

Introduction



The Sunset on Malibu

MOST PEOPLE THINK sunsets are about the ending of the day—the fiery orange largeness, the pink and purple paint brush strokes, the slow drop of daylight into twinkle hour. In our minds, there is nothing after; it is the final ending, the closing chapter. How often have we seen or heard, “They rode off into the sunset..”? Do we think Drew Barrymore and Adam Sandler are happy in Hawaii on their boat? Of course, we do. That’s what we are led/brainwashed, programmed/conditioned to think, over and over since we were children. There is an unnatural closure to the word, to the image, of an ending when sunset is the imagery.

SAMANTHA JONES DARLING

How often has the next scene been shown, written, or discussed? Rarely. Go ahead and say the word “sunset” in your mind now and follow it until the scene transitions into what's next. What do you see? The darkness in your mind is the emptiness of narration—the void of any suggestion, instruction, or inspiration outside of the understood happiness and loving contentment of the final scene. The sailboat 🚤 emoji uses the colors of the sunset to confirm the imagery further. Sailing off into the sunset is a cliché for a reason. That's where the fairytale ends. We don't discuss the night after. We don't imagine what can happen for us during the twilight hour and the darkness and what we can create before the dawn of a new day. We have been filled with images of monsters under the bed, creatures outside in the trees waiting to bite us, and implanted with a fear that has morphed into a glass box of limitations framed in lack.

Sunsets are the beginning of the transformations into a sunny tomorrow, but what is in between? Darkness, coldness, loneliness, that's what we are told, and that's what many of us have sat with alone. But the new perspective I want to offer is that *sunset is the time where possibilities are born*, and previously concocted mainstream scripts are burned. Twilight is the time to reflect on the day, noting what worked and didn't, and making the adjustments needed to navigate ourselves towards the future we believe in. Darkness and starry nights are magical times *where doing nothing is the transformation we need*. It is the time to gently surrender to what is, to accept our situation, to feel the weight of truth, and to integrate yesterday and tomorrow into our presence. Sunset is the time to slow down, to look inward, to nourish and to rest. Every sunset signifies the time to restore ourselves, and daily is written in the prescription.

THE SUNSET ON MALIBU

Restoration is the integration of yesterday and simultaneously the preparation for our movement into the future. We often fear the darkness because we don't know what to do with it. It's been skipped over in our cultural narrative for more dramatic scenes. And the nighttime stories we have been told are usually scary and have been painted with the brush of fear. The fear of made-up monsters, the fear of solitude, and the fear of the unknown plagues us all. We are even afraid of sickness even though it is a sunset for our bodies. When our bodies burn with fever, it is a cleansing; it is the beginning of a new future. Sunset is the beginning, not the end. Embrace the burn.

Though the sunset leads us into darkness, it brings with it hope. Hope for the next day, the next chapter, the next horizon. Hope is the crack of light in the darkness. Hope is the little tree growing out of a rock on the side of a cliff. Hope is the space we get to live in with each sunset, each night, and each dawn.

I am sitting on the thick white walls at my rehab in Malibu. These walls that sit on the cliffside overlooking the ocean are energetically keeping me locked in with fifty other demolished humans. I am facing myself and the Pacific Ocean for the first time. I am a South Florida girl who was brainwashed into thinking that California was horrible, and that simple lie is cracking my mind open to question all the other things I have been led to believe. I am allowing in hope in ways I could never have predicted. As I sit here looking across the Pacific Ocean from the clearest mind I've ever possessed, I see

SAMANTHA JONES DARLING

sunsets as the beginning. I see the vastness of the Pacific, and I follow it all the way to the end. I see hope in the horizon. I see hope in the unwritten story I am living. The darkness past the horizon is waiting to be filled with my light. There is excitement in stories that are unlive, unimagined, and unscripted. The hope in my heart grows beyond my body at this moment. I am reborn into my purpose.

I have found opportunities always come after my visits with the stars, the moon, my tears, and my nightmare fears. I get another chance to be the kind of person I always wanted to be. Every single day. These are the moments where faith in my higher self and the bigger plan were formed, and a seed was planted and grew and grew, turning me into the radiating light of the sun I see reflected in my smile today.

It was more than just the sun setting on my old life. The light around me changed. The darkness became my friend; the end was now the beginning. Where it was purple, it turned orange. Where it was pink, it turned yellow. Where I used to face the sunrise of the east with all its demands, I crumpled under the weight of expectation. Now the LED artificial light script I felt I must play a part in was being put behind me. I was leaving that life. I now faced the sunset of the west with its vast and endless possibilities! I knew everything that would happen next would be written by my actions and I was determined to soar higher than I ever had. I was determined to fly freely and dip majestically and spew fire at anything trying to hold me back. I was determined to be the Phoenix Rising, fly towards the unknown bravely, and let my story unfold slowly and beautifully.