

Waiting for Yes

By Patricia Crisafulli

It happens when you least expect it, popping up like a jack-in-the box with its mix of surprise and a tinge of trepidation, that what you'd thought might happen, could happen, is suddenly here.

I'm talking about "yes."

From writers with manuscripts to job-seekers with resumes and students applying for admission to college, and in every opportunity and occupation, in between, we all wait for the affirmative reply, especially the one that has eluded us for so long we keep a chair warm for rejection. Can't be, won't be, never will be... we repeat, over and over, putting out negative thoughts and unpleasant vibrations even though we know that we have to stay positive and optimistic. Oh, but who can walk around like a magnet attracting every jinx (even though we say we don't believe in such nonsense), and so we guard our hearts and shield our heads from the inevitable upset. If you expect nothing, you won't be disappointed, my mother used to say. She was right, of course, but who wants to live like that?

You have to hope for the yes.

I had my own yes recently, a fulfillment of one item on my long wish list: I became a featured blogger on Huffington Post. For months, I couldn't get anyone to tell me to drop dead,

go away, and stop bothering me kid. Then finally a connection clicked into place, serendipity personified, and voila on the Huff Post was I.

My yes had come with gratitude toward my sister, Jeannie, who wouldn't let me give up no matter how many times my email queries went unheeded. I had a partner in my quest for yes, one who was willing to join me in scaling the brick wall that wouldn't budge from my path until it finally did. Now, of course, I have to keep it up with stories and anecdotes that appeal and inspire, humbly thinking always of the reader first and not of myself; hoping to distinguish myself on a platform of writers and contributors with far bigger credentials and better-known names.

On days when I'm intimidated by the task, I go back to the word that first set me on the path, the "yes" that opened a door in that wall, big enough to let me through. I focus on the yes, and do my best. In the end, it is all any of us can do.

When the year is new and possibilities take root, we become more inclined to stretch our thinking and consider what might be if we gave our plans some air to breathe and our dreams the room to grow. Of course, in the territory where hope abounds also lives its shadow side of disappointment. Here is the no, whose voice is so much louder and more frequently heard. The reply is so familiar we listen most keenly for it.

An old saying tells us that God never answers a prayer with the word "no." Rather, the reply is either "not yet" or "I have something better." In the midst of our no's, though, we do not hear those meanings, and so we sit with the pain of what we fear is not to be. But what if instead of hearing no, we found encouragement to keep trying, to refine and develop, or to take a detour in another even more promising direction? How quickly would we shift from disappointment back to hope, seeing it all as another twist in the plot, like a story that keeps us absorbed?

On a flight back from California recently, I met a young man whose dream had ended soon after he gave it a first try. Practicality and financial reality sent him back to Chicago to regroup and figure out the next step. “Of course that’s what happened,” I advised him. “Every creative person goes through this experience - it’s part of the process.”

He looked at me with a mixture of curiosity and disbelief, liking the sound of my words but not exactly embracing their meaning, because the disappointment was too fresh. “Think of this as the story you’ll tell one day when you do make it,” I continued. “Then think of how grateful you’ll be for your success because you know what it’s like to fail.”

I didn’t tell him the rest, because I knew he’d figure it out on his own; that early disappointments are necessary to build resilience and stamina for the road ahead, when the pitch steepens and the terrain becomes pitted with rocks and holes that impede forward progress. That’s when we try but never seem to make much progress from base camp, and the summit looms so high above us we know we’ll never make it.

Maybe it doesn’t matter. The view from, say, five thousand or eight thousand feet probably isn’t too bad, even if you don’t ever make it to fifteen thousand or twenty thousand, or however high your dream of “up” might take you. If you only try you’ll at least move from where you are, from the parking lot at the trailhead to the start of the trek.

All you can do is go from one yes to another, staying as hopeful and optimistic as you can, while nursing the wounds caused by the no’s along the way, trying to hear the encouragement in the rejection of “not yet, something better, have patience...”

One of these days, the yes will come, with all its unexpected glory. Do not despair. It’s coming, sooner than you think. Have faith, embrace hope.

