

How to Stay Happy When Your Godmother is Going Through Chemo

I've struggled to say what I wanted to say here. It isn't that I didn't know the words I wanted to use or the feeling I wanted to convey. It is more that I don't know if the things I've been feeling are able to connect with you the way I want them to.

See, I can say all the right things in all the right ways and it still might not make a difference to you. You simply don't have to give a damn if you don't want to.

That idea kills me inside.

I want to be here to help and I want to be here with you in any way you need it, I've always been that way. I've always just wanted to be enough. When I'm not, I get mad. It's been a habit of mine to drive people further away because I find that I'm not what they need. It's selfish and ludicrous behavior, I accept that.

I've been working on getting better. There's a devil on my doorstep still, but I won't let him get inside.

Since I was a little kid I've had this dream of being a big shot writer with a big shot house in a big shot neighborhood, and as I grew up I clung to that dream with ferocity. Dismantling anyone who sought to tell me that my dreams were not realistic. I surrounded myself with people who could encourage me and wish me well, and from those people I created a garden in my own mind which I hide within for security.

I grew up in a household with no siblings, only my mom and dad, and their friends. When I came to make my own, I realized that though we didn't always think the same and we didn't always see eye to eye, they supported me, and they hoped in me. Out of all those numerous seeds in my heart that have now grown into tall trees, I don't want to succeed for any of them more than for my Godmother.

I remember, it was the Fourth of July and my parents were out at a concert or comedy show and I was back home playing The Hobbit on my PS2. I started feeling that dark weight on my heart I've come to be so used to and it scared me. It terrified me. I suddenly recognized that at any moment, my parents could die. My friends could die.

Even I could die.

There is no limit to our flesh. We are pound for pound what we are within. There is no great scale that weighs the essence of man. At least not like we humans need to know where we are lacking. Our scales come in the form of honor and morality, and most importantly, kindness. I prayed that night for a scale that would show me where I weighed in life. I did then, likely for the first time, what I've grown to do every day now.

I reached out to my Godmother and wondered somewhere deep down if she was as scared about the world as I was then. It came out differently, just like it always does. Like, I assume, it always will.

I called her after conquering Sméagol, with a packet of Reese's chocolate chips in my lap and asked if she wanted to watch the fireworks. I told her that they were really cool from my house. I spoke as if I was fifteen years older than I was then and I just felt lonely. I wasn't 23, but I was lonely. Not because my parents were gone.

The loneliness I felt then was the same loneliness that hides beneath my skin every day, a loneliness and a fear that I can't put into words and when it comes down to me with terrible wings, I can hear them flapping in the dark sky, echoed behind the cannon blasts of Independence Day fireworks.

It was the first time I had come face to face with that horror that I can remember, and I was so scared. So I called my Godmother and asked if she wanted to come to visit. She hung up and a few minutes later after frequently peering through our blinds, she came knocking on the door. My parents had called and asked if everything was okay and it was, on the surface.

Somewhere deep in my heart, the water tension had broken and there was a storm brewing that is still raging to this day.

She knew, of course, that I didn't just want to invite her over for the sake of watching the fireworks. I was horrified that my life wouldn't pan out the way I wanted it to. She knew then, perhaps not definitely, that she needed to make sure I was okay.

I've come to find that sensation hundreds of thousands of times since. Over trivial things, and over terrible things. When I feel that within me, I reach out to others and ask if they're okay. I make it a point to support someone else, usually, one who I know is doing fine because that is the only way I know to be okay.

Reaching out to someone I love is the only way I know to keep that shakey handed vulture away from my family and my friends. It's the only defense I have against that terrible creeping fear and I don't think I've ever been honest with myself about it.

So when my mom told me that my Godmother was going through treatments ranging from prescriptions to Chemo for a disease they couldn't define, I turned back to that winged figure and stared it down for as long as I could.

Because she was there the first time I met him, and what she did for me that night, whether she knew it or not might have saved my life, because I've found times that were too dark for me to be in alone. I've fallen in holes that were too steep to climb out of without a rope. I've seen demons that to you, may have been nothing, but to me, could have ended it all if I would have let them speak.

But I didn't, and I don't. Because of my Godmother.

Because the Fourth of July is a great holiday, but a terrible reminder. Because I've had my heart mended and broken so many times that I don't know which parts of it are scar tissue and which parts of it are pumping blood anymore. There's a mix inside of me, and I know that somewhere along the line, on a sleepless night because I know one day my momma is going to die, or one day my dad is going to be too old to help me fix my truck or one day my cousin is going to be killed, I've seen demons that I can hardly believe.

But I am still here.

I am still a light as often as I can be.

When the doctors figured out my Godmother's medical issues, it wasn't cancer, which is what you immediately expect when you hear Chemo. It was something else entirely.

Her brain is burning up, and when my mom told me, I could see that vulture, his shaking hands and devastating claws reaching out to her, trying to take her like he is trying to take everyone else I love.

I'm much older now than I was back then, The Hobbit is still my favorite book, I still love the Fourth of July, and I am still so scared of that thing.

He comes around less now, but when he does, I still find myself in bed at night shaking, staring at him pruning his feathers.

But it's been a long time, and I've realized since then that all of those moments, all of those fears were just ways for me to learn to be a light myself. I will always be thankful for what she did for me that day, because she taught me that I could overcome that fear.

She's doing better now; her brain is under control and she is healing. I still think about it often. Her relationship with my mom, the stories of their friendship and their lives inspire me to live for something a little bit more important than I think I'm capable of.

I'm still that little boy sometimes, terrified of the fireworks exploding inside the hearts of my friends and family, but that vulture has taught me a lesson through my Godmother. Sometimes all it takes is a moment to understand, to listen to what isn't being said, and to drive across town to be with the little kid inside all of our loved ones, to reach out to that scared child. I've learned a lot since then, but more than anything else I've come to understand that no carrion beast is more powerful than we are. We are remarkable. We are intangible. We are beloved...

...And we are persistent, and if we love well, our love will be even more so.

Right here is where my mind is trying to catch my breath
To be honest, I don't know what to do.
It is a bit like life is a semi on the highway and I,

Am a stupid deer.
Or a jogger with half a lung and overwhelming fear
That the next mile I run will be off a cliff.
Impaled by a stag in the canyon.

Have you ever tried to use antlers as a snorkel?
Have you ever tried to use them as a bong?
I did both, but since I'm so afraid of drowning
If I'd have to choose, I'd choose some cartoons.
But cartoons aren't the same as they used to be.
When I was a kid and I watched Scooby Doo,
I could pinpoint all the clues in the show because they
Were different colors.
Just a brighter shade in the same hue that told me
"This will be important."
So when the gang found a box that was a tan amidst the
Dark brown backdrop it looked like the sun in the sky.
You are a different color too.
Like you are a clue.
A clue for my mother, for me.
A best friend. A song we sing.

When I first heard about the treatment it had been almost 800 days
since I last picked up my guitar.
I've written plenty of lyrics since, and It was the fourth of July.
Two of them had passed and I neither played guitar,
Or played the Hobbit.
I didn't eat potato chips and I didn't watch the fireworks.
I just laid in my room and stared at the ceiling, probably
Worried over some girl or some problem at my job
That I cared just a bit too much about.
I put my lips to the antlers and sucked air in.
it felt so good to have the smoke inside my chest.
I do remember, exactly how many I smoked when mom told me.
Nine. Just because of the news. I had others that day.
They didn't hit till I was lost within the forest, a birthday party.

It's interesting to me, how easily we can find the moments
That make us rethink almost everything.
I know that it isn't cancer, for you.
But what if it is cancer for me? Or mom?
My dad? What would I do if any of my friends woke up,
The claws of a fat vulture demon in their neck?
I had never thought of that before.
I just laid in the tent, staring at the ceiling,

Soaring. Remembering last time I felt that small, looking towards the sky.
to be honest, I'm lucky I'm still alive.

That's what reminds me.
Fire on the tongue of a deer I'm running from.
If the stag is right behind me, raven's wings + nightmares.
If I give up now, stop smiling, stop laughing, just to break apart
Because someone else has a disease,
How will I be worth a damned thing when they aren't home?
When I have to pick up the torch from the hospital waiting room
After the cigarettes and the liquor,
And the vulture and my fear finally find me, all alone.

If you'd consider supporting research for this disease I'd be extremely grateful.

<https://paxgravitas.com/2018/12/13/how-to-stay-happy-when-your-godmother-is-going-through-chemo/?fbclid=IwAR0Lxb3clgOdgiq8mo6-49GMhrLRLEBATGAhcO9LKBQcAOsMj7CAIqvFw-U>