

Dearest Ben,

It's your birthday, and I will be celebrating your exceptional Life all day! I am so sorry that our relationship hasn't been very good lately. I pray that you can forgive me for whatever wrong I have done to you. I know you and Ryan detest Peter, and I still don't know how all of this came about. I realize he has his faults, some of it just comes from living in NYC for so long and never having lived in community before or had a family, but I don't think he has any more faults than the rest of us. I, too, have had some challenges with him, but the pros have far out numbered the cons. He adores me like no one else ever has. We have fun together and enjoy doing the same things, and he really listens to me and tries to understand where I'm coming from. I could go on and on about this, but this birthday message is not about him.

My heart is big enough to hold all kinds of people in love and affection, but no one will ever be more special to me than you, Ryan and Carrie. We have been together for so long through many good times and not so good times; but we have always stuck together through the good and not so good times... blindness, epilepsy, post traumatic stress, depression, alcohol, drugs, Marty's death, etc. All of you certainly have the right to blame whatever pain you have on me. I was not the easiest one to live with or please. I was only 23 when I had Carrie. I didn't know anything about PTSD or war or love. I needed, at least, to be able to keep the house looking good. I had so little control over anything else, and it made me feel good to have a clean house. Now I realize it was my OCD that made me compulsive about insignificant things. But there is no excuse for not being a loving, affectionate, positive, happy mother except that I never had a mentor or model to show me those traits. I was always trying to please God because I lived in fear of something bad happening to all of us. That was my way of dealing with OCD.

But you, Ben, were the sunshine of my life. You were kind enough to let me hold and cuddle you. You radiated happiness, kindness, and love for all life forms; rocks, turtles, dogs, etc. You were not self conscious & shy like the rest of us. You were the one to call all the older boys in the neighborhood to arrange activities. Ryan counted on you to be the instigator. You still have that wonderful way of getting things done. You were the one who would sing with your whole heart not worried about what others were thinking, and you taught yourself to play guitar! I am so impressed that you have taught yourself so much about farming and the way you've worked it all by yourself! And now, you're taking a break and taking good care of yourself (and I hope loving yourself more and more everyday) because I can't imagine anyone not loving & admiring you! No wonder you were born on the Summer Solstice! You came here to shine bright, and you're doing it.....

I'm fine with all of my children wanting to leave me. The most important job we have, I think, is to find whatever and whoever we love and live our lives authentically with no one else holding us in bondage to what they want or expect us to do and love. That's what I'm trying to do now, Ben. I know you & Ryan don't approve of the way I'm living and the person I've chosen to live it with right now, but it is my life and I'm happier and

more alive now than I have been in a long time. Yes, there's no guarantee how long this will last, but I've got to do it my way, even if I'm making a big mistake...

You don't seem to want to do anything with me for your birthday, so I'll honor that. I do have some clothes I bought for you, so I hope you'll at least take a look at them to see if any of them will work for you. Maybe Carrie will be able to help us all work through this separation that is so glaringly making us all uncomfortable.

With All My Love & Best Wishes For You!  
Mom