

Breaking Free From Gravity

LoREL Stevens

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As a child, gravity wasn't something I gave much thought to. When we're learning how to walk I think we figure out pretty quickly that if we aren't in balance, if we trip over something on our path or we're in a new environment, chances are, we might fall. When we're young, closer to the ground and perhaps a bit more fearless, we get back up and take another shot at it.

Later in school I learned about Sir Isaac Newton, learned about gravity, magnetic pull, inertia, the orbit patterns of planets, and the vastness of space. Although I found all these concepts and information interesting, I can't say I thought deeply about them or the applications to my life. I did often lie back and watch the clouds cross the sky, and gaze into the night sky in sincere appreciation for the beauty of the moon and stars.

Then one day I experience the law of attraction and magnetic pull in a whole new way. I was 17 and a junior in high school. He was a senior in my Sports and Rec class and inexplicably, there was something drawing me to him. The pull was palpable and undeniable. We began our orbit as friends, and even though I was trying to keep us as such, this magnetic attraction was too strong. Often, as I took a step back to maintain my space, he would step in. Soon we started dating and although our paths were not clear at the time, they became more deeply intertwined. Unfortunately, the closer we became, the more our orbits synced, the more volatile he became. Along the way, the more I held him off, the more I tried to keep some distance, the less space I had. Soon, my space was his space, my path and orbit became so closely meshed with his that it was difficult to determine where I ended and where he began.

Several times along the way, I would create a plan to leave him and start putting that plan in action. It was then that I realized the full impact of gravity and inertia. It seemed impossible for me to create enough explosive thrust to release myself from his gravitational pull. He was determined to keep me, keep me isolated, keep me dependant, keep me believing I could not survive without the strength of his support and protection, and I would stay. I would resume my orbit around him and continue my attempts to 'be a better girlfriend and wife', try to make him happier, try to protect myself from his violent physical attacks without fighting back and defending myself, and try to pray harder that this nightmare would end or somehow magically get better. At the worst of times, at the loneliest of times, I would think of the futility of this situation. I felt powerless to stop this insane crash course we were on, hurtling through the vastness of space toward this deep, black hole in the distance. I felt like the smallest star in the sky on its way to burn out and death.

One day, in October 1999, there was a shift in the cosmos. Something was culminating and brewing in the background, something unlike anything I had felt or seen before. It was no longer abnormal in our orbit and pattern for him to beat me, berate me, completely humiliate me and verbally tear me to shreds -- it would happen at various intervals. But it was quite unusual when he beat the living tar out of me for 45 minutes in front of our son, who was 5 at the time. This explosive power that resulted was

like an immense meteor penetrating the atmosphere of the earth and hitting the ground, creating a grand canyon-like crater in my world. Internally shattered, physically bruised, swollen and in great pain, I stared at myself in the mirror and felt....., shame, self contempt, and extreme frustration with this orbit I seemed to have no control over and couldn't break the inertia of, and now, complete and utter despair knowing that my son had seen this awful, horrific assault. What followed was a deep soul searching, an inner inventory and priority shift, and realization that there was no Superman to whisk me off like Lois Lane out of the path of danger, there was no Neil Armstrong to pull me out of this crash course with impending doom, there was no Space Shuttle to make adjustments to my internal velocity system and fire boosters to launch me out of this orbit. There was me, only me....., and this darling, sweet son who was placed in my orbit to love, protect and teach valuable life lessons to. Somehow, I would have to find a way to break free from the gravity that held me down, in this life, in this place where only darkness and coldness existed.

It took two weeks to get the escape plan together and every single ounce of energy I had in my body to leave and explode out of this twelve-year relationship. During those two weeks there were many times I doubted I could do it, and couldn't trust that he wouldn't somehow track me down with that magnetic force again and stamp out the light of my star for good. On November 2, 1999 I took my son and only our fewest most personal things, and left everything else behind. We needed to be as light as possible to break that gravitational pull. This escape, this exodus away from the black hole threatening to swallow me whole, was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. It may always be the hardest thing I've ever done. But also, it has been the best thing I've ever done. In breaking free, I set myself and my son on a new course and new path, aligned with where we were meant to be.

I'd never thought of gravity much before, until I understood how much it was impacting me. I never appreciated how strong that force was until I had to break free of it and in doing so, found that an even greater strength resides inside me that was there all along.

Love Shouldn't Hurt

Lorel Stevens

Pain so deep it bubbles in my soul like acid.
Fear so strong it permeates my bones, turning them to ice and sits upon my chest,
preventing my breath, my scream.
Words that whip through my heart like sharp blades.
Hate so fierce it winds its fingers around my throat and squeezes.
Anger whirls around me in a tornado I cannot prevent, control or cease.
A sick, secret shame engulfs me, drowns me and keeps me silent.
Love Shouldn't Hurt

Any feeling of love has hemorrhaged away with each blow, with each wounding word,
until my love, my blood, my tears have disappeared.
My identity is gone; I am no longer who I was before.
I am a shell of a person, and a hollow, empty, lonely void inside.

Any happiness I felt has been sucked dry by the parasite that dwells with me.
Love Shouldn't Hurt.

I hate who I see in the mirror, I don't know who she is anymore.
I can't bear to see my reflection, but I must look deeper.
I see weakness, I see a spineless pitiful fool.
I see someone who is too afraid to say, "STOP!"
I see someone who is too afraid to leave.
I see someone who is bruised and battered, whose clothes are ripped and tattered.
I see someone with no soul, no courage and no strength.
I see someone too scared to cry or scream or shout anymore.
I see someone who thinks she deserves the pain.
I see someone who can only shed a tear, and shake, and accept the blame for fear of it starting again.
I hate that person in the mirror.
I hate the reflection of someone who isn't me, but in fact it really is.
Love Shouldn't Hurt.

I didn't think love was supposed to be like this.
I never thought the person I met so long ago would bloody my nose and rupture my ears.
I never would have imagined he'd throw me to the floor by my hair and kick me again and again.
I wouldn't have dreamed he strike me so hard I could see only blackness and streaks of lightening.
I couldn't have known the person who said he loved me could scare me so badly I'd urinate my clothing
like a pathetic animal.
I never would have guessed the person I met that day would be the one to leave me with more bruises,
swelling, cuts and scars than I could ever count.
I didn't know the scars inside would be the ones that hurt the worst and be the hardest to heal.
He broke things I treasured, things I cared about and threw them at me, slamming them to my body.
He screamed and yelled at me so loudly, I still hear his voice in my head and my nightmares.
He broke my heart, stole my spirit, my self, and my soul.
Somehow he made me believe it was my fault.
I believed it. I accepted it and did nothing.
It happened over, and over, and over.
Love Shouldn't Hurt.

But one day I looked in the mirror.
I looked deeper, with more discerning eyes and I saw something.
Beneath the layers of pain, sadness, guilt and darkness,
under the sediment of shattered hopes, dreams and promises, I saw something else.
I looked harder and saw a spark, yes a glimmer of light.
I fought through the tears and battled through the tremors.
I pushed past the scars and cut away the cobwebs.
There in the darkest depths of my existence I grabbed a hold of the flame,
and gently drew it out.
I was so cautious, so careful, for fear of extinguishing it.
When I opened my quaking hand, I gasped at the sight before me.
For there in my hand I held a cocoon pulsating with light and life.
I closed my eyes and opened them to see my reflection once more.
Somehow, somewhere, I saw strength and courage in my eyes again.

I found the will to survive, succeed and prosper.
My gaze returned to my warming hand and there unveiled,
 was the most beautiful, exquisite butterfly.
It was so alive, so colorful, so happy, so peaceful and above all – FREE.
I gathered myself in its presence, pushed past my fear and left, without turning back,
 without a tear.
I basked in the knowledge and discovery of life, real life, not the nightmare I had known.
I did not deserve it, I did not have to accept it.
I could do something – I could choose Life.
I could transform myself from an empty cocoon to a brilliant butterfly.
Love Shouldn't Hurt.

Real Love doesn't hurt.

Counterfeit love will never hurt me again.

I am a butterfly reborn.
I have a new chance at life.

I AM FREE!!