



A  
butterfly  
in the  
Garden

*A caterpillar knows  
little of wings before;  
its time has arrived.*

by *Annie*

A  
butterfly  
in the  
Garden

A true story  
beginning with haiku

*A caterpillar  
knows little of wings before;  
its time has arrived.*

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## Dedicated to You

You love someone very much  
but you may not think they can  
communicate with you anymore.

Your loved one knows differently  
and wishes to say Hi to you,  
for they know they can  
and they know you will hear them.

It is why you are holding this book in the First Place.

## Chapter I

### A Caterpillar Travels from Seen to Unseen...

It began the day Gary died.

I didn't know anything had begun, but begun it had.

To me this was nothing but a terrible ending and I was stopped, dead in my tracks. I should say forgive the bad pun, but please don't. I experienced the essence of that phrase the moment I heard. I felt dead in my tracks and didn't move, not for a long time...until the shaking started.

It was early November of '99. The phone rang and I was getting dinner ready as one of my sons answered. "Mom...for you." I knew right away it was my friend Paul, I know his voice so well; the way he says, "Hey, babe." He choked it out: Gary had died a few hours before. Gary's wife Joy had left for work early in the morning and it hadn't been time for Gary to get up. She kissed him, said goodbye, and left. That night she came home. Gary had never gotten up out of bed; he was gone. Paul continued, "Annie, they think his heart ruptured...Sweetie, are you there?" I couldn't catch my breath and I couldn't speak without it. "Ann. Please say something."

I was able to get out a whispered, "Yes, I'm here."

Paul went on, "Marianne and I are on our way over to Joy's right now. Are you going to be okay? We will call you later tonight, I promise." He was having a hard time keeping control; you could hear it in his voice and having to be the one to tell me...it is one of the hardest things you ever do for someone you love. He said goodbye and still I just stood there.

My son was staring at me with a large questioning look. "It's going to be okay, honey," I said. "I just found out Gary has died and it is going to make me very sad for awhile, but it is going to be okay." He told me he was very sorry and left the room. He was just a little guy at the time and it is hard to

watch someone you love in pain over a death, regardless of age.

Oh, my God, Gary...you're gone. It was then the shaking started.

I moved myself out of the house and onto the back deck. I had to be alone for as long as I could get away with it. My husband Martin wasn't yet home from work and dinner needed to be finished. It was then I realized I was going to be spending the next innumerable days, weeks, months doing nothing but crying. Homework needed to get done, food cooked, cleaned up, life's chores taken care of...nothing but crying....

His laughter is gone. I just sat there sobbing as quietly as a mouse wracked with grief. I realize that is a weird thought, but have you ever heard one? You know what I mean if you have ever found yourself crying as hard as you can cry, trying not to make a sound while doing it.

I had lost family before and that had hurt terribly. My grandfather had died just a few months before, but somehow this was different. This was the death I was unprepared to deal with. There are people in your life you just always believe you will see again: sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, parents, friends. This is the pain that leaves you breathless when you realize that belief is a luxury, not a right. A hard Truth in life...still I shook.

Just the smallest sliver of a silver moon hung clipped in the sky. I wonder if you ever forget the moments right after you hear someone you dearly love has died.

Gary was my brother, one that I was very close to and deeply loved. I should say for the purists out there, he was not my brother by blood. Gary was a brother I chose: one I added to my family as a young woman and one I adored. We had started out as friends and become family. I had last seen him a few months before, on a perfect night in May when he and Joy had come to my 40th birthday party. I had spoken to him

on the phone in October, just a couple weeks before, and now I would never do that again. I had met Gary when I was 20 and now I was 40. We had been so close for such a long time; not enough time, and yet now it was a lifetime.

It was the end of 1999. I had been as excited as most, and looking forward to the holidays and the start of a new millennium. To be able to say you were alive at the beginning of the year 2000 was quite a thing to be able to say. Now I realize that depends on whose calendar you go by, but mine read that we were coming to the end of one millennium and the beginning of the next. It was a big deal. Something you tell your grandchildren, great-grandchildren. The excitement was palpable. So much of the world was getting ready for it, coming together for a special moment in history. That was the good news. The bad news: our computers were quitting at midnight, walking off the job, as it were. So many of the world's computers might not be able to handle this particular tick of the clock; or so the theory went. Remember those months?

Well, I didn't care about any of it anymore. The holidays didn't matter; the turning of anything didn't really matter to me. The month of November came and went and I cried my way through it. I took care of my children and my husband and my job; but in, through, and around this time mostly I cried. I also found myself working through the grief in another way, besides all the tears, and my mind knew it was an unreasonable way, a way that would seem "crazy" to many, if not most. But at this point in our dialogue, you can answer this question: Did I care?

I tried to work my way through the grief and pain by continuing a "conversation" with Gary "in my head." There was too much left unsaid between us; too many conversations still in front of us. Too many things had happened that I needed to talk to him about. Of course, I knew the dialogue was one-sided...me telling him how very sad I was for him,

how much I hurt for Joy, how sorry I felt for me. How much I was going to miss him, his friendship, his hugs...his laughter. I knew I was just talking to myself. Yeah, well, did I care? What I didn't expect and truly couldn't have prepared for was when Gary showed back up, in real time and in my real life. And God knows, it was in a way that only someone who was a master showman like Gary could have pulled off....

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The first day I didn't cry within the first few hours of waking was a little over a month after Gary died. It was the day my brother John, this one by blood, and his wife Jacquelyn were having an annual Christmas gathering of friends. John and Jacquelyn are a very warm, generous, and loving couple. I adore them both. I have shared a group of friends with them for a very long time and once a year, around Christmas, this particular group gets together. It is a group of friends that have known and loved each other for many, many years. We had gotten to that stage in our lives where children seemed to be everywhere and jobs and other commitments were in charge, we weren't. This night might very well be the only night that year we would all see each other. There are no children attending this party, no new friends, no one's parents; it's just us. This is one party we all try our best to make.

The kinship of this group is very special in many ways, one being that the love felt and shown for one another is the unconditional love of a true friendship grown over many years. All of us can be ourselves at this party, completely and without reservation. You may show your ass at this party, proverbial or otherwise, and you *know* you will get talked about and that's perfectly okay with you. Each of us has had at least one turn at sipping too much of whatever punch we had concocted for ourselves. Everybody's had a year where it

all seemed to be too much and needed one night to totally blow off whatever steam had built up, and to know they were safe while doing it. Everyone's had a turn at playing the party's fool and we all know that we are going to be just as loved and just as accepted the day after the party as we were the day before; perhaps more so. It's a very special band of friends, indeed.

It was now the one evening, the one holiday event that year I was excited about. I had just lost a very dear friend and Martin and I were going to spend the evening with other friends we deeply loved and rarely got to see anymore. Being with these people was even more special now than it had ever been. I needed this party, badly, and I wasn't going to let anything get me down—at least not that day. I was finally feeling happy about something and I was excited as we pulled into my brother's driveway. Martin gets out of the car and looks up into the clear night sky and sees a shooting star. I told him, "Hold on, dear, it could be a crazy night." I told myself to do the same...just hold on.

John and Jacquelyn are exquisite hosts. They have a lovely home and a wonderful way of making sure you realize when you cross their threshold you are in your home away from home. Everybody was gathered in the downstairs family room. For that night it is the party room. It contains the bar, pool table area, large television for whatever game is on, a blazing fireplace, and of course, the doors that look out onto the back garden. It is perfect for a party.

We had all been there long enough to hug each other and have a cocktail. I was standing by myself for a moment, leaning against the far wall, taking in the view. I honestly wanted to absorb the room. All these friends, all these smiles, all this love gathered in one spot. I wanted to somehow fill myself up with all the feelings, experiences, and emotional comfort I could get my greedy hands on. While I was doing

this, out of the corner of my mind a thought appeared...“Oh, babe! What a great party! Can I come?”

Gary? Oh no, Annie, no you don't! I got angry, very angry with myself. You are not going to get yourself started thinking you are “talking” to Gary right now. He is gone and you have got to stop these ridiculous conversations...thinking he can somehow “hear” you! Enough! Just get a hold of yourself, please, and stop it.

And then I threw what I knew to be impossibility out to the “thoughts” in my head: “Gary, if you are really there, I will win the pool tournament tonight, you will attend a great party, and we can talk about it in the morning.” I stood up away from the wall and headed out into the room.

Now of course, I win the pool tournament, or there would be no tale to tell. But as with most “games” in life, it wasn't that I won that is so memorable, so incredible. It was the *way* it was won.

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That I would have anything to do with winning the pool tournament that year was not possible to me. There was no way it would occur. I believed that because the very last thing I wanted to do that night was play pool. I had a room full of people I wanted to spend time with, listen to, and enjoy. I had no intention of wasting time getting little colored balls into tiny pockets. I was in no mood to spend a moment of this particular night trying to remember whether I was striped or solid. However, just begging out was not really an option. If a woman doesn't play, one of the guys can't either; everyone plays so everyone can play. I suppose I could have raised a ruckus and just refused that year but I was there to have fun, not cause myself more grief.

The tournament is played as the party rolls along. At the beginning of the evening, each woman pulls a guy's name out

of the hat. She is then the pool partner with that particular gentleman until they lose. The game played: your standard eight ball. The only house rule: you may not play with your spouse. Did I mention this group is also rather intelligent?

That year I pulled Ross's name out of the hat. I love Ross. He is one of the world's best huggers. He is a sports coach and administrator at a public school and one very terrific guy. I felt kind of bad for him because this tournament is a big deal to the guys, bragging rights for the year, as it were. I knew I was going to be playing lousy pool and didn't care. I wanted to get out of playing as fast as I could. Sorry, Ross, I said to myself, there is always next year. And as life would have it, he and I were up first against the pair I would call the number one seeded couple. One of the women at this party, Audrey, can shoot awesome pool. If she draws the name of one of the guys that can shoot great pool, there is your number one seeded team. And that night she did: she drew one of the best pool players of the group, Tino. Good deal, I thought to myself. The sooner this is over, the better! And, as I thought might be the case, Tino and Audrey came close to running the table. Tino was getting ready to shoot the eight ball into the corner, and Ross and I still had most of our balls up on the table. Just as Tino calls the pocket and takes his shot, a "thought" floats into my head.

"Annie, this is important, just for tonight...try to believe, just believe."

Gary?

No, I thought, not Gary; Gary is gone. Please stop doing this to yourself, Ann. This "dialogue" is going on in my head as Tino perfectly shoots the eight ball in the pocket. Then we watch as the cue ball, ever so slowly, heads in the direction of the opposite corner. Well, surely it is going to stop right there. Okay, well, it is going to stop now. It was like watching slow motion video...and it got to a point where we all knew what was going to happen, but there was nothing we

could do to stop it. The ball went so slow, but on it went. When the cue ball went into the opposite corner pocket...the chill you get from the tip of your toes all the way to the ends of your hair, all in the same instant...that tingling zipped through me and then the “thought” came into my head...“My dear friend, this is one great party and you know how I love a party! Do you know that there isn’t a bad soul here? Try, just for tonight...Believe!” And off the thought went.

Off Gary went? Annie, I don’t think so! Please try to get a hold of yourself. What was that? What just happened? Thoughts swirled in my head. Tino and Audrey were, needless to say, bummed. Very gracious and wonderfully good sports about it all, but really bummed. Who wouldn’t be?

Ross. Ross was thrilled. He didn’t brag or get snotty. I mean, let’s face it: we still had most of our balls still on top of the table. But we had just moved on to the next round.

“What was that? What just happened?” I kept asking myself that...just a fluke, just a coincidence. Just a weird moment, and they certainly happen at this party. Ah, but the night was young.

Our next game ended as we were in the middle of playing it. While one of our opponents was shooting a ball into a pocket, another ball kicked off, hit the eight ball, and you know the rest. In a pocket the eight ball went. Game, set, match—Ross and I move on again. I started to get very quiet.

During another game, Ross was across the table from me discussing what shot he should take with one of the guys. He and Audrey’s husband were talking strategy and I found myself standing alone just watching the two of them. Another “thought” comes floating into my head: “Annie, honey...believe, just believe.” In the same moment, Ross decides what he is going to do and he lets out this coach’s yell...“Believe! Just believe!” he shouts. I know my mouth dropped open...I had stereo going.

There were four games Ross and I played that night. We won every game we played. However, not one of those games—not one—did we win because we were the first to get all our balls off the table and sink the eight ball. The eight ball was in charge that night, make no mistake about that, but Ross and I never touched it. Everything that could go wrong with an eight ball went wrong—with our opponents. By the end of the night, Ross and I were that year’s champs.

Now, it didn’t look like it to anyone in the room, but I was no longer completely “there” anymore. Dazed is a good word here. Amazed would be another word to describe how I felt; and I didn’t know what I was supposed to do about what had just happened. Ross looked at me when it was all over, shrugged his shoulders, and let out this ever so male YEEEEAAHHH! I couldn’t bring myself to tell anyone. I didn’t think piping up with “Uhhh, folks, I’m not really sure Ross and I won because, well, because—something else, someone else did.” That just wasn’t something I could believe, much less say out loud. Not even this group was ready for a statement like that from me or anybody else. What I did do was drink. I told myself it was all one grand fluke; or somehow maybe, just maybe, it was Gary’s way of saying goodbye. I had another cocktail.

Martin and I fell into a bed at John’s that night and I just said thank you to the ceiling. Whatever that was, however you did that...you stopped to say goodbye...thanks, Gary...I love you, too!!! It was in time for Christmas...and the tears streamed.

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I would have thought that was enough, but I had forgotten all about the last part of my challenge to the “thoughts” in my head. I remembered the part about “Gary, if you’re really there, I will win the pool tournament.” I recalled

thinking "...and you'll attend a great party." Those thoughts I remembered. What I had forgotten was the rest of what I had thought in my mind: "...and we'll talk about it in the morning."

The first thought in my head the next morning when I woke was not mine. There is no other way to say that. The first thought that came into my head was definitely NOT one I would have come up with on my own. I wasn't the type; not for a very long time had I been anywhere near the type, especially the night after a party, and certainly not with the deserved hangover I was suffering from. The first "thought" in my head as I woke was, "Annie, while growing up, you recited a prayer at least once a week that you believed in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, of all things Seen and Unseen.... It is now time for you to learn about the *Unseen* part of that statement."

## **Longing**

The hope dreamt which waking forsakes.  
Yearning's pain from heart felt aches.  
A trick perversely twisted with the treat.  
The sentiment that so defines bittersweet.

To endure impatience in life spent  
prevented from knowing the scent,  
the feeling, or sight of senses sated;  
of cravings palled by a spirit elated.

Being pulled by desire's attraction,  
yet ties bind preventing reaction  
to the taste of joy's sweet lust  
before time scatters one's dust.

ahhh.....

To sit within a wish's company,  
freely serving oneself to its honey,  
euphoric in a moment's belonging.  
Rain to the thirst of parched longing.