

Written by Alyssa Bilotti on Aug 27, 2018:

A wise man once told me that change begets change. I didn't understand it at the time, and sometimes I still need to remind myself that change is how we grow and move forward, but boy was he right!

In the last year and half, I have experienced more change than I thought possible. In May of 2017, I came to the realization that my marriage wasn't going to work. It was something that took me a long time to fully realize and accept, but when I make a decision I tend to go full steam ahead and so I did. Within a month of making this decision, I had a new job lined up in another state, a new apartment, and a fresh start. I wanted to get to know people in my community, so I joined a dating/friend finder app. About two weeks after I arrived, I met a man named Lenny. We chatted and decided to go for a hike. It ended up being a 5 hour hike where we talked nonstop the whole time. We come from very different backgrounds but had so many things in common - it was a delight to find someone who communicated the same way I did. We started dating and it was such a happy feeling. He has a beautiful little boy who is 6 (he's divorced) and he is a wonderful father which was evident when the 3 of us spend time together. He came from a very broken home, with abusive parents and spent a number of years in foster care. Just after high school, he was arrested for being present at a crime and not reporting it. Due to the severity of the crime, he was charged with joint venture and served 15 years in prison. There is much more to his story but all of this is really just a bit of the background I wanted to share. His ex-wife is a troubled woman who suffers from bipolar disorder. In February, she turned our world upside down. On a Sunday morning, she showed up at my apartment in a rage. Lenny went downstairs to try to calm her while I stayed upstairs with their son. She attacked him the moment he opened the door and took his phone, screaming at the top of her lungs the whole time. He pushed her away from him to get back into the house and this part was witnessed by a neighbor who called the police. She had left with their son by the time the police showed up. When he tried to explain that she had attacked him, the officer told him that she would get arrested if he kept saying that. Since he didn't want to send her to jail and (in his mind, he knew he had a record & didn't want trouble), he said never mind – everything was fine. Of course, she didn't feel the same way. She said he assaulted her for no reason and the police returned and arrested him. He spent a month in jail until we were able to hire an attorney to get him released. Since then, we have been preparing for trial, and fighting to get visitation restored with his son (part of the charges included a restraining order preventing them from seeing each other).

Throughout all of this, I have had the unfailing support of my parents, and from so many of you with whom my mother shared our story. Every week at Mass, our names were included and prayers were offered for us. It's so incredibly special to know there are so many people with open minds and hearts. Below is the letter I had asked my mother to share with people who have been following what was going on and keeping us in their thoughts and prayers.

Monday we go to trial. Words I didn't think I would ever say in my lifetime. This last year has proven to be one of the most wonderful, happy, scary and difficult years of my life and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I certainly wish things happened differently but I've always been a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. To test us, to bring us closer together, to make us stronger. I would like to say "thank you, we've learned what needed to be learned so can we just be happy now?" Unfortunately, that does not get to be my decision. I'm hopeful the universe in all its wisdom will give us the outcome we hope for.

It's hard sometimes not to get stuck in the darkness of possibilities and to focus on enjoying the moment especially when it feels as though your life is in limbo. Some days are better than others. Some moments are really, really hard. I've learned to not sweat the small stuff, really, to cherish every moment, to not hold grudges, to let go, to compromise. I've learned to love in a way I never have before. I'm loved in a way I have never been loved before and these are all blessings. I've witnessed the beauty of love between father and son and have been privileged to share in it. I've witnessed the true kindness and support of strangers, friends and family who have big hearts and open minds. I am eternally grateful to have such amazing people in my life. I've also witnessed true selfishness of others in such a way I can't begin to understand because it just isn't within me to be that way. I just keep hoping that karma kicks in because for acts such as this to go unpunished in anyway, to have no lesson learned, seems cruel.

Monday, this man who I love could be vindicated - for the first time in his life, things might go the way they should, perhaps help to restore his faith in people and our country's judicial system. The lawyer is very confident that he can beat this which is always nice to hear, but hard to take comfort in when we've both witnessed just how unjust this system can be. I pray for a compassionate jury who is unbiased and can see what a troubled woman his ex-wife is and what a good man he is. I pray that now that I've found happiness, I get to keep it. I thank you for your continued hope, prayers and well wishes, they have meant and continue to mean so much to both of us. Fingers and toes and anything else that can be crossed, crossed. Thank you again!

Thankfully the outcome of the trial was Not Guilty!!

I can't begin to express the relief, gratitude and pure joy that I feel - that the jury was able to see the truth and that for once in his life the system worked for him instead of against him. While this was not what either of us would have chosen, what a unique opportunity we have been presented with to test the strength of our relationship. The next important date for us is September 25th, when we will go to probate court to try reinstate unsupervised visits between Lenny and his son. With the not guilty verdict, that shouldn't be any more than a formality, fingers crossed. What a joy to start to be able to look forward to the future again, to make plans, and enjoy life. Thank you so much for all your thoughts, prayers and good karma that came and continue to come our way.