

The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

3rd February, 2009

I'M SICK... I'M NOT DYING OR DEAD, SO STOP STARING AT ME LIKE THAT!

DEAR DIARY, I bumped into an old friend of mine in Pizza Express on Saturday. Brenda and me met at circuit training class when we were about 19 and we ended up becoming friends and as luck would have it, she moved in two doors away from me so she also became my neighbour for about three years. Her boyfriend was a DJ and her brother was an A&R Man at BMG Records so we spent a lot of our time raving & recovering with bouts of Circuit Training in between. You can punish your body like that when you're young and fresh!

Brenda needed to keep fit as a choreographer and I was doing circuit training because I was hell bent on owning a bikini body in readiness for my holiday in Barbados. I had a photograph of Tyra Banks sticky-taped to my bedroom mirror and the only thing that kept me going in circuit training was the thought of having a body just like Tyra's. But as they say, youth is wasted on the young because I achieved my Tyra Banks body, but I was so self conscious back then about showing off my near naked hot body, I covered myself up with a sarong for most of my holiday. I practically wrapped it from head to toe like some sort of mummified silly cow! Now that my body's all soft and mushy, I'd commit murder to be able to strip down and parade myself wearing nothing but a bikini but the bikini body's all but died a death of cellulite, child-birth and stretch-marks now – it's my body's way of telling you the story of my life which I'd rather keep a secret.



Anyway, me and Brenda hugged and kissed and squeezed each other in the middle of Pizza Express. She looked fabulous; I've always thought she was beautiful, but on this occasion, she was literally glowing. Brenda had just returned from a three week vacation in Jamaica as she needed a break because she's been diagnosed with a debilitating illness. She didn't say what it was initially but I had to pry so I asked her what her illness was. It turns out that Brenda has been diagnosed with epilepsy.

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I asked her how it came about and I was more shocked by what triggered it off than the condition itself.

I remember about 15 years ago; a lot of the females in my life, including Brenda were beginning to settle down and were getting married and starting families and making lives with their respective partners. Back then I became a struggling and unhappy single mother with two children under two and felt very depressed, so when I received a wedding invitation to Brenda's wedding, I cried and they were not tears of joy. I was happy for Brenda because she met and was about to marry a walking, talking, handsome dream man who worshipped the ground Brenda walked on, but I was more than sad for myself. I felt left on the shelf and unloved and knew that I was destined to life as an unwanted woman with two children. So when Brenda told me that her husband lost his temper about a year ago and beat her to the point of her being concussed, I couldn't believe my fricking ears.

She said she remembers the beating like it was yesterday. Apparently, Chris developed (or hid) a fiery temper and a sewer mouth, but when he attacked her, it was the first and the last time he put his violent hands on her. But unfortunately, he left is cowardly mark – the beating was so severe that he's left her with epileptic fits for rest of her life.

Do you know what she said to me right after that explanation? She said it's not the end of the world!

I was riveted to the spot by her tranquillity. I remember how close to tears I was when I told someone that my chocolate cheesecake was stolen from the fridge at work; I was choking on the words so when Brenda calmly said to me, it's OK, I'm getting used to it now, I was looking at her like she was a sticky green alien who had just stepped off a spaceship from planet Zog!

She said OK, her driver's licence has been revoked, but now she gets free travel! She also said it's been difficult coping as a very active woman with a young family to support. She said she's not worked for 8 months but her intention is find employment that fits in with her new life. She said it's actually brought her family closer together and her children have been incredibly mature and attentive to her needs. She said she's met some wonderful people at her support group and now has a new found respect for people working in the medical field. In fact, her daughter wants to be a doctor specialising in neurology.

I couldn't help staring at Brenda with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat but I could sense that if I looked at her with pity for five more seconds, she was going to slap me upside my head and tell me to pull myself together. I gained my composure right on time and

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stopped the head shaking and hugging and hand-holding in time to talk about her holiday, our children and changing the way we look at things so that the things we look at change.

I started to lean towards the “pity look” again when I found Brenda staring at me with a look of don’t you dare feel sorry for me and I quickly pulled myself together for the second time.

She said she spent months crying and asking “why me?” and wallowing in self-pity so by the time we talked, she had passed the stage of God, please come and grab me off this cruel earth and kill me. She had stopped the daily expressions of grief and the pure undiluted hate for her ex-husband because it was causing her more harm than good.

I’m going to bed tonight with a new attitude - for some reason, seeing Brenda has really moved me. Our meeting again has really touched something deep down in my soul.

August Mayfield