

When You're Completely Helpless

Our bus arrived in Edinburgh on Sunday around noon on a breezy, sunny, altogether gorgeous autumn day, and I was up for adventure. Scotland was the third country on the long-awaited U.K. tour Chuck and I had been enjoying in honor of our 33rd wedding anniversary, and we were thrilled to be presented with a few free afternoon hours before a scheduled Scottish castle dinner at 6 o'clock. (Yep, I said *castle*! Woohoo!)

Chuck wanted to hit the sack for a catch-up nap after seven days of non-stop activity with our tour bus companions, but I was keen on exploring the ancient city. After all, our Scottish guide had said our hotel was only "a brisk walk" from bustling downtown Edinburgh.

I didn't want to waste a single minute. So after a brief check-in, I tossed my things into the hotel room and without more than a "See ya, honey!" I set off in the general direction in which the hotel clerk pointed.

Ah, the wonder of it all! I walked many miles, enjoying the sights and sounds of the enchanting, romantic place, marveling at the intriguing architecture, lovely Scottish accents, the cozy little coffee shop where J. K. Rowling painstakingly birthed Harry Potter, and the charming, heart-warming statue of Greyfriar's Bobby, the loyal little dog from the 1800s who had sat on the grave of his beloved master in Greyfriar's Abbey cemetery every single day for 14 years until his own death.

The congregation of Greyfriar's fed Bobby and tried to lure him to shelter during the frigid winters, but he'd steadfastly refused to leave his master's side.

Up to that point in my self-made tour, I had been keeping careful tabs of where I was in relation to where I'd been. But I had been so deep in thought about dear Bobby, I'd turned a corner or two unawares.

Uh oh. Where was I? It was then I realized that I'd left my cell phone back at the hotel. I had come away completely unprepared: no phone, no hotel name or address (we'd had a last-minute hotel substitution which I hadn't written down) and a lousy sense of direction. The emergency number for our tour guide (whose first name was all I knew) was safe in Chuck's phone back at the hotel, which he'd turned off because of killer overseas roaming charges.

I didn't know what to do. I was embarrassed at my air-headedness. I couldn't even ask a policeman for help; I didn't know where I was staying or whom to look for.

So I just kept walking. Walking and praying that at any moment I'd see something familiar that would give me a clue which direction to go. I hoofed it for nearly three hours, alone and lost in a bustling city, growing more frantic by the moment. I knew that if I didn't find my way soon, I'd be kissing my dreamy castle dinner farewell. It seemed as though I was walking in gigantic circles. Sure enough, by the third time I encountered wee Bobby's statue, I knew I was in trouble.

As I stood there staring at Bobby, internally wailing to Papa God in desperation and about to collapse to the curb in tears, I heard a woman's voice call out on the crowded street, "Hat girl! Oh, hat girl!"

Me? Could she mean me?

I touched the brim of my tweed newsman's cap and turned to find the smiling faces of a couple from our tour group who just happened to be passing by. With a map. And the name of our hotel.

In the midst of thousands of tourists traipsing the busy streets of the sprawling city, they'd somehow spotted me. They didn't know my name, but recognized me because of the hats I'd worn every day on the bus.

Despite my fatigue and blistered feet, I had to laugh. My heavenly Papa had used my hat fetish—a weird personal habit of mine which He knew as well as He knows all your silly personal quirks—to bail me out of a disaster of my own making. And it happened right in front of the statue of Bobby ... a tribute to faithfulness.

Luck? Nah. Coincidence? No way.

My Savior might as well have written across the sky with a giant black Sharpie, "I love you even when you botch it up, dear child. You are precious to me, quirks and all. Just like the extraordinary loyalty displayed by little Bobby here, I will *always* be faithful to you, even beyond death."

And in a nutshell that's what Papa God's unconditional love is: forever faithful. Even when we're a wee bit air-headed, He'll never, ever leave our sides. I'll bet my hat on it.

*Adapted from Too Loved to Be Lost, the latest release in Coty's Take On Life series. **Debora M. Coty** is a popular speaker, humorist and award-winning author of over 130 articles and 14 books, including Too Blessed to be Stressed and Too Loved to Be Lost. Coty can be found online at .*