

# YIN & YANG

## Rebecca & Robbie Degenaar

Rebecca, 31, and Robbie, 32, are the sibling duo behind "nip-tuck tourism" company Restored Beauty Getaways. Every month they take up to 40 people to Thailand for cosmetic procedures. Their relationship has never been stronger.

### REBECCA

**I WAS BORN IN SYDNEY.** We had a fantastic childhood. Sebastian is the oldest and then Robbie and then me. Mum was still breastfeeding Rob when she got pregnant with me. It was a happy surprise. Both my parents are Dutch, they migrated in their early 20s.

When I was 10, our lives took a massive turn. The divorce was sudden. They never fought, you'd never know there was a problem — he just met someone else and packed his bag and walked out. Mum wanted to take off and chose Perth. We lived in Bickley. I started primary school and Rob started high school; it took me ages to settle. Mum cleaned schools and I would go and help her after school. It was my school actually — how embarrassing!

Rob and I had a normal brother-sister kind of relationship. I was always getting punched in the arm and getting teased. Robbie was involved with basketball and he was off with his mates. And I was a bit annoying at that age. Robbie was popular with the girls.

After I had my first daughter Estell, Robbie got me a job where he worked and then I got pregnant with Mia. I breastfed both girls and my boobs shrivelled up. I wanted breast augmentation so I contacted surgeons in Perth and it was \$12,000. I felt selfish to spend that money.

Then I heard about people going overseas so I looked into it, went overseas and had the surgery. I came back and my hairdresser wanted to go so I booked her and I thought I should be charging people to do this! I took a trip back to Thailand, made a presentation to a big hot-shot American guy and got rejected. I think he looked at me and thought I was young and immature — I was only 24. Then the tsunami hit. We left Koh Samui and went to Pattaya to get away. Mia got bitten by a mosquito and



PICTURE MICHAEL O'BRIEN

to Pattaya to get away. Mia got bitten by a mosquito and we had to go to hospital. So I approached them (to do the surgery) and I got signed up straight away. It was meant to be.

Not long after I started I set up a home office (in 2005). *The West Australian* did a story and then Nathan and Nat from Nova called me and the phone rang hot all day long. It came to the point where I needed help and Robbie was ideal so we joined forces. Rob does a lot of the business side — the accounts, the bookkeeping, he looks after all the franchise offices, whereas I do a lot of the marketing and sales and consult with the clients, so together, we make a really good team.

## ROBBIE

**IT WAS A HAPPY CHILDHOOD.** Rebecca would always want to join in and we didn't want her to. Although we did include her, for example playing cricket we'd put her out in the field and she'd have to fetch the

ball! She kept pestering us. We used to battle a lot — I guess that's normal male/female kids growing up.

We moved to Perth when our parents divorced. It was a big shock. When I graduated from Year 12 we all moved to Sydney. I did my uni there and then we all ended up back in Perth again. Bec and I didn't have a lot to do with each other, I was quite busy. I guess I had my life and she had hers. She wanted to get back into the workforce after her first child. I knew she was capable so I got her a job. I was quite excited that we would get to see each other more — she was on a different level but we'd make efforts to see each other. That job was the start of bringing us together more.

She went to Thailand and did her surgery. I remember her coming back and her friends were asking her how she did it so the concept came from there ... They went back to Thailand and that's when the tsunami hit. That was very difficult for all of us

because we couldn't reach them, we were all beside ourselves. Then Mia obviously brought them to the hospital. Yes there was a business plan, yes there was a bit of luck. I stayed on at work part-time and spent half my time on the business not getting paid ... to try to take it to the next level. But it got to the stage where it was starting to get momentum and I went full-time into it. Obviously the beauty of our partnership is that we both have strengths and weaknesses and we complement each other. We've had disagreements but we haven't had a big, heated argument.

We have our moments and our time out in our offices but we do get along very well. Rebecca is very motivated, very passionate about what she does. Her mentality is a "do now, plan later" kind of thing and I'm the opposite — I'm more "look at all the information and then do something" so I guess it works well.

Interviews: Amanda Keenan