



SHAUN PROULX

SPIRIT & THE CITY

Turning lemons into lemontinis

When life is yippee skippy, refreshing passion is easy. But what about when life blows up?

Last summer a blog post I wrote about Caitlyn Jenner at the apex of her *Vanity Fair* cover popularity went viral. Not the misused "viral," this went global. My point — that Jenner was beautiful without heaping pandering questionable descriptors atop her — was widely misunderstood, which I own. In the ten days that followed, thousands of well-meaning people awed by Jenner from as far away as Europe wrote missives and social media posts to and about me — "I hope you die of AIDS; you're actual human garbage" — while many of Toronto's LGBT community, to which I've been a part of and contributed to for over two decades, publicly turned against me. I was labelled transphobic, misogynistic. A community leader said I should censor myself. Some demanded my radio show be cancelled, that I be fired, and others threatened me, my then-husband and my dog with violence and death. Through this experience, people I wrongly called friends were AWOL.

We've all had Caitlyn experiences. Life shell shocks us when we least expect; cocktails are poured before lunch. Everyone has taken hits that left us with spinning heads, broken hearts, tied tongues, gasping; you and I both know the sick feeling in our solar plexus that comes from being brutally misunderstood, confused, hurt, or under attack. It can feel too much to bear, and at best it's about "refresh my vodka," not passion. So what do you do? When you're sick with worry, when you feel betrayed, consumed with deep fear, when you don't know how to even stand: what do you do? Most will answer: fight back, dial up determination, roll up sleeves, throw money, try harder.

That only works when life is yippee skippy. If you want to be in a place better than you are, and if where you are is heinous, can you get to heaven from hell? You can't. So what's the one thing you can do?

Your only option is to say and know and believe this:

"It's all right where I am."

Where you are has got to be OK. You've got to make where you are the right place before you can get anywhere you prefer more.

It's inevitable problems ease, solutions come, clarity flows. But when you're asking for ease, solutions, and clarity after any upset, your emphasis is on struggle, problems and confusion. So the struggle, problems and confusion have to be all right. Present yourself with dialogue that matches that. When the Jenner debacle happened, my script was Fisher-Price simple: "It's all right. I'm doing good. It's all right."

Simple yet true, and true for you right now as you read this. It's all right that you are getting better at who you are, at what you do; it's all right that things are not where you

want them to be. It's all right that your days fluctuate. It's all right that today asks things of you, and that tomorrow will too. It's all right that you have a routine unfolding before you today. It's all right that you have things that people are expecting from you, that there are things to do. It's all right.

When you acknowledge it's all right, what you really say is: No action is required of me right now. (I didn't respond to any of the hate I received, I did nothing but binge on Schiff's Creek.)

Because once you know it's all right, that there's nothing you need to do to justify, to improve or change, what you're really stating is that you're good. That natural well-being is yours because you're worthy. That there isn't anything you need to prove or defend that.

When life blows up, it's all right. You've got it. Well-being is yours — it's who you are. And then notice how quickly storms pass, revealing genius ideas and clarity. Your passion is ready to be refreshed, with everything around you all right, even yippee skippy. Proof: I was booked later that summer to introduce Jenner at Roy Thomson Hall.

It's all right. Alright?

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