

Together in any weather: an anniversary story



Our plan was to drop off the boys at their grandparents' house and head to Philadelphia so that Patrick and I could celebrate our 8th wedding anniversary. God had other plans.

It started with a phone call from my mother-in-law as we scrambled to leave the house; a storm was on its way. "She worries too much," Patrick said, as we shoved shoes on the boys. Before we even made it to the end of the street, a robo-call featuring the calm and pleasant voice of Harford County Emergency Manager Rick Ayers warned us of a Flash Flood threat. "We're headed to higher ground," I said. "We'll be fine." But, it was the ear-piercing squeal coming from my phone at the Dunkin' Donuts drive-thru that derailed us. This time, it was the Emergency Broadcast System alerting us to take shelter immediately. This was NOT a test.

We pulled under the awning at Home Depot and studied the radar on Patrick's phone as buckets of rain and rapid force winds attacked customers struggling to push their orange carts to the comfort of their vehicles. The worst part of the storm heading straight from Baltimore to Philadelphia...and here we were stuck directly in the middle. Would we make it?

I had been looking forward to our trip all day. In Philadelphia, there are several restaurants that offer incredible vegan food, like the Spaghetti Sandwich and Coconut Club at Memphis Taproom. (There's even a dairy-free dessert paradise called Little Baby's.) I'd already settled on a chocolate "ice cream" sandwich when the "change-of-plans" discussion started.

But, it was a conversation we had to have.

"It's going to be so late by the time we get there that the restaurant will be shutting down," Patrick said.

"We could go somewhere in Baltimore," I said.

“That’s just as far away.”

“True...Let’s try somewhere new,” I said, remembering that a place called Birroteca had just opened in Bel Air. By this point, the storm had passed, so it was safe to drop off the boys and head out on our “recalculated” adventure.

I decided to scope out the place first. I dashed into the restaurant wearing a hot pink rain jacket and turquoise paisley rain boots. Before I even finished asking the Birroteca hostess with the bright brown eyes if they had anything vegan on the menu, she ran to the chef and came back with a list of specialties he’d be happy to prepare for me, most of which featured vegetables grown right here in Harford County.

Patrick and I came back in shortly, with me wearing a cute black and white dress and black sandals. “How did you change so quickly?” the hostess asked.

“It’s an old Audrey Hepburn trick,” I told her. She sat us at a table right near a poster for Hepburn’s romantic movie “Roman Holiday,” which co-starred Gregory Peck, one of my favorite actors. (Sometimes he reminds me of Patrick.)

My “Locovore” brick oven pizza loaded with asparagus, garlic, blistered tomatoes and arugula was delicious, but sitting next to my favorite person in the world as he enjoyed his shrimp risotto was even better. And we were only fifteen minutes from home.

The best part of the meal (other than being together) was our funny red-headed waitress who talked to us about her three grown boys, one of whom came by to tell her to check out the sky, which she, in turn, pointed out to us. The rain and wind had stopped, but the sky was saturated in a rapidly changing show of colors from gold to burnt orange to mauve to lavender. There had to be a rainbow somewhere nearby. Even if we couldn’t see it, we knew that God was near and that he always keeps his promises.

We thought we wanted something, but forces outside of our control threatened our plans. We didn’t get angry about it. We thought through it, made a change, and found happiness right where we were.

This is just a silly story about being forced to change dinner plans, but Patrick and I try to handle every obstacle we face in the same way. From financial crises to household chores to discipline to medical emergencies, when problems happen, we work together to solve them. Maybe that's one reason why we're still married after 8 years.