

No Danger, Only Experience

While pondering a trip to my sister's wedding, whether to go or not, if my husband and son would go with me, how will we go, etc., the advice given to me was "you already know all of these answers". I did know that I was going, I just didn't want to admit it to myself, I guess. I quickly realized I would be going alone, and I would be driving from Wisconsin to Wyoming alone. Yes, insane to many (my mom, my husband, most of my "friends"), but that's what I knew. Once I found myself "willing" to proceed, it was very clear that I would be camping along the way. My sister recommended KOA (Kampgrounds of America), and I soon found that I could stay at a KOA all the way. It became a mantra - "KOA all the way". I slept in my SUV, so no pitching a tent alone in the dark, etc., and best of all, no hotel room expenses.

Tremendous amounts of fear during that anticipatory/preparation period.....my whole body wanted to scream in fear. I didn't know what I was afraid of, but it was "big" and I was scared. The advice given to me was "just get in the car; the fear will be left behind." The other piece of advice (that sticks with me to this day) was "there is no danger, only experience." I really get that, and I was grateful to have heard it.

As a young adult, maybe 23, I wanted to leave Wisconsin and "go west" to start fresh...I wanted a "do-over". I wanted my roommate to come with me. She just finished college, great time to start fresh! She thought I was crazy and didn't give it another thought. I never went, either. I was afraid to go "alone".....so when logic and reason set in.....well, you know.....Instead of a "do-over", I got back together with my boyfriend, whom I married, and stayed in Wisconsin. Now and again I would wonder.....what was calling me "out west". I always regretted not going.

A few years ago an astrologer told me that the year much of this happened was the first time "They" came knocking. He asked why I didn't answer, and "how many times do you think They knock?" Well, apparently They knocked again, and although I don't remember what year that was supposed to have been, I didn't answer again, and the astrologer asked me why. I was confused; I didn't understand how to answer when I didn't know anyone knocked. It "just wasn't time".....in hindsight I really don't believe I was ready. People say we're never given more than we can handle (even if it seems laughable at the time) but honestly I wasn't ready at that point in my life. If I were ready, wouldn't I hear the knock? I don't believe I had the ability to understand any message that would have been received at that time.

So, the trip....my chance to go "out west." The first two days were really difficult. My body wanted to shut down....driver's fatigue....I just wanted to sleep my way through my trip. Did I really? No.....I pushed on and eventually got into Yellowstone. I never understood the big deal about Yellowstone...I mean, a

park's a park, right? Well, I get it now. I spent days at Yellowstone in awe. I was sad that I didn't have someone to share the experience with - my husband and son weren't there to see the beauty I was seeing. I called the woman, who has helped me understand sooooo much in tears. I couldn't find words to express what I was seeing/feeling, but she understood, and I was very grateful that I could share it with her.

When I settled into a very crowded campsite one night, I couldn't get over how ALONE I felt. Surrounded by all of this beauty, and all of these people, I felt like I was in hell. Sadness consumed me. I knew I should journal through this, but I let fatigue win...I let denial take over. I went to sleep. I woke up around midnight with what I call a "panic episode." This is when every cell in my body panics, IBS symptoms kick into high gear, I find the nearest toilet, and assume a fetal position. I prayed to God to make it stop, please, just make it stop. I'm sorry I ate chocolate, I'm sorry I slept instead of doing my work first, making whatever deal I could think of so I could get out of the (freezing cold) bathroom and back to sleep. (As if!) That night the intensity of "alone" settled in (or was it being released?).

There was no stopping it, or avoiding it, the wave took over and consumed me. I'm, high atop a beautiful mountain in Yellowstone Park, (21 degrees in June that night), sleeping in my SUV, all alone. I rode the wave of alone, explored it a bit, hoping to squeeze every drop out of it so I didn't have to do this one again! Ouch. My body and my mind could barely take it, but at the same time I was fascinated with where the wave took me. What's up with this alone thing? Why does it feel like a heavy, black hole in my chest? Why do I feel *so alone*? It was much deeper than I could ever imagine.

When did this alone-ness start!? With my family? My parents? Myself? Yes, yes, all of that, and more. At the time the awareness I had was that the alone-ness started when I got mad at God for taking my sister, my pure, beautiful source of unconditional love, away from me. That's when I decided I must not have been good enough for God...he wouldn't have done that to me if I were more perfect, more religious, more saint-like.....just MORE. It seemed to me I had reached the core of alone, and I cried my painful, weeping body to sleep feeling the intensity of that aloneness.

I don't remember the feelings of the next day, other than "wow, that sucked." I remember I did have to start preparing to re-enter the world - a.k.a., get to my sister's for the wedding, and I wasn't quite sure how to do that. I still felt so alone and so isolated that facing being with my sister, and her friends, and my mom and my niece, was confusing and almost as painful as being alone had felt.

On my way out of Yellowstone toward Wyoming, I was riding near one of the lakes. The sun was shining, I was taking it all in, and it gently occurred to me that my dad was with me. I was so grateful, yet felt badly for not having invited

him in the first place. More old patterning.....We didn't have much of a relationship when he was still here, so it seems I continued to "forget" about him. But he came, and stayed throughout the wedding process. When I got to my sister's, thankfully she was alone and I could slowly reintegrate to speaking to people again. I hadn't spoken to anyone (but campground site renters and a bison that approached my car) for days. Talk about a silent retreat. I was able to share with her a little of what I experienced, although I didn't quite have the words for it then, but she wasn't listening anyway...standard, but the wedding details added to the picture.

The wedding day itself was magical. It was a renaissance wedding, and during the ceremony a "love potion" was passed. Interesting, but I put the history aside and drank some anyway. I know they put a spell on that potion! My heart seemed to split wide open. I was so full of joy, and everything I laid my eyes on was pure beauty. Was *this* bliss, I wondered? Worth the wait, I decided. It was a beautiful experience. A storm rolled through very quickly and left behind a triple rainbow, something I had never seen. We were all speechless at that point! But, the photographer, who was also a jester/comedian/juggler/ball balancer, brought us back. Such joy that day. It was way, way too hippie for my mother, but even she seemed to enjoy the beauty of the day. A short time later my sister sent me a picture that I didn't know was taken, and I don't think I ever saw myself as beautiful until I saw that. It seemed to capture the joy in my heart, as much as a photo can.....

Wedding is over, time go "go back".....everything seemed black. I didn't want to go, didn't want to "lose" the joy, the bliss. Who does? I tried to hang on, but we know what that means.....and the lesson wasn't over. The Sunday on my drive back I learned a thing or two about a thing or two. I learned that not much is open on Sunday, and if it is open, it closes by around 4. Had I known, I would have filled up the gas tank in Cheyenne.....somewhere in the Big Horn Mountains I realized I was on empty for what seemed like hours, winding road after winding road through endless mountains, passing closed gas stations, and even gas stations that posted "no gas". NO GAS???? WHO RUNS OUT OF GAS???? This isn't the 70's, people, I need GAS, NOW!!! I began to realize I might learn a whole new level of alone. Mile after mile, I vacillated between having enough food and water to get me to "whenever" someone comes by, assuming that didn't take a week, but then the fear would remind me that I have no idea how often this road is traveled and "whenever" just might be a week. Can you accept that? Can you withstand waiting for someone to come by, whenever? Yes. No. Yes. NO WAY. Yes, I can. There's no danger, only experience. Okay. OKAY.

I thanked everything on earth and everyone in the universe once the gas pump was finally in hand. I wanted to kiss the gas pump, I was so grateful.

I had plenty of time pondering what I was capable of, just how alone I was willing to feel in the middle of nowhere with plenty of animals ready to break the glass of

my vehicle and eat whatever might be tasty inside. I was scared of the night, until I remembered it was only an experience. My sister would say "just a blip on the radar screen of life". Just a blip, I can handle a blip. I can sure turn a molehill into a mountain. Mountain - no, I'm on a mountain, alone, in the dark in the middle of nowhere with plenty of wildlife waiting to eat me. Let's just go with blip.

The next day, nerves settled down a bit from the test the day before, I again find myself in the middle of nowhere with nothing but dry dirt all around for miles, with no apparent sign of life anywhere. Next test.....a storm. It rained so hard that I couldn't see anything and had to come to a complete stop. I stopped in the middle of the road, pounded on my dashboard with both fists screaming "BEAM ME UP. BEAM ME UP NOW, GOD DAMMIT. I KNOW YOU'VE DONE IT BEFORE - DO IT AGAIN. I WANT OUT." And I meant it, and I was pissed that it didn't happen. I don't know how long I sat there, not being able to see, just wanting to go home, but I got the message. Not able to see, just want to go home, beam me up now!

Such incredible discomfort. Discomfort I didn't even know existed, discomfort. Going home wasn't going to fix it. Going HOME would, but they wouldn't beam me up. So what is it that I am not able to see? Why do I want a do-over? Why do I want to go home so bad? Why am I so uncomfortable here that I want them to just beam me up?

When I finally got home and tried to share this experience with my husband, that going home wasn't going to fix the discomfort I was feeling, he heard that I didn't want to come to our home. Needless to say, reintegration into my life was just as discomforting as the trip itself. However, I received all of the gifts I had been searching, and more. If we don't learn from comfort, as my dear "teacher" often shares, I clearly had learned a lot on that trip. That which doesn't kill us.....