

Thursday, December 24, 2009

WHILE IT WON'T FIT UNDER THE TREE, THIS WILL HAVE TO DO

Today started well and then quickly turned sad, thoughtful, and then full of gratitude.

I awoke early, having some of the most restful sleep I've had in a long time. I have been plagued with nightmares for months and it's been taking a toll on me. Sometimes they were remembering the reality of what I endured, stayed for, and swept under the rug to pose as being happy. Other times they were dreams of things that never happened, but were post-breakup and always involving him hurting me in some way or another. Other times they were of him and what could have been if he hadn't been so sick. No matter what, he was always in them, no matter how much I wished he would be exiled from my dreams and thoughts. So while I at least sleep nowadays, my vivid dreams often leave me shaken, disturbed and confused when I awake. This really throws me off and starts my day in a less than desirable way.

Last night as I closed my eyes and faded off, I said aloud, "I will not dream of you tonight." I fell into a deep sleep and instantly I heard music, which I realize now I rarely hear in my dreams. I was in a small town in the mountains having a picnic with friends whom I knew were friends, but I've never met. The dream progressed through the day with the picnic, then a hike, then walking around the town laughing, seeming very happy. It all felt very familiar and comforting. I felt so free. There was nothing bad; no worry, no fear, no hurt, no regret, no blame, no shame or embarrassment. All the things that have plagued me for so long were gone as I slept. I hadn't felt that in a very, very long time. I finally had a true good night's sleep and actually woke up smiling and happy before my alarm went off! I didn't want to move in fear that the feeling would stay in my bed when I left it. Luckily it continued.

Today is pay day, and tradition with pay day is that I get up early and "splurge" on an Americano at Starbucks. I've actually gone almost every day this week being that I'm alone at the office and not wanting to make coffee that is crappy, so it's been a \$6 splurge kind of week. The sun was coming up, the city was covered in frost and the roads were near abandoned since so many people are off today. I pull into the parking lot of Starbucks, start to walk to the back door, and am stopped by a car pulling out. The man tells me they are closed, which shocks me. He then informs me that the police are out front, and that they were robbed this morning. The people there are always so sweet and nice, and whether you are nice or not, no one should have to go through being robbed, particularly in the early morning of Christmas Eve.

He drives away and two others start to walk there and I tell them and they panic, not knowing of any other coffee shops. This is odd to me since that was their first concern. I give them directions to where I'm heading and go there. When I get there I see this man I always see when I go to Starbucks in the morning. He's always writing in the corner and chatting with the staff there. I ask him if he knew anything about the robbery. He tells me a few men robbed them at gunpoint at about 5:00 AM. He and I discuss this for a few minutes and I comment how sad it was that they had to go through that at all, yet alone on Christmas Eve. He replies that it just shows how desperate people are right now. I agreed and left feeling sad that this is what our world has come to. As I drove away, I passed this building with a huge line outside of it. I had never seen this there before and stared, trying to figure out what was going on as I drove by. I then saw that it was for plasma donations. I realized that these people were likely trying to get some money last minute for gifts. The tears set in and I cried most of my way to work.

In a year that has been one of the most painful and shameful ones I have endured in my adult life, I find that as it wraps itself up, I am constantly reminded of how lucky I am. I am beyond blessed with a fun, loving and crazy family that is its own source of constant entertainment, comfort and support. We can have it out pretty bad sometimes, but within a day (usually less) things are fine and we are laughing at how stupid and ridiculous we were being. My family is always there when the shit hits the fan in whatever way they can be. I have a never ending supply of love and support and calming getaways to regroup my thoughts. I have recently had some much needed financial support to take care of recent health issues that I was not prepared to deal with, and am not sure what I would have done without it. My family is there for each other. We're nuts and bizarre. We do not necessarily understand each others' paths, but we support them. We are all very different, but very much the same. And in all of this we love and are there for each other in our own ways. I can't imagine it any other way, and am beyond grateful for their love and all they do.

I am blessed with many, many amazing friends that are pure and true friends; the kind of friends that truly know me and my heart. They are the kind of friends where it's not about what we're doing, but about the fact we're doing it together; whether it's going out, going for a hike, having dinner at someone's house, or just sitting on a couch talking about life. I

can open up to the depths of who I am and what I believe to these people and they will share that with me as well. I can laugh with them, cry with them, or just try to figure out what the hell is going on with this crazy world with them. They are family to me. They are partners in crime. They are cheerleaders of life. They don't approve of everything I do and will lovingly express their concern or call me on my shit, but no matter what retarded choices I make in my life, they stand by my side. They are there to celebrate my successes and mourn my losses with me. They pick me up when I feel like I can't stand. They help me understand that baby steps are still steps. They remind me not to beat myself up, be ashamed of my choices, or let someone take away the best part of me. They remind me of who I was before I feel like I became a shell of that person and try to instill that that person is still in there.

Between my family and my friends, I am always loved, supported and taken care of. I have always had a roof over my head, even when I had those times where I had no idea where I would be living the very next day. I have always had food. I have often been spoiled with being treated to various things that I could not afford on my own...dinner, shows, drinks, getaways. I hold a lot of guilt that I have received so much, yet feel like I can't give back in those same ways. I only hope that I can give of myself and be a good friend who loves my family and friends back as much as I feel loved.

So as I think about the people who had to rob a store or donate plasma last minute to likely have money for Christmas, my heart aches for those people who have so little or have no one at all. It aches for the extremes that people will go to for material needs rather than focus on instilling love. It aches for the kids who get so much while some have nothing to awake to on Christmas morning. It aches for those who may have a lot "things", but no one in their life. I have struggled much in my life in many ways, but it has never been as bad as it could have been because the one thing I always have had is a plethora of love from the most wonderful people.

So tomorrow morning as you open your gifts and you get an ugly sweater, the wrong kind of whatever, another pair of socks, or are like me and not doing gifts (except for the niece) and will simply have a lot of Christmas hugs and my mom's Christmas breakfast, remember there are those that don't even get something they didn't want. Remember that you are loved by many and have much to be grateful for. And while I am definitely no big deal, know you are definitely loved by me dear friends and family. You are so very loved by me.

Merry Christmas!

Posted by Heather Duffin in The Chronicles at 06:14

Friday, December 18, 2009

SNOW IS NOT A NATURAL DISASTER

We here in Charlotte have a "Winter Storm Warning" that is causing panic in the hearts of Western North Carolinians. We are supposed to get...brace yourself...are you ready...1-3 inches of snow!!! Now this is definitely an impairment, particularly to the people of North Carolina since they freak out on the roads when it simply rains. Many people move here for the great mild climate most of the year (minus sweltering, humid summers) and get spoiled....but scared of rain? Come on, people! I bet you'd be less scared if someone told you that you had to drive through a stream of urine (which I accidentally did once). If this brings comfort, just multiply those urine streams and drive. I bet it seems a lot less intimidating to drive through urine streams than rain, right? IT'S THE FRICKIN' SAME THING!

Okay, I got off track there. My point in bitching about the people who are scared and don't know how to drive in rain is that imagine what happens when you have snow on the road? It's really scary! Seattle panics just as much with the snow, maybe worse because of all the big hills there. I remember the storm of 1996 where people were abandoning their vehicles on the freeways and walking to hotels. Of course we had an actual blizzard that time, but even with an inch Seattle panics. North Carolina is pretty flat and it's much easier to get around in it if you must. So when I encountered a little bit of snow here during my time in High Point a couple of years ago and then in Charlotte last year, I was shocked to see what happens in this state...it's unlike anything I've seen before. And so with that, I address the situation to the people of North Carolina.

Dear North Carolinians,

As we all await the predicted snow, many things are swirling about my mind...things like, "How festive! I'm so glad I'm going to the lake this weekend; it will be so pretty there with the snow! Mom can make snow cream if we get enough! I hope I can beat the storm before it hits Mom's since they're supposed to get 3-6 inches. Did I bring warm enough clothes? My tire is kind of bald, this could be bad. I really suck at driving in the snow...please let me beat the snow." These thoughts are just simple concerns and excitement. Please notice dear folk that nowhere in these thoughts have the following concerns appeared:

- I must buy two packs of every type of battery!
- A flashlight! I must buy a flashlight! Maybe more than one, even!
- What about food? We will surely run out of food! We must raid the grocery stores!
- I am going to call in sick to prepare for the winter storm.
- This is the end of the world!!!

I know this may shock you that I am not concerned about the above-noted items, but seriously people...it's only supposed to be around for the weekend. Unless your cupboards were bare to begin with and you are just grocery shopping the way you would any other day, then chill the fuck out! Okay, that wasn't very kind or Southern of me. How about this? CHILL THE FUCK OUT Y'ALL!!! Was that too harsh?

I know snow can be scary to drive in, trust me I know and I do battle fears of driving in it myself. Sometimes you just have to try it if it's not too bad out though. I am not cancelling my plans to go to my mom's just because it's supposed to snow. I did come into work early so I can leave early and try to get to her house to watch the snow hit. Yes, I am nervous about the snow starting up before I get there, but I will deal with it and drive like a grandma if I must. If something bad happens, at least I have a sleeping bag and my Halloween gnome hat to keep me warm, but I doubt my travels will end up in that bad of a situation.

So while I can truly understand your concerns of driving in the snow, I cannot understand the sheer panic and hoarding that takes place in this state (outside of the mountain towns that are used to it) when snow is about to hit. I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that you will not starve to death. Once again, it is only supposed to last through Sunday and warm up on Monday. I'm sure you already have enough food to sustain yourself through the weekend. If for some reason another crazy North Carolinian breaks into your home and robs you of your bread and cheese, of which were your only food items to last you for three days, please note that the human body can go without food for quite some time so long as you have water. And guess what? If for some reason your hands are too cold to turn the knobs at the faucet, remember that the root of this evil is snow! And what is snow? Let's all say it together now, "FROZEN WATER!!!" Yes, you can eat snow for the three days you have no food and are unable to drink water from the tap. How lucky of for you!!! So in knowing that you will not die from starvation during the two days of snow, please do not

purchase four loaves of bread to get you through the weekend. My friend went to buy juice the other day and said there was no bread in the store, as it had been all bought up in the winter storm panic that is standard around here.

On another note, this is snow and not an ice storm...power outages are not likely. Tree limbs do not typically break and down power lines when they hold a couple of inches of snow on them. There is no need to buy tons of batteries for the one flashlight you own. And there is no need to purchase a bunch of flashlights. Most of what you likely have in your home does not run on batteries anyways. Worst case scenario, you do lose power and you have your four loaves of bread, your flashlight and a working vibrator. That's about it. Be more concerned with keeping warm. If you were out buying up bundles of wood for your fireplace and s'mores ingredients for the fun of a fire, I can understand that. But bread, chips, batteries, etc? You. Are. Retarded.

Basically what I'm trying to say to you people of North Carolina is this...it is a couple of days of a couple of inches of snow. This is not a scene from "The Day After Tomorrow". You do not have to horde food, buy up batteries, loot stores that are closed from the snow because it is imperative that you have Frosted Flakes to survive the snow, burn books to stay warm, or contemplate cannibalism in case you run out of steak. Just drive safe, be careful, be reasonable, use common sense and for god's sake stop acting like it's the end of the world! It will be melted in a few days.

With great amusement and some discontent,
Heather McDuffin The Cold McMuffin

Posted by Heather Duffin in The Chronicles at 04:55