



“If Sue ever leaves me, I’m going with her.”

— James Patterson *

Dear Faithful Reader,

When I first read this great line, from the prolific James Patterson, I laughed out loud, then immediately went to find Ana and share it with her.

Once back in my office I pulled out my trusty dictionary of etymology to find out where the word “companion” comes from. (I love etymology; it’s like archeology, only about words instead of dinosaurs.) Sure enough, I found a gold mine of meaning. “Companion” comes from the Latin word “panis,” meaning bread.

A *companion* is someone you break bread with. A breadfellow.

And it occurred to me: some of the greatest moments I experience with Ana are found in the mundane, the everyday. Yes, there are thrilling moments of high romance and dizzying passion. But the glue that binds us, the mutual web that sustains us, comes mostly from the bread-breaking moments.

We take walks. Drive to the grocery store. Sit and talk over breakfast. Talk in the kitchen while we cook. Lie in bed and talk.

In those moments we talk about nothing and everything. Sometimes I find myself talking over things that are troubling me, or challenging me, or that I’m trying to figure out but have gotten stuck in. Ana processes naturally through talking. I process best in solitary, through thinking or writing. Writing is a solitary business, and I’m an introvert by nature. Still, there always comes a point when I need to talk something through in order to figure out what it means, or how I feel about it, or what to do about it. Times when I need her wisdom, her perspective, her patient capacity to serve as a sounding board.

It’s in those moments that I feel the least articulate, the clumsiest. The most vulnerable. And those are without fail moments when our companionship saves me.

I don’t know where or when Patterson first uttered (or penned) the quote at the top of this email, but he repeats it in a recent interview in *GQ* (Jan. 23, 2023):

I’m very lucky because my wife and I, we love each other. We love hanging together. We are best friends, we love to talk to one another. In my autobiography, I write,

and this is true, every night, we go to sleep holding hands. And one of my comedic lines about her, which is also true, is, “If Sue ever leaves me, I’m going with her.”

Ana and I don’t fall asleep holding hands, but I wake her up every morning with a cup of hot tea and a kiss (feeling much like a prince in a fairy tale) — and am rewarded with a smile that illuminates the rest of my day.

My March wish for you: Spend time every day with your best companion doing nothing special, just talking and listening. Let the sheer companionship of it feed your soul.



#

*** ABOUT THE WRITER**

James Patterson is the most recognizable name in publishing today. His books have sold nearly half a billion copies. He has coauthored books with such superstars as Dolly Parton and Bill Clinton, but honestly, he is arguably as much a superstar himself.

The man has often been attacked as a hack, his writing labeled shallow and “paint-by-numbers.” A “Henry Ford of writers” who has turned novel-writing into an industrial process and cheapened the art form.

I don’t buy it. Millions of people who don’t normally read books at all have devoured hundreds of pages of Patterson prose — and in my book, the world is a richer place for it.

In any case, Patterson serenely floats above the flak.

His detractors point to his professional past: Before becoming the world’s bestselling novelist, or any kind of novelist at all, Patterson worked for years as a bona fide Mad Man, working his way up to CEO of the New York branch of a huge advertising firm. Still, as he says in that same *GQ* article:

“I’ve been clean for over 25 years now, so don’t hold that against me.”

Jim Patterson loves what he does with a childlike abandon. And he goes to sleep every night holding his best friend’s hand. I call that a living masterpiece.