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LIFESTYLE

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Timing is everything

BY LAURA HUNT ANGEL

Sooner or later we all learn that whoever wrote the old saying about “best laid plans” was spot on. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, our very best intentions still go awry. When that happens, the best move is usually to come clean and forge ahead.

A DISCOVERY

I found the cocoon lying on the ground after a windstorm one late fall day. We had studied butterflies in school, so I knew what it was right away. I carefully carried it into the house to ask mama if I could keep it until spring and see if it hatched. She said yes, and to put it somewhere out on the back porch, so I headed there to look for a good spot.

Our back porch was closed-in with sliding glass doors all around, and above all of the doors was a little rim. The rim was just big enough to rest the cocoon on so that it wouldn't be bothered by our cats, which mama would sometimes let me bring inside. I pulled a chair up to one edge of the room and climbed onto it. After I placed my treasure in a safe spot, I reached out and put one hand on the top of our big upright freezer to keep me steady enough to hop off the chair. Suddenly, I felt a sharp poke, and, lifting my hand from the freezer, saw that there was a big fishhook stuck in my thumb.

Daddy heard me whimpering and came to see what the problem was. I showed him my thumb and he gently pulled it out, reassuring me that it was going to be fine. Then he told me to go wash my hand and have mama put some Mercurchrome on it. I did, and quickly forgot all about the cocoon.

A MONSTROSITY

Months passed. The days lengthened and spring flowers finally began to bloom. We hadn't had to light a fire in the wood stove for quite some time when I finally remembered the little cocoon. I climbed back into the chair, this time mindful of fishhooks, and retrieved my prize.

The cocoon was dry and brown and, from its time on my improvised shelf, a bit dusty. I shook it and didn't hear any noise, even though I wasn't sure what sort of sound a butterfly might make. Certain that whatever was in that cocoon need my help, I ran to the kitchen where Mama was just finishing up supper to ask her if I could open it and hatch out my butterfly. She said I could try, so I raced to the front porch, hopped over the balsam roses and down into the yard.

Crouching down in the fresh spring grass, I examined the cocoon and found a spot where I could begin tearing at it so that my butterfly could escape. Little by little I worked at the dry shell, expecting to see a pair of colorful wings unfurl. After a few minutes I had finally peeled away enough of the cocoon to tip the little butterfly out.

What spilled out of the cocoon and into my hand was definitely not a butterfly. Instead, there was a huge, swollen, grub-like creature the same brownish-black color as a dried-up night crawler. I panicked and immediately dropped the repulsive lump on the ground. After a few seconds, I prodded it with a stick to see if maybe there were wings on the other side. To my horror, the thing squirmed to life. I gasped, then moved back up to the porch, dizzy with fear and certain



Photos by Laura Hunt Angel
Top: Buttermilk breaded pork chops, butterflied and seasoned just right. **Above:** These cupcakes are flourless, sugar-free and utterly delicious. **Below:** A beautiful example of a Costa Rican butterfly.

that I was going to be cursed forever for preventing the butterfly's completion.

Just then, mama hollered that supper was ready. I headed into the house, appetite gone, but couldn't even gather the courage to tell my parents what I'd done. I tried to act normal and filled a little bowl with macaroni and tomatoes. I took a few small bites, but even this favorite dish had lost its appeal.

THE METAMORPHOSIS

That evening we went to Joe Jenkins' house for Daddy's music practice. Joe Jenkins and his brother Connie were from down in Robertson County, Tennessee, and they mostly played the guitar. Brother Ramsey, an old country preacher from West Virginia, had a high tenor voice straight out of the bluegrass that could make your mother cry. Daddy sang and also played the guitar. His rich baritone blended well with Brother Ramsey's voice, and the two of them sang into the night — “Hold Fast To The Right,” “Family Bible” and one called “The Lost Sinner's Prayer.” I tried to imitate Brother Ramsey singing along with him on his parts.

Mama, Mrs. Ramsey and Joe's wife Velma sat in the kitchen for awhile. They swapped recipes and drank coffee, and eventually joined us and sang some, too. The music helped me forget about the butterfly for a while. That night on the way home, I fell asleep in the car, and when we got home daddy carried me in.

As soon as I awoke the next morning I decided that I needed to tell daddy what I'd done to the poor butterfly. When he headed to the chicken coop to get mama some eggs, I followed him out the door so that we could talk. With my heart pounding, I took his hand and



told him what had happened. To my great relief, Daddy wasn't the least bit disturbed by my horrible deed.

“Oh,” he said, “That's an interesting thing to see.” Perplexed by his response, I asked him if the butterfly would have to live forever stuck like that.

“No, I'm sure some big fat robin has found it by now.” He stooped to gather the last of the eggs, and grunting a little,

added, “I'll bet it made a good breakfast for him. Now let's take these eggs to your mother before she gets so hungry she eats her apron.”

My troubles eased, the rest of the day was spent rambling through the fields with my sisters, picking dandelions and holding them under our chins to see if we liked butter. The next morning in church I sang “There Is Power In The Blood” with old Brother Ramsey, and

matched his tenor note for note. And I vowed to the good Lord to never open another cocoon again.

THE RECIPES

If these breaded, butterflied pork chops do not whet the appetites of your loved ones, then surely the sugar-free, flourless chocolate cupcakes will do the trick.

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