

What the Hell? *The Secret* Didn't Work!

By Mary Patrick Kavanaugh

I'm planning an elaborate funeral right now. Not for a person, for a book. It's a novel—the one that was supposed to launch my bestselling writing, teaching and speaking career. Instead, it was rejected SIXTEEN times. I'm still in a state of shock. How could this happen when I had watched *The Secret* and did everything it advised me to do in order to realize my dream of commercial literary stardom?

For anyone who's been living in a cave for the last year, *The Secret* is a book and DVD that was promoted by our good sister, Oprah, one of my favorite people on the planet. It teaches you to get anything you want in life by following three simple (but not easy) steps. (1) Know exactly what you want and ask the universe for it, (2) Feel, believe, and behave as if the object of your desire is on its way, and (3) Be open to receiving it.

I was all over that, baby. And just like they suggested, I even created a vision board filled with the pictures of my desires—including having the book featured on *Oprah!* I hung this board in my closet so I could stare at in morning and night—become one with the vision and *believe* it was mine to receive. (Another reason I suspect they called it *The Secret* was that some of us felt it necessary to keep this practice a secret from our non-magical thinking friends who would only worry if they knew.)

But to clarify: I didn't just stare at my secret vision board, and then ask, believe, and prepare to receive. I worked single-mindedly to make this happen, well before I'd even watched the DVD. I wrote four versions of the manuscript, over four years time. Before even finding an agent, I'd hired three professional editors who helped me cut, trim, revise, and re-pace. I spent another year finding the agents, who took me through two more revisions to polish the prose, and get it into the shape necessary to make it appeal to the commercial publishing world. Once it was in my agents' hands, I hung my vision board, asked, believed, and prepared to receive.

Imagine my horror and confusion when what I received were sixteen rejection letters.

After this, I was more than a little pissed at *The Secret*. During my season of rejection, I spent night after night cocooned in the soft blankets of my bed feeling completely destroyed—like the caterpillar who had dissolved into goo, having no idea it would ever re-emerge into the light. I mean, come on: I'd asked. I'd believed. I was ready to receive. What the hell happened?

One of those miserable nights I had a vague memory of a member of Oprah's posse (possibly life coach Martha Beck?) saying that you really had to let go of your idea about *how* something was supposed to happen to give it a real chance to succeed.

Hey, I thought. Was I trying to dictate to the universe HOW I was supposed to become a bestselling novelist, teacher and speaker?

The answer that came to me was a clear, YES, dangit. There you have it. Bossiness is one of my most annoying personality traits. And it occurred to me I was being bossy, even in *The Secret* life of manifesting my dreams.

I had to let go and trust, I thought, feeling cheerful for the first time in months. And what better, more respectful, way to let go than to have a full-blown funeral for this book—this little labor of love? If I had to kill the idea of winning the literary lottery and getting Oprah’s attention for my novel. I could at least have a party by publically putting it to rest. And I’d invite friends and family to bury any dead dreams, bad ideas, or old crap that was getting in their way too.

We all need to take a lesson from Mother Nature: Things have to be destroyed in order for exciting new life to emerge—and I’m ready to make room for the new.

Luckily for my mental health, Oprah shifted her attention away from *The Secret* and on to Eckhart Tolle’s book, *A New Earth*. It was there that I learned how to accept this hiccup in my plans for greatness. According to Eckhart, “Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at this moment.”

For self help and spirituality, I like this Oprah pick better than *The Secret*. It makes the varying degrees of crap experiences—like pain, disappointment, and rejection—feel very important and necessary. With that wisdom, I can rest in peace with my book—which is currently being resurrected in a self-published form.

Is there anything in your life you need to bury? Those ready to let go of stale hopes, dreams, and desires that are dragging them down are invited to join the funeral party. Visit my website, www.mydreamisdeadbutimnot.com, where we help turn life’s crap into compost one plot at a time. For more information or help, contact movingon@mydreamisdeadbutimnot.com.

Family Plots

Love, Death, and Tax Evasion

A novel by

Mary Patrick Kavanaugh

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