

'Ritas & Rants

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Thursday, March 24, 2011

Jessica

"Courage is simply the willingness to be afraid and act anyway." **Dr. Robert Anthony**

"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." **Christopher Reeve**

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." **Ambrose Redmoon**

"The hero is one who kindles a great light in the world, who sets up blazing torches in the dark streets of life for men to see by." **Felix Adler**

JESSICA

Tell me your story. My heart loves to write, and to write with purpose is even more fulfilling. It has always been at the back of my mind to write people's stories, to share those stories with the world. This will be my first attempt at doing just that. When you go to buy a car you don't expect to have some spiritual revelation, or to hear a tragic story, well most people probably don't. You go to buy your car, plunk down your money, weasel the salesman who is weaseling you and hope for a decent interest rate. I admit that when I walked onto the sales lot of Sisk Auto Mall that is exactly what my intentions were. I was on guard that day, a few days ago I had visited another car lot and the salesman there had nearly shoved a car down my throat. So my plan here was to hop out of my car, check price tags, hop back in, and drive like hell before the salesman even had time to reach me.

That plan failed. I did hop out of my car, and did try to see the price tags, but none were present. I could see the salesman approaching. I decided to try to head off any inquiries by telling him I was paying by way of POA. This usually slowed the sales people down, though admittedly not much. Mr. Moore introduced himself, and told me that a POA was no problem, dang it! I admit I was harsh on him at first, my last experience so firmly entrenched in my mind that I was refusing to give him an inch. I asked the prices of the three vehicles I was looking at and then asked about warranties. Mr. Moore answered my questions in this calm peaceful voice, so that when he asked if I would like to take a test drive, I agreed without really thinking about it. His tone and manner had disarmed me. There was stillness about him that I liked. He wasn't trying to throw a car at me and he appeared to be listening to what I was saying. Shocking, I know. He retrieved the keys in a timely manner, which was fortunate because I forgot my coat and it was drizzling out. A true gentleman, he actually offered me his coat at one point in the conversation.

Of the test drive of the vehicle there isn't much to tell. I loved it the first time I slid into it. Mr. Moore just sat peacefully in the seat next to me, commenting on the weather. He asked how the vehicle felt, and beyond that he was quiet. I really, really, liked that. It gave me a chance to feel the vehicle, rather than dodge salesman quotes from the bible of the car salesman. In fact, I brought up questions about purchasing the vehicle, and his only question was, when would I like to buy? My answer was, today would be good. It was on returning to the car lot that things began to unfold. We had to wait for the finance guy (isn't that always the case?), and so Mr. Moore filled the time by asking me if I liked fishing, horseback riding or hunting (yes to the first two, no to the third). He showed me a picture of his little daughter with her horse. The two looked like best friends. I said as much to Mr.

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Moore who laughed and said yes, it was Chandler and Dixie against the world. He said that his daughter had made him promise that if anything ever happened to her that he would not sell her precious Dixie.

I was surprised that a nine year old would be concerned that something would happen to her. At first I was concerned that she might be sick, or someone she knew was sick. The only other explanation that I could think of was that something tragic had occurred in her young life, that made her keenly aware that life is altogether too short. Curious, I asked Mr. Moore about it. My friend Mardi has taught me the importance of asking questions. Mr. Moore told me that there had in fact been a tragedy in their family, quite recently too. Turning back to his computer, he carefully typed in the words Seton Hall Shooting, and I was introduced to Jessica.

Jessica Ann Moore. Her pictures are beautiful, her story one of the most tragic I have come in personal contact with. It is one thing to hear of a school shooting, it is quite another to sit across a desk from a father who lost what no father should bear to lose. I vaguely recalled hearing about the Seton Hall shooting, but like most things that are not in direct contact with our lives I shook my head at the loss, gave a silent prayer for the family, and moved on with my life. Today that story came back full force and I sat in stunned silence as I listened to Jessica's story. The list of Jessica's accomplishments is amazing. Jessica had recorded two singles, co-founded a program called Drop Out to Degree, her college goal was to become a psychologist to help assist soldiers returning from war. Jessica graduated from high school with honors and was an honor student at Seton Hall University. The list of her accomplishments goes on and on. Her greatest accomplishment, however, was her final act.

On September 25th 2010, Jessica was attending a fraternity party. A man attempted to come into the party, however he was denied entry. The man returned later that same evening, gun in hand. The suspect began shooting into the crowd and proceeded to shoot Jessica's friend in the face. The man continued firing and in an act of bravery and courage, without hesitation, Jessica threw herself over her injured friend. She was shot in the back of the head and killed. Jessica died at age 19.

As Mr. Moore gave me the details of the story, showing me pictures of his daughter and sorting through news stories I was consumed by the need to share this story. It moved me in a way that I didn't understand, nor did I care if I understood. I simply wanted as many people to know Jessica as possible. To know about her accomplishments, to know of her bravery, to know that she had given everything in service to another.

Mr. Moore told me that in a strange series of events Jessica's headstone was being replaced. At first I thought someone must have damaged it, but I was wrong. The money for the headstone had been paid, but a few weeks later when someone went to check on the progress of the stone they found nothing but an empty building with a lock on the door. Thankfully, Virginia Burial Company (I believe that was the name of the company) reviewed Jessica's story and is generously replacing the headstone at no cost to the family.

After he had finished telling me Jessica's story, I asked Mr. Moore if I could have permission to write about it. He said that would be fine. Mr. Moore told me that they had made t-shirts with Jessica's picture on it. At his home, the t-shirt is folded up in a chair, in Jessica's chair. Though Jessica may have left us too soon, we are blessed with her memory and the examples that she left for us to follow. To me, Jessica is a beacon of courage and unconditional love. I am truly blessed to have been honored with her story. For those of you out there who are wondering, and hoping, yes Jessica's friend survived. Thank you, Jessica, God Bless You!

[Links to Learn about Jessica](#)

<http://www.jessicaannmoore.com/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6eDuSF5F8> One of Jessica's singles "I Cry"

<http://www.dropouttodegree.org>

Posted by Sara at 10:00 AM 0 comments

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About Me



Sara

I have been writing since I could pick up a pen. I love writing and I love sharing. Putting

this blog together has really opened me up, and helped me to share what was previously being stuffed into a drawer. I am currently working on a book about my spiritual experiences, and the experiences of my friends and co-workers, while working at a metaphysical store for the last four years. My intention is to help people understand spirituality and themselves. Of course, I get to grow and learn along the way so bonus there!

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Thursday, April 28, 2011

The Genre of Truth

Tasty Tidbit #1: Life

At exactly 5:01pm on Friday, April 22, 2011, Jaylin Avery Faulkner decided to join us on the physical plane. By my calculations she was one minute late, but that was just because I had a bet on when she would be born. I felt honored to be at the hospital when she was born. In a twist of irony, I had been on post earlier that day talking to my doctor about different methods (i.e. pills and shots) to prevent such a miracle from occurring in my life, at least in the immediate future. Though not related by blood, I feel very much a part of the Spencer, Feliciano, Fetter, Faulkner, family. Which is soon to be the Spencer, Feliciano, Faulkner, Adams family. I was as excited and proud of baby Jaylin coming into the world as if she was my own niece. My first look at her told me she was beautiful, (thank God she wasn't a troll baby; it makes things so awkward when they are). The grandmothers and great grandmothers, I think there were two greats I was a little confused on that, all got a turn holding the baby. My limited baby experience always leaves me feeling wary when little ones are about, but not being a blood relation or grandmother of any sort I didn't think I had anything to worry about. That is until someone, I think it was Teresa, asked me if I wanted to hold Jaylin. Being the Gemini that I am, my mind split off in a hundred different directions and questions, all at once of course. I'll just give you the abridged version. One, yes I desperately wanted to hold that little bundle of joy, lack of experience or no. Two, I didn't want to be selfish by taking away time from the actual family. Three, yes I really wanted to hold her. Four, I was terrified at the prospect of holding her; I wasn't even sure how to hold her. I had tidbits of information rolling through my head about supporting the neck, but don't touch the top of their heads. It was getting messy in my over thinking mind.

The wanting outweighed everything else in the end and after a slightly tense moment for me, during the transfer of baby Jaylin from a grandmother to me, I stood rather dumbfounded looking at this little miracle. I looked down at her feeling so proud of that little girl I thought my heart would bust on me. Good thing we were already in a hospital. I was equally humbled by the fact that I was allowed to hold her on such an important and sacred day as her birth. I looked down at that little life and welcomed her into the world. After a brief time, the nurse was headed back to the room and I relinquished Jaylin back into the care of her momma.

A few days later, Teresa told me she had something for me. She handed me a picture. Had I known a picture was being taken I would have felt very self-conscious and worried that I was holding Jaylin wrong or something along those lines, but I didn't know. Instead I got a photo of me, smiling down on baby Jaylin as I held her in my arms. A moment to be treasured. I think it might be the best present I've ever received.

The Genre of Truth

Sometimes life is just a bitch. To be honest, since we're going that direction, that's not how I originally intended to start this blog, but what the hell. When I first started college, people used to ask me two general questions. What is your major? What do you plan to do when you are finished? Once I got answers to those questions, or at least good approximations of answers, and settled into an English major, and decided that my chosen profession would be that of a writer I started getting a slightly different set of questions. What is your major? What do you write? When I set about explaining what I wrote, which was a difficult task at best, I usually got this follow up question, can you make money at that? Oh, sorry didn't realize that was the end goal. I thought I was writing because I loved

to write and I'm good at it. I also got a couple helpful suggestions; my favorite was from a fellow student who is also a writer and a damn good one as far as I'm concerned. He told me that I should focus on being a teacher or professor and just do my writing on the side, which was his plan. I guess from an economical standpoint that does make more sense. From a creative aspect it's stifling to the point of suffocation. I realize that you need money to live, pay bills and all that jazz, but I don't like putting the focus on that. I don't want money to be the reason that I do anything, especially writing. I'm practical enough to know that I need a job; however I am also smart enough to know that if I place my writing on the back burner that's exactly where it will stay. So I decided, mostly with the birth of this blog, that my writing needed to come forward, as in all the way.

When people ask me what I do, I tell them I am a writer. When I bought my car and heard Jessica's story, I told Mr. Moore, "I am a writer, may I have permission to share Jessica's story." Being a writer is no different than being a retail clerk, or a phone operator, I know because I've been both. It's a job, a career, something I have to work at every day. What drives me to the point of insanity, or at least it did for a long time was that second question everyone asked me, what do you write? At first it drove me crazy because I wasn't really writing. I wanted to write, I felt the hunger to write, but I couldn't drag myself to the desk to do the actual writing. I was road blocking myself with passivity. I love one of the dictionaries definitions for passive, 3. *Not working or operating*. Yep, sounds like me. I was stuck in that tar pit of wanting to write, but not sure how to make myself do it. When friends suggested that I do this blog things started to roll. At moments they seem to roll along much smoother than others. I am actually writing, I have a deadline each week to meet, and amazingly enough I am making that deadline, though occasionally cutting it close.

One Sunday, I got together with a woman who works at our shop who is also a writer. She has had several works published and is working on a book, probably as I write this blog. As we sat in the coffee shop,(and I have to ask this, why do artistic people always hang out in coffee shops, is that like required or something?), we discussed some ideas she had at the moment for stories. Then she asked me the question, what exactly do I write? As usual, I floundered around for a minute, and then said I write everything. She laughed and said "have pen will write," yeah basically. We spent a couple hours talking about writing, ideas and other artistic stuff and then parted ways. I enjoyed my time and got a lot of good information, but something was nagging me. I knew it while I was still at the coffee shop, but it grew once I was home. It didn't take long to realize it was the question, that damn question, that was driving me nuts. Truth be told it was driving me into a funk. The fact that I didn't have a solid answer bothered me. I felt I should be able to say, I'm a fiction writer, or a blog writer, or something! Shouldn't I know what I write? I should know what my genre is, but I didn't. The fact that I didn't, left me feeling like an idiot.

I funk'd around for a couple of days, and to those who are wondering yes funk'd is a word. I finally decided that spiritual intervention was needed. There was an exercise on one of my online writing courses about talking with your soul. It was basically an exercise in just writing for five minutes non-stop, the only difference was that at the beginning you ask your soul what it wants. I was feeling blue, and not particularly optimistic about the exercise, but I did the damn thing anyway. Would it be boring to say I was surprised, because I was. Turns out my soul just wants me to write. Don't worry about genre, don't worry about answer other people's questions, just write. That's the short version at least. I decided since that exercise was successful to try a second one. This one you just write a question and then wait for an answer, writing down the first thing that pops in your head without censoring it. I decided it would be fun to include the conversation between myself and well, myself.

Me: What do I write about?

I write whatever my soul whispers to me.

Me: That is a beautiful and somewhat fluffy answer.

I let the story write itself. I just hold the pen to the page, God does everything else.

Me: Better, still fluffy though.

I like the fluff. Stop trying to be logical. It's not going to work.

Me: But what do I write? What is my genre?

Your genre is Truth.

Needless to say I was a bit taken aback by that answer. Who ever heard of the genre of truth? Is there an agent for that? I don't know, but I do know my truth when I hear it. I felt the burden of trying to cram myself into a mold lift off of me. I had been attempting to limit myself, and my soul had given me permission to write whatever I needed to write. I had permission to write my truth.

Posted by Sara at 9:39 AM 1 comments

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