

November 16, 2008

Halloween

What could be more exciting than Halloween on a Friday? Halloween on a Saturday, I suppose, with a full moon! Believe it or not, that will actually occur on Saturday, October 31, 2020. That'll be the Halloween of the millennium!

Although 2008 wasn't a once-in-a-lifetime event, I was looking forward to it for well over a year. This was my first Halloween as a San Franciscan, and last year's Halloween in Paris was non-existent. Somebody needs to teach those Frenchies how to dress up and party down!

My costume this year was pretty simple. Start with a pair of white overalls I bought two years ago. Add some work boots, a pair of socks, a paint brush or two, some body paint, and voila, I'm a painter. Why a painter? Because I was a farmer a few years ago, and the overalls were hot hot hot! If I remember correctly, I was quite popular that night.

I added a clever touch to the painter costume with a "My Name is Joe" nametag, tying the costume to political happenings (a la Joe Six Pack and Joe the Plumber). I was set for Halloween night with one week to go.

Hell Week

Little did I know that the hellish, ghoulish, ghastly holiday that is Halloween would engulf my reality for the week leading up to it.

On Friday, October 24, my boss summoned me into a conference room at 4:00 p.m. I had a bad feeling about it and said to him, "Please don't ruin my weekend." The weather was going to be gorgeous all weekend, and I just didn't want anything to muck it up. Well, muck it up he did. He informed me that they weren't able to keep me in the Budget office. I was losing my job when the economy was at its worst since the Great Depression! I was horrified. Did somebody cast a wicked, wretched Halloween curse upon me? [Moldy mildew, mother of mouthmuck, dangle and strangle to death!](#) (That's Aughra from The Dark Crystal, but you get the idea).

My boss told me that there was a job available in another division of the Controller's Office in the Contracts Unit. They would be willing to transfer me over if I got the job, which was rarely done for employees still on probation. I quickly ran up to Personnel to obtain more information about the interview process.

Victim of Bad Timing

Understanding that I possibly had only one week of work remaining, I immediately took action to stop unnecessary spending and secure my finances.

My first decision was to halt repair work on my car, which was in the shop about to get fixed. My car had failed the smog inspection way back in July. I had placed it in storage for two months until the State of California's Consumer Assistance Program was up-and-running again after the State's budget was approved. The program pays \$500 to repair a car or offers \$1,000 to buy it. In one of the most painful decisions I ever had to make, I decided to sell my beloved car of 21 years. It would be brought to a junkyard and dismantled. My stomach sunk.

I was so stressed out that I barely slept, and I could hardly eat a thing. Why can't I be one of those people that finds comfort in food? Why does everything have to kill my appetite?

Bad Things Happen in Threes

I should have been on guard, because they say bad things happen in threes. The next morning, I decided to check my e-mail. There it was... lurking, waiting... like the Grim Reaper suddenly appearing, reaching out and poking me in the eye with his bony finger of death.

"Hi Rick... I'm afraid I have some bad news." It was a dreaded break-up letter by e-mail, the worst kind. I knew my long-distance San Francisco-Toronto relationship would be challenging, but I wasn't quite expecting its demise this way. "I'm afraid of developing deeper feelings for you, only to be likely disappointed because of the realities of our situation... I care about you probably more than you realize... You're smart, articulate, sweet, sexy as hell, and just simply genuine. I couldn't ask for anything more. Having someone like you in my life was so close, yet so far."

It was a beautifully written letter, and I understood completely. Long distance relationships across national borders are very difficult. Too difficult. But it was the timing of the letter that made it so incredibly painful. Within 24 hours, I lost my job, gave up my car, and got dumped.

Needless to say, I was pretty devastated. In just a few days, I lost five pounds. That just made me feel even worse.

Luckily, I'm blessed with great friends and family and a positive disposition. I got my resume in order, started practicing for the upcoming interview, researched other jobs online, and began thinking about other possible career paths. It would be nice to get back into neighborhood revitalization again.

Halloween Day

On Halloween day, I learned they were keeping me at work for two more weeks until I found out about the other job for which I was applying. That put me in a better mood. I dressed up as the Grim Reaper for our Halloween costume contest. I thought my embodiment of death was wholly appropriate.

I went out to the Castro by myself that night, feeling quite sexy in my white overalls. I might have to start wear overalls more often than Halloween!

I bumped into a friend on the dance floor, and we decided to hang out. We eventually met another person, then another person, and the four of us were having a great time. Yes, I'm being EXTREMELY vague here, but I have to keep it family-friendly for potential employers that might be reading this. (Hi! I'm a very intelligent, dedicated, hard-working employee!)

Towards the end of the evening, I reached back into the pocket of my overalls to see if my wallet was there. I have a habit of doing that every so often just to make sure I wasn't... I wasn't... I WAS PICK-POCKETED!

In the middle of the dance floor, my friends and I started searching the floor to see if perhaps my wallet had fallen to the ground. It was a huge disturbance to everyone around us, but I didn't care. To my disappointment, there was no wallet. It was stolen.

With everything I had been through, would you believe I just started bawling right there on the dance floor. How humiliating is that? I left my friends and sulked in a corner until the bar closed, at which time I checked the dance floor one more time. No wallet.

I ending up losing \$20, my driver license, my debit card, and my November transit pass, but luckily not much else. I left everything else at home.

Bottom of the Curve

It truly was the week from hell. I guess bad things happen in fours, not threes. I hit the bottom of the curve, so things could only get better from here, right? I canceled my debit card and ordered a new one. I ordered a new driver license. I'll watch my credit report closely to make sure my identity is not stolen. Who would want to be me at this point, anyway?

My two interviews for the position in the Contracts Unit went very well. I did the best I could do, which made me happy.

On Friday, November 14, they gave me the news. I was SECOND in the interview process. D'Oh! Always a bridesmaid, never a bride. They'll offer me the job if the #1 person doesn't take it, which is always a possibility. The Deputy Controller also offered to help me find work in another department. She made a few phone calls on my behalf. I thought that was very kind. And she asked me to stay on board for another month while I look for work. That's very helpful. December 12 will be my last day.

I already have three resumes out for neighborhood revitalization work. I'm hoping something good comes through. Something that will make me productive and happy. Something where I can make a difference in the world. That's my real purpose.

As I learned during my time of self-exploration in Paris (psychological self-exploration, that is, not Halloween-in-overalls self-exploration), "Things happen. Make the best of it." Although it's not grammatically correct, I shall continue to live by those words.