



Clarity in the Chaos: A Glimpse of Heaven

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March 11, 2021. I boarded the plane from St. Louis to Charleston. When I landed, the world had changed forever by a “worldwide pandemic.” Fear of the unknown set in as I waited for my long-distance boyfriend of two years to greet me at baggage.

After the hug and kiss, I asked, “Did you hear the news?”

He said in his southern drawl, “Yep, what you worried about, Honey?”

“I’m worried about not getting back home to St. Louis. I only packed for three days...how long can I stay?”

Without hesitation, he took my hand, “You can stay here with me forever.”

With that, my eyes welled up with tears; and as we walked to the car, I tried to get my emotions in check. I kept thinking, *I can’t go into a pandemic all ooey-goey*, so I focused on what I’d read every day for years, a cross-stitch my sister had made: “Put on your Big Girl pants and deal with it!” Ah-ha!

I took a deep breath and put my “big girl pants on” as I got in my man’s truck. The statements “Life happens” and “Attitude is everything” consumed me as my sweetheart asked me why I was so quiet on the car ride back to his home from the airport. I told him that I was trying to gain some clarity in the chaos of the day’s events and wondered how this news could affect us and those we love.

My thoughts were racing from *For God’s sake, this was supposed to be the twentieth celebration of my thirtieth birthday* (because it doesn’t

sound sexy to say “fiftieth birthday”), *a three-day weekend at the beach in Charleston with the man I love*, to *I forgot to pack underpants*, to *Thank heaven I remembered to put swimsuits in my weekender bag*, to *Every well-visited American beach town has a Wal-Mart close by if I forgot to bring something—like underwear!* Honestly, to deal with a pandemic, where does one find big girl pants big enough?

I continued in my out-loud voice to explain that I needed to draw from unrelated past experiences to realize the wisdom that might have prepared us for this day and the days ahead.

“Make sure you impart anything profound or funny that bubbles up,” he requested while smiling and winking at me.

And over the next few days as we watched the television—too much—I shared three stories that would help me cope and find clarity through the next seventeen months, until I was fully vaccinated and could return to St. Louis. These three stories taught me what I needed to do to survive the pandemic.

Be Yourself

I was just a wee one when my Aunt Diane came all the way from Wyoming to visit St. Louis for the first time. My mom picked her up at the airport and headed down to Laclede’s Landing by the Arch to get a beer in the historic part of St. Louis. My mom headed to the restroom. Aunt Di was sitting at the bar, alone, when a gentleman came over in a Budweiser jacket and asked if he could buy her a beer. My Aunt replied, “No, I already have one. I have a Coors.”

To which this gentleman replied, “You sure you don’t want a Bud? You are in Budweiser country.”

And Aunt Di said, “Okay, I’ll take another beer. You can get me another Coors.”

Then he asked her where she was from and what she did for a living.

“Originally from Nebraska, now a principal at a school in Wyoming, here visiting my sister for the first time.” Then she asked, “What do you do?”

Aunt Di turned around to see my mom returning and noticed a group of guys in Budweiser jackets carrying a cake. The gentleman pointed saying, “I’m with those guys. We’re celebrating a win today. I’m with the Budweiser Racing Team.”

Aunt Diane proclaimed, “I didn’t know they raced the Clydesdales!” I love my Aunt Diane. May she rest in peace.

What this story taught me during the pandemic chaos was to be myself no matter where I am or what life throws at me. Some say when in Rome, do as the Romans do; I say, wherever you are, be you. Go with the flow. Don’t try to be someone you are not. In the words of Shakespeare, “First to thine own self be true.” Be true to what you want and who you are and always leave room to not take yourself so seriously. Laugh when you say something ridiculous—that’s what Aunt Di did, and now generations of our family have shared this story. Be yourself.

Be Flexible

My buddy since age three was getting married about twenty-five years ago. He came over to visit. His parents were divorced and he’d known my mom and dad his entire life. Mom and I were sitting in the kitchen. The windows to the back porch were open. We began to hear a very serious conversation ensue between my buddy and my dad. My buddy, inquisitive about marriage in general due to his upcoming nuptials, asked my dad (Rodger) about being married to my mom (Jayne). At the time, my mom and dad had been married for twenty-five years.

My friend asked, “Rodger, how have you been able to stay married for all these years?”

My dad stated, “Well, I’ve been married to a lot of women...they have all been named ‘Jayne.’” They both laughed as Dad explained, “She’s been skinny and not skinny; she’s had short hair and long hair, blonde, brown, and frosted hair; she’s worn glasses and contacts; she’s been single and married; she’s been a mom of one, two, three; a stay-at-home mom, a working mom; a room mother, a girl scout leader, a speech pathologist, a real estate agent, an antique enthusiast, a gardener; she’s had different

friends, sang in the church choir; and on and on. I've loved every version of her!"

Mom and Dad were married fifty-two years before mom passed three years ago. My buddy was at her life celebration and heard more versions of Mom and the reasons we loved her. Shortly thereafter, my buddy and his bride celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary. My dad was pleased—he gives great advice.

As I looked at being with my love during the pandemic, I kept reflecting on this story and how the great love stories that surround my life have unfolded. When partners have the freedom and flexibility to express who they are in a relationship and the encouragement and acceptance to pursue ideas and dreams, love provides clarity. Be flexible.

Believe in the Supernatural

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, Practice, Practice. That's what I did. I had taken voice lessons since age ten and performed with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus for ten years. While with the chorus, I was honored twice to sing with a selected group of women at Carnegie Hall. It was during our second trip to sing Holst's "The Planets" onstage with the Harlem Boys Choir and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra under the direction of its then-conductor, Leonard Slatkin. It was an out-of-this-world experience and one that is inexplicable, but I'll try my best.

The women of the chorus, including myself, stood on stage, in the middle, in a semicircle in front of the orchestra. The Harlem Boys Choir, dressed in trademark gray slacks, white shirts, ties, and maroon sweaters with traditional insignia, stood in front of us. As we started to sing with notes soaring higher and higher into the stratosphere, I focused on Conductor Slatkin's baton. It became mesmerizing as he swirled and pointed, creating the cues and tempo. I fixated my eyes on the movement of the wand; my ears, tuned to the rich blend of melodic harmony and dissonance; my breath expanded with every inhalation as it filled my chest and lungs.

With my eyes focused, Slatkin's baton turned blue. A bright electric blue, an ethereal glow, like a Stars Wars light saber, throwing off light, refracting from wall to wall, ten-feet, then twenty-feet, then thirty-feet. Blue light careened through the entire auditorium. I was flooded with a sense of peace and tranquility. I couldn't believe my eyes. But I knew I was not hallucinating when, while we were singing, a Harlem Choir boy turned around and looked up at me.

With tears streaming down his face, he whispered, "Do you see it? Can you see what's happening?"

I responded. "Yes."

I turned him around and we both kept singing until the performance ended in a standing ovation. As we hustled off stage, this little boy, whom I had never seen before this moment on stage, found me in the crowd. He hugged me tight.

"Were we the only ones who saw it?" he asked. "The whole hall went blue, right? It was so amazing! Why didn't everyone see it?"

I explained, "Sometimes God gives us a glimpse of Heaven but not all experience it at the same time."

I don't know that what I saw was truly a glimpse of Heaven, but it was unlike anything I'd ever seen or experienced before—or since. I don't know if others saw the phenomena that the Harlem Choir boy and I did; but to me, it explains how, in the same moment, two people can be seeing and hearing the same thing, but interpret and understand it differently.

To cut to the clarity, sometimes you have to believe that a situation, problem, opportunity, or possibility can be reimagined. We can choose multiple ways at any given moment to proceed through life; we are limited only by the choices we make and our own understanding.

Since that experience, I flip things upside down and think about them differently than they might first appear. I often revisit my focus on the blue light that filled Carnegie Hall and remind myself that there are, at any given moment, alternative ways of doing and seeing things to create peace and tranquility in our lives.

When I recall the moment I first heard of the worldwide pandemic and remember the fear that set in, I also recognize how I handled my stress.

1. I allowed myself to be me, to say and feel the things I needed to, to thrive through the uncertainty of the future.
2. I became flexible, accepting my living conditions and realizing there are more ways than one to see and experience something—anything. I looked at the pandemic and saw more than just how to survive out of a weekender bag without underwear. I saw the positive possibilities within the changes that accompanied the pandemic’s social distancing, mask-wearing, and lockdowns. I accepted the inherent uncontrollability of my life.
3. I believe in the supernatural, and signs of and from the supernatural. During the seventeen months quarantined away from my St. Louis home, I received three distinct supernatural signs.

First, on my mom’s birthday, I was taking pictures of a sunset over Folly River in South Carolina. I was concentrating on the photo so intensely that my love had to tell me to look to the right. My sweetheart pointed, “It’s your mom on her birthday!” A cloud shaped like a winged angel filled me with hope.

Next, on the day I was to serve as a virtual music leader for a Christian conference, I walked out to the porch and snapped a quick picture of the sunrise. The sun shone like a cross, as if God was giving me a signal of encouragement before the conference.

Finally, on New Year’s morning 2021, I heard the sound of doves. I had never heard that sound before at my boyfriend’s home. I took it as a sign of peace.

Did I assign the meaning of hope, encouragement, and peace to these experiences, or were these supernatural signs I received at the time I needed them the most? To me, yes, these were supernatural signs: a glimpse of Heaven. Indeed.



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Diane credits her ability to help thousands of Americans find the right insurance over the past twenty years to her background and career in education.

Diane holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of North Texas, two master's degrees from Webster University: one in teaching and one as an education specialist. She completed post-graduate work at the University of Memphis and Northwestern University.

Diane is thrilled to be a contributor to this anthology.

Please contact Diane below to share your glimpses of Heaven.

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