

Happily ever after endings

By Ruth Ostrow

AN old girlfriend of mine used to obsess about travelling abroad. She was lonely, desperate to meet a man, and believed that the only way to find someone special was to be in an exotic location.

Rather than spend money buying clothes and going on dates, she saved her pennies for a long overseas trip. She hoped the money would last several years and worked double shifts to accrue the funds.

Finally she was off. We waved her goodbye, envious of her incredible journey, which began in the Swiss Alps and took her through Europe and then on to the rest of the world.

During the first week we got a phone call. She had fallen while skiing and had broken both legs badly. She was carted off to hospital where it was predicted she'd be interned for many months, and much of her savings would go to rehabilitation.

Those who spoke to her said that the word distraught was too polite a term for her state.

To cut a long story short, a few days after her accident, they put a fellow victim in the bed beside her. Amazingly, he had a similar story. He was also from an English-speaking country, was also on the journey of his life and had also broken his legs in a skiing accident. Furthermore, he had the same profession as she did and was about the same age.

Within months they were married and now live together in some exotic location, very happily at last report.

Similarly, I heard a story recently of another friend who was called back unexpectedly from the trip of a lifetime. She was very upset that she'd lost the value of the ticket, which had cost her her new car - so she went into a newsagency and bought a Tattsлото ticket to cheer herself up. The ticket won serious money.

These are two true stories that I was privy to and can be validated by mutual friends. I have left out the details to protect the privacy of the parties involved. I was reminded of these two stories the other day when listening to a rabbi tell the parable of a poor farmer whose only horse ran away. Everyone in the village thought it was a terrible thing.

"Let's see," said the farmer, and the horse came back with a female and they had many offspring.

Then the farmer's only son was riding the horse, fell and broke his leg and couldn't help his dad in the fields, and everyone thought it was a terrible thing. "Let's see," said the farmer. Then war broke out and his son was saved from fighting and certain death. And so it goes.

"There is always more to the story than we know," the rabbi smiled when he finished the long tale. "And everything that happens is perfect."

I am thinking of these stories today because I'm trying to apply these very profound teachings to a particularly shallow situation - with not much luck. I'm having an outdoor party and the weather has been very unpredictable. I'm fretting as the sky turns nasty and threatens the safety of my best furniture, the food and musical instruments I've scattered around the garden.

"Nimbus clouds?" I ponder to my husband, who became a virtual meteorologist with me when we once did a renovation that required absolutely no rain. We lost a year of our lives in three days, waiting by the radio, trying to catch the weather reports, chasing builders who'd gone missing as storm clouds gathered overhead. Today I have similarly gone loopy, driving up a friend's hill to see if I can see what's happening on the horizon as the dark clouds gather, and analysing the sky as if the Meaning of Life were written up there. But even as I ascend the hill I'm aware that weather-watching is ludicrous. Because we never do know the full story.

Like a friend's outdoor wedding I went to recently. It poured. Violent rain. Yet crammed into a small indoor space the guests grew very intimate and it was fabulous fun. Several people fell in the mud, one woman set her dress on fire trying to warm herself. But we all laughed hysterically and had a ball.

We don't know what's in store for us as we gaze up at the sky desperately trying to predict the unpredictable. Worrying, pointlessly. Wanting to know the denouement and hoping only for good things.

Out of bad weather can come love, Tattsлото wins, great sex and greater parties. "Let's see," I say to myself as I continue planning to entertain under a precarious sky. And I trust that whatever happens will be - as the rabbi says - perfect.

www.ruthostrow.com

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