

The Vow



This is the beginning of rebuilding who I am. For so many years, I had cared and provided for others and had forgotten how to put myself first. That changed today, without warning.

Beauty, Bliss & Butterflies

I met my sweetheart, Winston, in 1980 during my junior year of high school. We dated for four years, then married and had three children. We were so much in love! We were Mr. & Mrs. Winston Singer and had started to build what became our 36-year life together. We both were entrepreneurs; his trade was landscaping while mine was childcare so that we could spend a lot of time together.

After a while, we both became deeply involved with our careers. Due to the decline in the economy, Winston found the need to begin working with a local company. He later stopped doing landscaping to work with this company full time and eventually began working the second shift, which required him to sleep during the day. Quite the opposite, I was off in the mornings and night because my hours were 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm. In the morning, I would prepare breakfast and dinner simultaneously. He would go to work with a full course meal every night and would often say that his coworkers would try to buy his meals.

Every night, they would want to see what he had to eat. Some of them would say that they wished that their wives cooked dinner for them some time so they wouldn't have to eat fast food every day. One of his coworkers even asked if he could buy dinners from me. Winston was appreciative of the meals, but he later said he could hear me as I moved through the house while preparing the meals and other things while he was trying to sleep. What had initially been something he appreciated had become a disturbance. In hindsight, that should have been a red flag.

Winston and I talked about buying a new home and preparing for retirement. We talked about becoming debt-free and just enjoying life, so we attended various workshops and seminars to help us accomplish our goals. He began to have numerous opportunities to gain extra income by working overtime. What we saw then as a blessing should have been another red flag for me. He would often call me on his breaks to let me know that he was asked to work over for a few hours. One morning I woke up around 3:00am feeling a little off. I wasn't scared. I wasn't unhappy. I wasn't sick. I just felt like something was wrong. A still, small voice told me that Winston was having an affair. I said, "No he's not," then rolled over and went back to sleep. I woke up that morning feeling like I'd had a bad dream. Months passed, and in June 2014, I had to have a major surgical procedure. Since Winston worked at night, my son and daughter-in-law invited us to stay at their house during my recovery process. They didn't want me to be alone at night and wanted to assist in my care.

After being in the care of my son for two days, Winston came in one night and seemed restless. He later said that he was going home and would come back later that day. He said that

he just wanted to sleep comfortably in his bed. I thought that to be a little strange, but I agreed, kissed him and said, "okay." Another red flag.

One Sunday, I decided that I'd like to walk a little more and venture outside. I woke up feeling great. I decided that I wanted to get up and do a little more for myself. Although my children didn't mind catering to me in bed, I was determined to join them at the table for meals and in the family room to watch a movie. It was a beautiful, sunny day! They were all outside, and I was determined to get some fresh air and enjoy my family, even if only for a few minutes. I mustered up enough strength to get up and walk toward the door all by myself. I didn't ring my little "help me bell" (given to me to ring when I needed assistance). I didn't call or text anyone for help. I wanted to do this on my own.

I was still unable to stand straight. Therefore, I was slightly bent, walking very slowly and carefully. Every step was an uncomfortable chore, but every step was getting me closer to my destination ... outside. As I approached the door, I noticed that Winston was on the front porch leaning over the railing. I paused to catch my breath. I thought for a moment, should I call him and ask him to help me? Then I said to myself, NO! You've got this! You can do this! After the brief and reassuring self-discussion, I continued to press through the discomfort, pain, and exhaustion because I was almost there. I'd come too far by myself, and I could make it to my destination. I could see the beautiful sunshine, and I was determined to enjoy it today!

I opened the glass door and walked outside. Winston was still leaning across the railing. I thought I could lean against him if I could get to him. He could hold me, and I'd be alright. I was hoping that he would not move. I continued to teeter across the porch. Just a few more steps, and I'd be able to lean on those big broad shoulders. Whew.... I made it! I was so excited and relieved! I was resting on my man. He was surprised to see that I'd come outside without calling anyone for help.

As I was resting on his shoulder, I noticed that he was reading a text message on his phone. It read, "Love you, and miss you!" So, I asked, "Who is that message coming from?" He laughed and said that it was from the people at work. I said, "Work? All of your coworkers are guys, and they're telling you that they love you and miss you?" His reply was, "You know how they are; they're always joking around." I continued to lean against him. I said, "Ok, you better respond to the text." He just stood there. Then I said, "let me see your phone. I'll respond." I wanted to join in the fun too. He became very agitated and refused to give me the phone. I was confused. I asked, "Why are you getting so mad if it's just a game?" By this time, my pain had subsided. I was confused, but not stupid. That message was from a female. He said, "I'm getting ready to leave!" I asked, "Why? Let's respond to the text." Again, he refused. As he walked down the hallway to get his keys, somehow, I got his phone and responded to the text, "I love you too!" "Call me when you get a chance." I wanted to see where this "game" was going.

He tried to get his phone from me again. When he saw that I was determined to keep it, he left and had no choice but to leave his phone with me. He said that he was going home. As I sat in the bedroom, I felt an avalanche of emotions all at the same time. I felt anger, hurt, disappointment, rejection, fear, and sadness. All of these emotions were in addition to the physical pain of my recovery process. As I sat clutching the phone, waiting for this individual to call, I began to say, "Calm down. It's not what you think. There's an explanation for the text." Hours went by. Should I tell my children? No, there's nothing to tell. Just wait, see who it is and their explanation for sending the text.

Finally, the phone rang. My heart began to pound deep inside my chest. I answered in a deep voice, leading them to think that they were talking to Winston. She said, "Hey baby, you

know I'm at work and couldn't call." By this time my heart and my head were pounding, and my leg was shaking.

Speaking in my own voice, I asked, "Who is this and why are you calling my husband? There was no response. I said, "I saw your text. Do you love my husband?" She said, "You need to talk to Winston," and hung up. I called back, but she would not answer.

As you can imagine, I was hot! I called my son and daughter into the room. I told them what had happened and asked them to take me to my house. I was determined to talk to Winston and get to the bottom of this issue.

The ten-minute drive seemed like ten hours. It felt as if my heart was beating outside my chest. The rage and surge of emotions had me hot and ready to see Winston face to face. I went into the house to find Winston lying in bed. I immediately asked who she was since she felt like I needed to ask my husband. "A girl from my job," he responded. I asked if he was in love with her, but I left him no time to answer and mustered up all of the strength I had to ball up my fist and throw a punch that would have knocked out Mohammad Ali. He dodged it, and I hit the headboard on our bed. At that moment, I didn't feel anything. I began to yell and ask, "How could you do this? After all that we've been through. How?" I threw his phone at him and left.

I walked down the steps of our house feeling totally numb. My son helped me back into the car and took me back to his house. Winston called me to apologize. He asked for our pastor's telephone number. He said that he really needed to talk to him. That night as I lay in the bed, I still felt numb. What should I do next? I began to pray as I did daily, asking God for strength and guidance. I didn't cry that night. While lying there, so many questions began to race through my mind. Who was she? How long had this been going on? Have they had sex? At this time, only my son and daughter-in-love knew. How do I tell my daughters? How could he do this to us? I finally fell asleep, knowing that I had a long day ahead of me. Though my body had been prepared to sleep, I knew rest was far from me.

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