



Unfolding Butterfly Wings

Does Rebekah Have a Right to Lose Weight?

Rebekah was fat. At least that's how she saw herself in the mirror every morning as she prepared to shower in the pre-dawn light. Her friends always said she looked great, but, as she squeezed the water off her long hair, she knew they were just being kind. Hadn't she also told those same white lies to support a friend?

Rebekah turned 43 last Sunday. The Friday before, she used the last day of her 90-day fitness club membership. She won it at the law office where she worked as a paralegal. The coincidence of these two events started her thinking.

Rebekah's oldest, Tom, 16, has his father's infectious smile. He is trying to get onto the high school football team. Cassi, 13 going on 19, is more of a handful everyday.

(Wow, was she that tuned-in at 13?) Then there is Franklin. The surprise child of 5, and as sweet as they come, he is every bit a daddy's boy. Daddy was off in Baton Rouge for one more day.



Photo: Wikipedia

Driving the long rainy commute into Memphis that morning, Rebekah became reflective. They lived in the country because it would be better for the kids. But it meant a lot of driving time with precious few moments left for herself. As she turned onto the freeway she began to think about her weight again, and how she'd lost 14 pounds the last 3 months. She was proud of that. But it had taken its toll in other ways.

I feel like a caterpillar about to unfold from a cocoon after a long winter.

She had one of those tense conversations with Luke the morning he left for Baton Rouge. He was concerned about her staying longer in the city 3 nights a week to go to the club. Then there was the extra cost of the "new" food she was buying for herself, because he and the kids preferred the "old" food. Plus, she was spending a lot of time reading after the kids went to bed. She didn't use to do that. It all added up to less time with the family and more money. As she dropped him off at the airport she told Luke she was considering buying a one year membership to the club. With a quick flash he said they would have to "discuss it all" when he returned.

On the drive home in traffic that evening Rebekah began formulating a letter to Luke. She needed to write it down. He was so strong and impatient when they talked about difficult things. So, in their 18 years together she had learned it would come out better if she wrote it down first.

Late that night, after the kids were in their rooms, she propped herself up in bed and thought. Then she began to write on her laptop...

My Dearest Husband,

I love you and the kids so very much. Everything I ever wanted I am experiencing now with you, and them. I love taking care of you. Each of you is so special, and so different. But, somewhere along the road I lost sight of me. I'm not sure where I went, but I got lost. I have been so busy for so many years doing so much for my family, I'm not sure who I am any more. And I need to know that.

When I started losing weight, I began to see just a little glimmer of me. It was part who I was when we were young together, and who I am now. I began to

wonder who I would become in the next few years. And it made me think about you, and how I relate to you, and what it is you still see in me.

When we parted at the airport, I saw this pain and boyish fear in your eyes. Plus a bit of hidden anger. I know that you have been concerned about our money issues. And my time away from the family. Plus, my late night reading. But, for the first time, really, I have needed to concentrate on me.

I feel like a caterpillar about to unfold from a cocoon after a long winter. I don't yet know what kind of butterfly I will be, but I know I will be one. I can't wait to find out. I know I will be beautiful.

But, looking into your eyes that morning, I sensed you were threatened by my changes... and whatever future changes may be in store.

The effort I use to change my life requires me to feel my needs more strongly, to give them greater priority.

Then I thought, does my way of being with you give you what you need? If it doesn't, I'll have to reevaluate how I relate to you – what I thought I meant to you. And that is where I get stuck.

My dilemma is that by discovering and choosing what is right for me may look like a threat to you. And I don't want to threaten you.

There is the possibility that, in changing, I may not value you in the same way, that I may not need you as much. The very effort I use to change my life requires me to feel my own needs more strongly, to give them greater weight and priority. In doing this I may end-up lessening my dependence on you, as I am becoming more dependent upon myself. This doesn't mean that I care less about you, or the kids, only that I care more about myself.

Does caring more about myself have to mean I care less about you? Do I need to think that it does? Do you have to feel that it does?

Is there some way for me to change lifestyles such that both of us see it as a positive challenge to create a deeper relationship, instead of a negative threat to whatever kind of relationship we have now?

Does my way of being with you give you what you need? If not, I'll have to reevaluate how I relate to you.

Must I deny my need to find a greater affinity with myself, so that I have to relate to you with a former, paler version of me? A version that is less me, but more acceptable to you? If it is the old, "less me" you want me to be, where does that leave the full, "unfolding me"?

Do I have to choose between finding, discovering, experiencing a more real, meaningful me, and a peaceful existence with you?

And if the person you experience is not fully, really me, then who or what is it that you truly love?

I really love you. I famiously need your love. But I need me too. I need to invest time, a little money, some late-night reading, and a lot of unconditional conversation to discover what type of butterfly I am. Maybe I'm no type at all... maybe I'm my own original type.

Can we both find ways to have patience while I discard my cocoon and unfold my radiant new butterfly wings?

I love you.

Rebekah

Rebekah finished the letter, then read it all over again. Then printed it out. Tears flowed unexpectedly. She had never been able to clearly articulate this before. Seeing it on paper, all at once... her deep breath pushed out the tears.

Would Luke understand? Would he be hurt? Couldn't she just hold it inside and find a better way – a safer way to handle it? Maybe she shouldn't give the letter to him.

She folded it up and put it on the nightstand. She would sleep on it. She would decide whether to give it to him in the morning, before she left to pick him up at the airport.

With that, she turned out the lights and closed her still-moist eyes.



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– by Boyd Jentzsch

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