

Emerge, You Glorious Creature!

Ever had one of those weeks? About ten years ago, I experienced what I still consider to be the worst week ever. Suddenly, I was getting a divorce and on the heels of that, my sister committed suicide. I'll do you the favor of skipping over the gory details which included many, many tears and a brutal hangover which lasted for weeks.

In a rash decision based primarily on single-handedly chugging an entire bottle of wine coupled with a late night internet search, I gave away most of what I owned and packed the rest, including two children, a dog, and a hamster named Oreo into a moving truck. In a move of absolute desperation, I left Ohio, the only home I'd ever known, in the throes of a record-making blizzard and headed for a sunnier climate. Leaving the clouds behind seemed like a step in the right direction, and honestly that was about as far as the plan went. I was uneducated, heartbroken, and terrified. I didn't know it then, but it was the best thing I would ever do for myself because it was how I learned to embrace change.

When the dust settled, I was in brand new world sixteen hundred miles away. The sky was a gorgeous expanse of blue and the air was fresh. The possibilities were endless and I was energized.

The next ten years were not easy. I found a job. I began college for the first time at age 34. I juggled work, classes, and kids, and somehow I managed. Sadly, Oreo the hamster is now gone, but the rest of us muddled along. I succeeded in my classes, and began building a career, but something was still missing. It was so confusing. I had done the sensible things; I was supporting my family and was almost finished with a degree, but on a daily basis, something nudged at my soul.

I wasn't answering my own heart. I secretly wanted to be a writer and an artist. I had absolutely no experience in either of these fields, and worse, it seemed that they weren't even practical. Getting rich in either of these areas is akin to winning the lottery or becoming an overnight pop sensation. Unlikely. Laughable. Not something on which I was willing to wager the rent. Nevertheless, the muse, a pushy broad if you ask me, continued her persistent calls. They pestered me and they began to make me miserable, because once you hear that voice inside, you can't ignore it and you can't silence it, you can only *pretend* that you don't hear it. I was terrified of trying, worried that I might look stupid, and convinced that I wouldn't be any good as a writer or as an artist. I thought that if I tried, someone would reject my work or laugh at me.

Eventually I managed to scrape up the courage to begin creating and these things *did* happen. Over and over again. I made hideous art that even I didn't like. I poured my heart into short stories only to have them rejected multiple times.

But along the way, an amazing thing happened – I realized that it didn't matter. The world didn't cave in. I didn't die of a broken heart. Instead, that was when I discovered a very basic truth. If something makes you happy deep down in your gut, you must pursue it. Chase after it with insane and wild abandon. Anything less than that is a crime that you perpetuate against yourself. Even if the

outcome is different than what you'd imagined, even if you fail by the world's standards, you must still try, because it is the trying that will change and transform you. There is a sweet spot, right on the edge of your comfort zone where the sprouting and expanding begins and it is addictive. When you realize what latent potential you possess, you will be inspired and heartened. Let go of your preconceived notions about the outcome and push forward into the process of metamorphosis. Lock onto your dazzling future and think about stretching and flourishing. It's not instantaneous. It's a process, a beautiful, fabulous, incredible process, which will serve you well if you make it a regular part of your life.

I believe that each and every person possesses the power to live an extraordinary life, yet many people do not fulfill their innermost ambitions. Why is this? I believe the answer is simple – fear. Fear of change and fear of failure prevent many women from growing and thriving.

People sometimes ask me about my formula for success, and I find that I can answer with one word: transformation. Transformation is hard. It's scary and it requires great courage, but it's how great things are accomplished.

The simple act of following your dreams will change you from the inside out. Every single time you do something scary and incredible, the fear will shrink just a little.

Of course, someone still needs to pay that pesky electric bill, so use some common sense, ladies, - don't quit your day job to become a clown at children's birthday parties unless you're absolutely sure you can make a living this way - but ultimately, you are the only person in this world duty-bound to make yourself happy. Take this responsibility seriously. Shine, sparkle, and transform.

Your dream is likely very different than mine, but no matter what dream you're nurturing in that sweet head of yours, it is valid and important.

Today, I'm wildly happy and this is what I wish for each and every one you, dear readers.

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