

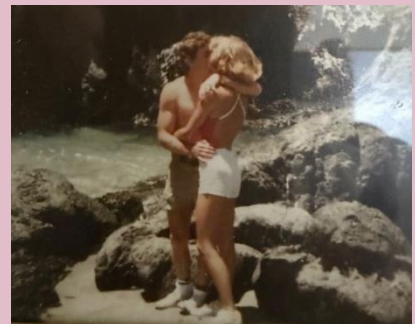
A Letter to My Schatz



Dear Schatz,

When We First Met

Meeting you was the best thing that ever happened to me. Our friend Rachel tried to play matchmaker, but it didn't click the first time. I probably should have known then that winning your love would not be easy, it would be worth it, but not easy. I remember cooking for you one night with the guys, proudly serving up artichoke hearts, not realizing you hated them. But you stayed anyway, even though the food missed the mark. I was already taken with you. You were absolutely beautiful. Still are. A ten out of ten. And let's just say, I knew I wasn't.



They say a man is lucky when he marries up. But sometimes I wonder if that makes you the one who had to marry down. And yet, you chose me, with all my edges and energy and chaos, you still chose me.

You were not an easy pursuit. You held your cards close. You were not going to be won over by smooth talk or showmanship. And for a guy like me, that just raised the stakes. It made me want to rise. I remember that alumni gymnastics meet when all the old gladiators were sitting around getting back rubs in the bleachers. I tried to get one from you, and you turned me down flat. That moment got under my skin, but it also told me everything I needed to know. You were not going to baby me. You were not going to coddle me. And deep down, I knew that was exactly what I needed. You were the one.



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Building a Life

Not long after, you got baptized, and I fumbled my way through a proposal that same day. Somehow, you said yes. We honeymooned in Hawaii, remember that? What a beginning.



Then came grad school, military life, and years of adventure and transition. Ten moves in ten years. Six of those years overseas in Europe. Through it all, you anchored our home



in every place we landed. And along the way, you gave me two incredible kids, Ashley and Gregory, two of the greatest gifts I have ever received.

Of course, the story has not all been mountaintops. Life came hard for a season. My health took a hit. We crashed financially. I burned out from overwork, and I bottomed out. Trauma from long ago caught up with me. Add to that an injury from medication, and I was flat on my back. That was one of the lowest points of my life. I did not bounce back quickly.

But you, you did not walk away. You stood firm. You held me up when I could not stand on my own. You saw through the pain and confusion to the man you married. You reminded me who I was. You told me to get back up.

Any reasonable woman might have said, I did not sign up for this. But you stayed. You gave me love, support, grit, and when needed, some tough truth. You did not baby me, you helped save me.

Courage and Simplicity

When my lucrative private practice turned toxic, you encouraged me to walk away. You never once cared about the loss of status or income. You said, Simplify. And we tried. Sometimes we nailed it, sometimes not so much, but the heart was there.



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You encouraged me to take a government job with the Department of Defense, where I spent nearly ten years. You were never driven by material things. You cared about peace, health, and purpose. You reminded me again and again that our wealth was not in numbers or square footage. Our wealth was in what we had already built, each other, our family, our faith.

You never worried about the bank account. You worried about our souls. And that is one of the reasons I love you most.



Even now, as I step into my new roles at Holdfast and AnchorPoint, I carry with me the steady love and wisdom you have always given me. I am grateful beyond words.

When Life Hit Us Again

Just when we thought we were stepping into calmer waters, life threw us another blow. We were out of the military system, transitioning toward a simpler, more grounded life, and then came the hardest loss I have ever known. Gregg. My twin. My brother. Losing him tore through me in a way I cannot even fully explain.

And while I was still reeling from that, allegations came at me from my former post at Madigan, false and driven by ideological bias, just because I held firm to my conservative values. It was vicious. I had to fight for almost a year to clear my name. The weight of it all could have crushed me. Honestly, some days I thought it might.

But because of you, I did not fall apart. You were my shield, my voice of reason, and the one who reminded me who I was when everything else tried to redefine me. You helped me hold my ground with grace, courage, and integrity. I made it through because you were there.

The Wealth That Matters

Schatz, you have been with me through it all, through seasons of joy and seasons that nearly broke us. You stayed. You fought for us. You challenged me, believed in me, loved me even when I had nothing left to offer. You kept our family strong. You never stopped seeing the best in me, even when I could not see it myself.



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Here we are now, easing into this next chapter of life. We have faced so many battles, but we have also known great love. What we have now is deeper, richer, more real. We are not rich in the way the world defines it, but we are rich in all the ways that count. And that is because of you.

We have not just survived, we have grown. Through the fire, the loss, the laughter, and the grind, I have found what truly matters. Not accolades. Not titles. Not wealth. What matters is faith, love, grit, and the grace to keep showing up for each other.

That is what we have done. We have kept showing up. Again and again. And that kind of love, the enduring, refining, fire-tested kind, is sacred.



Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9, NIV)



You are the harvest, Schatz. You are the beauty that has come from choosing love again and again. You are the reason I believe that God's promises are real and that steadfast love truly never fails.

Thank you for staying. For loving. For enduring. And thank you for still being the most beautiful woman I have ever known.

With all my love forever,

Jeff