



Chapter 9 – The Butterfly Takes Flight

Excerpt From
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I received dozens of letters from my mother, all filled with scripture, and although I repeatedly asked her to stop preaching to me, she wouldn't honor my wishes. Eventually, I resorted to returning her letters to her unopened. It pained me to have to be so harsh with her, but I didn't know what else to do. Asking her to respect my boundaries was like asking her to hold her breath indefinitely.

At this time in my life, I accepted that it wasn't really my mother who was reaching out to me—a mother who had nurtured me as a small child, who made sure I had my coat on when it was cold and that I was never hungry when I went to bed, a mother who kissed me repeatedly on the cheeks even though I pulled away with disgust and yelled “Eeewwwh!” This wasn't *my* mother. It was an icy apparatus built by Jehovah's Witnesses, driven to do its duty to try to recruit a “black sheep” back into the fold of the righteous. *This* alone was her mission. Once I recognized that an uncontrollable force was responsible for manipulating my mother—a force greater than our earthly bond—it was somewhat easier for me to accept our battered relationship and forgive her.

My dad, however, didn't fare so well. He remained a prisoner of denial for many years. When we spoke on the phone, all he could say was, “It's a shame you left, Brenda. You couldn't have been *that* unhappy.” No matter what I said, he would not accept the truth. The guilt I felt for seeking to live my own life was a heavy burden I carried around for years.

There's no doubt that I was happier than I'd ever been, and I refused to allow anyone to squash that happiness. But I was so enmeshed in family battles, trying to hang onto who I needed to be and at the same time trying to change my family's mindset, that I didn't see that the train I was riding on was about to derail. In all my innocence and naivety, I never imagined that by making one seemingly harmless choice, I would be switching tracks and sending my life into more chaos than I could ever imagine...(continued)

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