

Sometimes I Wake Up GRUMPY ...

and Sometimes
I Let Him Sleep

KAREN SCALF LINAMEN

 Revell
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Just between Friends

I don't know about you, but I for one had all these amazing ideas growing up.

I thought that my life was going to be simple and perfect, just one Kodak moment after another.

I figured I would keep house like Donna Reed, raise my kids like Harriet Nelson, and wear the same dress size as Jane Wyatt.

I used to think life was going to be a bed of roses .-.-. a piece of cake .-.-. a walk in the park. Of course, what I didn't figure on, way back then, was that roses have thorns, cakes have calories, and a walk in the park increases your odds of stepping in doggie doo-doo.

Now wouldn't it be nice if I were the only woman on the face of the earth who had been surprised by the fact that life has turned out differently than she expected? Wouldn't it be great if I were the only woman since Eve who had experienced a gap, a rift, a chasm between happily-ever-after dreams and desires .-.-. and reality?

But my guess is that you know what it feels like to have life fall short of your expectations and end up filled with more stress or crisis or pain than you had originally planned!

It's enough to make you grumpy, isn't it?

Maybe you can relate with a few of my disillusionments with life:

I was naïve enough to believe my husband when he said it would eventually be my turn to hold the TV remote.

I thought "self-cleaning" ovens actually cleaned themselves. (Actually, I was kind of hoping that, if I asked nicely, mine might even do a couple loads of laundry at the same time.)

I figured women were just making up that stuff about men always forgetting to put the toilet seat back down.

I just assumed my kids would be close in age, like my sisters and I were; I certainly never expected to find myself shopping for a training bra and a diaper pail on the same trip to Target.

I thought when they said "one size fits all," they meant it.

I believed "happily ever after" was some sort of unwritten guarantee, like death and taxes. Phrases like "stress management" or "emotional pain" or "depression" simply were not supposed to be part of my vocabulary.

Fairy Tales

I don't know about you, but I used to think I was the only woman in the world who wasn't living a fairy-tale life. I actually bought into all the picture-perfect facades and masks that people wore around me.

Now I know better.

Even the Bible tells us that there's nothing new under the sun, no problem we face that isn't common to humankind.

We're all in the same boat, ladies.

In fact, let me tell you about three friends of mine. Like you and me, they've learned a few things about life. Among other things, they've learned that life isn't always a bed of roses .-.-. that the human spirit is far more resilient than any of us ever wanted to experience firsthand .-.-. and that the phrase "And they lived happily ever after" is actually a long-forgotten medieval punchline that, translated, means, "And, boy—ha ha!—are they in for the surprise of their lives!"

These friends look picture-perfect on the outside. But they know as well as anyone else that life is filled with ups and downs, cheers and tears, triumph and tragedy.

I'm talking about three women we know and love. Their names? Cinderella, Snow White, and Rapunzel.

Don't look so surprised. Sure, you and I remember the regal settings. We remember the handsome princes who saved the day. We remember how the kiss of true love changed everything. We remember the magic and the romance and the happy endings.

And yet .-..

Cinderella came from a family so dysfunctional, they'd make guests on the Jerry Springer show seem like the Waltons in comparison.

Snow White lived with a man dubbed "Grumpy" by those who knew him best.

And Rapunzel *couldn't* have had a very good sex life! I'm guessing that, after letting her two-hundred-pound lover hang from her tresses as he scaled the tower wall, she wasn't kidding when she shook her head and said, "Not tonight, dear, I have a headache."

My point is, not even the fairy-tale Queens lived fairy-tale lives. Bottom line, these gals had problems, too.

You don't believe me? Just think about the adjustments they had to make living with their handsome heroes. Can't you just hear these women a few months after the honeymoon?

“Why can’t you ever put your socks in the hamper? Who do you think you are, royalty or something?”

“What do you mean just because I didn’t give you a son you get to have sex with our nubile young chambermaid?”

“If you think I’m going to stand by while you marry our adolescent daughter off to the eighty-seven-year-old king of Brumania just so you get access to half his fleet, well, you’d better think again, buster!”

Whether our address is Anytown, USA, or page sixty-seven of *Tales from the Brothers Grimm*, when daily stresses, unmet expectations, and broken dreams leave us feeling bruised and wounded, life doesn’t feel like a fairy tale, does it?

So what do we do about it? How can we cope? When we’re stressed or hurting, can we find healthy ways to rediscover joy? In our relationships with our men, parents, friends, and children, can we learn to laugh and love without losing ourselves in the process? Can we seize the best and forgive the rest?

The truth is, life is filled with bedlam and blessings. It is both blemished and beautiful.

Can we find the inner strength to embrace it all?

Cappuccino Confessions

Not long ago, several friends and I decided we were overdue for a “Girls’ Night Out.” We had a great time eating Mexican food, going to a movie, and then chatting in a coffeehouse over mocha cappuccinos.

We found ourselves talking about the days we wake up grumpy (and about the days *that* particular honor belongs to our husbands or kids!). We talked about life in general and emotional crises in particular. And among the four of us, we pretty much covered it all: daily stresses, broken dreams, unexpected disappointments, and unforgiven hurts.

All too soon, the coffeehouse lights flickered off and back on, and we realized we were the last customers in the small cafe. The college student running the place turned the key in the front door, then nodded to us on her way back toward the kitchen. "Don't rush," she said. "You're welcome to stay till I'm done cleaning up." We accepted her generous offer, lingering another forty-five minutes over cold coffee and intimate confessions.

The conversation shifted as we went from sharing problems to pondering solutions. We talked about how each one of us might not only escape the chains of stress, disappointments, and past hurts but go on to .-.-.

experience true healing,
entertain new hope,
encounter fresh passion, and
embrace vibrant joy.

You and I may not be able to chat over cappuccinos, but we *can* enjoy some encouraging girltalk through the pages of this book. I've always said that when girlfriends get together, it's time well spent if they've managed to laugh, cry, and eat chocolate.

I'll take care of the laughter and the tears.
You bring the chocolate.