authentic Ho'oponopono, but to show how the human mind strives to make sense out of nonsense. I have no idea if I'm right or wrong about his motivations, nor does it matter. The real point is that Dr. Hew Len was right. The shit *did* hit the fan.

What did I do to handle the crisis the shared program in my friend and me triggered? Nothing.

I didn't hire a lawyer or contact any government agency. That didn't feel loving and forgiving or anything like authentic Ho'oponopono. Even though my friend did some horrible things in an attempt to ruin my

reputation (which hurt even more because he knew about full responsibility and clearing), I didn't retaliate.

Instead, I cleaned—I felt my deep pain, the betrayal, and the injustice, and I took it to the Divine. I used the very process Dr. Hew Len taught me. I took responsibility. I owned the situation. I didn't say anything negative publicly, and I'm only sharing the story with you now for a larger lesson (to come in a moment). I took the drama inside, and that's where I cleaned it.

I also used an advanced form of Ho'oponopono, which I'll share with you later in this book. The combination of all these methods finally allowed me to release the energy of my perceptions about my former friend. The drama blew over. He stopped his smear campaign. The dust settled. Life went on. Business continued as usual, just without him in my life. I miss the loving relationship we had, but I'd rather be free than frantic.

Interestingly, he contacted me while I was writing this book to ask if I would lead a Ho'oponopono event with him. Was it a sign that my clearing had worked and that we were now peaceful? Yes. I passed on his offer, though. He was the past, and I had cleaned it and let it go. I love him, forgive him, and wish him well.

Let's move onward.

What's the greater lesson here?

Please understand that none of this drama was my friend's fault, nor was any of it my fault. Nobody is to blame. The cause was a *program*.

This is essential to grasp. I took complete responsibility for the program I became aware of in myself. As I cleaned on that program, the situation resolved.

That is the first lesson to get. It's the reason I've shared this story with you. Even for authors and gurus, it all comes down to using the practice of Ho'oponopono to clear programs, memories, and other data to return to a state of pure love. As Dr. Hew Len so often says, "I am only here to clean."

As you'll learn in this book, life will always present you with challenges. That's the nature of life. The get out of jail free card is the practice of Ho'oponopono. As you say the four phrases—*I love you, I'm sorry, Please forgive me, Thank you*—you delete programs and beliefs you aren't even aware of, making your adventure through life easier. The

more you clean, the more data you delete and the closer you get to Divinity or Zero.

Is it really that easy? Does it work all the time? Why does life often seem to get worse before it gets better?

Stay with me, and let's go deeper into this adventure. . . .