Writing the Wrong

After the Party

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I am staring at the carnage left in my kitchen from a party my husband and I threw on Saturday. Glasses, half empty cans of coke, and dishes piled in the sink. Normally I would have looked at that and started sobbing immediately, since we do not have household help to pick up after us here in Connecticut but this morning I look at it as evidence of me living life fully. Enjoying my friends, whom I am not going to see for a long time because I am moving to Dhaka for seven months (the longest I have ever stayed there is three weeks), and connecting with what makes me happy.

It is now Monday morning and four of our friends decided that they were going to stay and push on through. One of them is grinning at me right now as she sips green tea. We sat all Sunday on the back porch of our house and looked at the trees that are changing colour and not once did we mention Sarah Palin, John McCain's seemingly frozen cheeks, or the fact that more and more Americans are facing the prospect of living under a bridge.

In California, an Indian man shot himself after killing his entire family including his Fulbright scholar son. He was in finance. He lived in a gated community, in a McMansion. There was an SUV in the driveway. The Desi-American dream. More and more people are hurtling themselves out of the window so to speak, but again we did not talk about that. The only non-desi on the deck was my husband and he is almost Bangali by default. He and the rest of us, three Bangladeshis, a Pakistani and an Indian all sat around and talked about our dreams. Both literal and figurative, but real dreams, not ones that involve money, material gain or recognition. As the sun set, we lit a fire and told ghost stories -- well djinn stories -- there were a whole bunch of Muslims on that deck and the lone Hindu got creeped out and tried to leave but we made him stay. Like there are no wacky beings made of fire in Hindu mythology, thank you very much!

We were kids again, talking about the stuff that scares us, and thrills us, giving weight to our sense of wonder, surrendering to it as Rumi advised us to do. As each person shared their story (and everyone had one), I looked around at the others who were listening and I saw very clearly the child who is in all of us. It was magical, truly. I did not have to meditate that morning-well I couldn't because almost every space in my house was occupied, including my meditation space which someone specifically requested to sleep in my entire day was one long meditation, on friendship, on love on endings and beginnings, childhood and off-colour jokes said at the most inappropriate moments (when an actual child is in the room and will then go back and repeat the joke to a rapt group of fourth graders and I receive a stern note from the teacher in his backpack, sigh), raucous laughter and teasing.

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Most of us at some point, talked about our parents and how much we honour them. Our parents would be very surprised to know just how much of what they taught us has rubbed off. Everyone shared their dreams some very secret ones that they were shy to share but then just blurted out and it was such a beautiful thing. Because no one laughed at them. Our dreams and aspirations are what keep us moving forward and people who deny them -well I got one word: Hitler. A frustrated Austrian painter, who didn't keep applying to that art school or pushing his craft and boom! Six million Jews gone and WWII. Okay, it's gross oversimplification but I have seen what happens to people with no sense of purpose, who stifle their dreams, and who then lead lives that only indulge their insecurities and narcissism. It isn't pretty!

What we all gleaned is that people need to inspire one another and that is what is sorely lacking in most of our lives. And we spent the whole day doing that, encouraging each other to push ourselves and talking about how Bangladesh is a perfect place to attempt to inspire or be inspired. Though I was also warned about the red tape one can become entwined in and the fish bowl social atmosphere that leaves too much room for conjecture and gossip and can be distracting if not downright destructive.

"Tune it all out," I was advised by a Dhaka veteran. "Pick the people who will inspire you and whom you inspire and stay away from all others."

But they also talked about how the room for outstanding collaboration was huge. And that takes me to my main point here. Collaboration, community and building those relationships are key to one's happiness. Souls coming together for a common positive purpose is the most powerful force on earth. That is why, of course, who you choose as your running mate (and I mean this metaphorically) is imperative. Lately I have been researching various musical collaborations, and it has been eye