

Facing a Holiday Without a Loved One

Grief is heavy today. It's awkward and cumbersome and frustrating and surprising. Weird that it's surprising, right? But it is, because so far the holiday season has been pretty much lovely. It's been fun to decorate and plan and shop and not worry about how Steve is or where we're at in the Shadowland. It hasn't been overly emotional or difficult and so maybe I thought I had moved into a new phase or something. Not "through it" or "over it" because I'm not yet convinced those phases exist, but maybe I thought I had moved into the "handling it" phase, like I had Olivia Pope'd my grief—all efficient and decisive and in control. Heh.

This side-road of sadness snuck up on me because last week was awesome. And Sunday was great. It was full of family and really fun. But Sunday night, I felt the clouds roll in, and I think I've identified the trigger point. I fear it's going to sound crazy when I tell you what it was, but I'm telling you anyway because then you can tell me I am, in fact, *not* crazy.

I started on the gift-wrapping, and it was going fine, until it came time to sign the tag. *To Josiah*. From ... my pen hung in the air for a long time until I found the courage to write it. *Love, Mom*. Just Mom. To Corey. From ... Bo. Just Bo. Seeing my name all alone on the card made me feel as alone as I have felt since Steve went home and it made my kids look truly and honestly fatherless for the first time ever.

And that's when the clouds rolled in, grey and weighty, with a suffocating kind of sadness. Usually they move in and out pretty quickly. This time, they've lingered longer than I'd like—through two nights and two mornings and three coffee meetings and two Christmas movies. Through driving and

shopping and still more gift-wrapping. I've fought it, but not very passionately. I've jabbed at the air a bit, but I don't think I've landed a real punch yet. Grief makes you tired, is the thing, and sort of wild-eyed so I feel my aim is off.

This morning, I woke up and my Year of Yes seemed not just impossible, but invisible. Impossible, I can do. I *like* impossible. The quickest way to get me moving is to tell me it can't be done. But invisible? Different story. Today I have felt sorrow-blind, widow-blind and, consequently, Yes-blind.

But here's what I know: I am following the One who can see in the dark. I am living in relationship with the Light of the Whole Wide World, and though this corner is blind, He sees the entire road. If I could see, I wouldn't need Him to lead. But I can't, so I do. I need Him. So much.

Because I have no other weapon to wield, I'm saying Yes to Day 143. The only day I can see. The only truth I know—that He is good and all He does is beautiful. He *will* be beautiful to me and in me and through me. Yes to that truth. Yes to light. Yes to life.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined (Is. 9:2).

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