**Chip**

The writing assignment was to find a photo that I appear in and write about the thoughts and feelings surrounding that time.

I hadn’t been in my trunk of photos for years since I packaged them safely away after my divorce.

Surely after 6 years, I had processed the grief, resentment and confusion enough to go in to the chest and find a simple photo.

As I leafed through the boxes and albums I found it hard to find even one that my ex, Bruce was not in.

There was Bruce pouring our front patio. Bruce and I in Italy, Bruce at Halloween dressed up as a woman, Bruce on the tractor with our nephew, Bruce, Bruce, Bruce!

My overwhelming feeling was “Did my whole life consist of Bruce? Tears were stinging my eyes.

All at once I came across a photo that made me smile and then laugh.

It was one of those canned photos at the Safari park that a staff photographer takes with an elaborate background of lions and tigers. The photo was of me…and Chip.

It was autumn of 2012 when it all happened. I knew I was not going to stay married any longer than the 20 years I had been married.

I spent a month on Cape Cod, where I had spent every summer as a child. I cried three times a day, every day and had fallen into shock and depression.

Halloween had always been my favorite holiday and the Cape was notorious for outstanding costume parties. I thought I would sit this one out. A knock on the door from my cousin and sister in law was a signal that they were not going to take No for an answer.

They dragged me out in my T shirt and jeans to Parkers, a neighborhood sports bar. There was a rock and roll band and an endless array of great costumes.

The one that caught my eye was a large box with a man’s head in it. He had scooped out two half-moon slots in the front of it and had a sign that read “Breast exams”. It made me laugh. I proceeded to take my almost not existent breasts and hold them over the slots. I asked my sister in law to take a picture to send to my husband.

After a few dances and some wine that man came up to me, held up my left hand and said husband? I don’t see any ring on that finger. I replied, “I think I’m going through a divorce.”

We proceeded to talk the rest of that night as he shared with me that he had also gone through a divorce about three years earlier. His ex-wife was also an alcoholic. We had a lot to talk about.

One thing lead to another and I had a special romance with this man 10 years my junior.

I thought I would never see him again but once back in San Diego, Chip and I kept in touch.

We spent many hours on the phone and Chip taught me some profound things.

He explained that going through a divorce is like going through a tunnel. At first you don’t even know you’re in a tunnel, and then you find yourself in the middle of it where you can’t see any light and eventually you see the end of the tunnel and find your way out.

Chip lead me through that tunnel.

My divorce was not an easy one. There were many complications. My Ex could not reason well coming off of an alcohol fog and l went through most of it in traumatic shock and denial.

Chip used the analogy that the marriage is like a thick rope. Little by little the strands separate until you are only held together by a few strings. Eventually those will break also and then you’ll be free. He was so instrumental in helping me structure the final agreement which set us both free.

At one point Chip made the trip across country to visit me. He had never been to California and I was able to share this one of a kind place including the Safari park.

After a fun day we found ourselves in a line of couples and families having their pictures taken by the park staff. The couple before us was bickering to each other and the one behind us had faces that were expressionless. When we stepped up to the animal set, the photographer commented on how happy we seemed. Chip embraced me and said “That’s because were not married!”

I’d love to tell you that Chip and I lived happily ever after but that was not the nature of our relationship. He was the first of many special men who came in and out of my life always teaching me something.

A couple of years later, when visiting Cape Cod again, I met Chip at the Chocolate Sparrow.

Catching up over truffles, he told me he had reconnected with a special woman he knew as an acquaintance from a longtime ago. He was very excited about her and said they had plans to move in together.

I had always been behind Chip in terms of healing from the divorce and dating experiences.

I was so happy for him and at the same time asked my Mr. Wizard if it would ever happen to me.

He said when the right one comes along you will just know. There will be no doubts just an all-encompassing “knowing”.

I continue on with my journey with immense gratitude for the universe bringing Chip into my path.