

Have you ever heard of Lucy Kaplansky? She is a singer-songwriter in New York with a Ph.D. in psychology.



Kaplansky writes great lyrics and has a voice a bit like Nanci Griffith, if you are familiar with her. At my request, Lauren, my eldest niece and my 2008 Secret Santa, bought Kaplansky's album *Ten Year Night* for me. On it is a song called *One Good Reason* and the chorus lyrics are:

There's a line I've crossed somewhere
I left the best of me back there
Never thought I'd end up here
Guess all the best things disappear.

The song is about some guy waking up, reaching for a whiskey bottle, and watching his gal walk out of the door. He can't think of one good reason to give her to stay.

I like how Lucy sings these lines. There is finality to time and a soulful remorse for what is lost. At one time in my life, I felt like this. Lost. Alone. Even now, if you are anything like me, you wonder if you haven't left "the best of me back there." Feelings like this can grow roots in our aging. Just the other day, some guy on a movie I was watching said that once you turned fifty, you most certainly say goodbye to youth. Once a week, as I struggle to do pushups and sit-ups, I see a foreign woman in the mirror looking back at me, and I get it. I've crossed a couple of lines somewhere and a few of them have landed on my face, but I know I did not leave "the best of me back there." In fact, I believe my best is still ahead.

Where I do agree with Lucy is that I "never thought I'd end up here." Beaufort, and her pearl necklace of islands strung together by liquid strands of rivers and tidal creeks, is a far cry from the hilly streets of Pittsburgh where I grew up, or the flat prairies of Illinois where I last resided. All of the best things are appearing here. My husband wanted to live in the South and here we are. My mom made huge changes, and now lives three miles down the road. A year and a half ago on the twenty-sixth of December, our beagle Toby crawled out of the darkness and into my life. I have a roof and a few live oaks over my head, a job, and I just spent my morning watching the sun rise over the Atlantic Ocean. The best things have not disappeared.

About seven years ago, I found myself in the Arizona desert walking a labyrinth. There was a stone at the center of the circular path with the word 'clarity' etched on it. Whether I was supposed to remove the smooth, glassy rock or not, I did. I believed it was left there for me to find. I had not given that word or the quest it implied much thought before that walk, and now I understand that clarity has outlined the borders of my path ever since, slowly illuminating my way, whether or not I have been aware of the guidance.

One month ago, I found myself inside the same labyrinth, and this time, there was a large rock in the middle of the huge circle in the shape of a heart. I stood quietly in the middle of the maze made of stones, pebbles and dirt and looked out into the desert hills. This time, the word 'balance' whispered into the dry, hot breeze and met my receptive ears. I agree that this is my

new quest; to achieve balance between family, work, dreams, spirit, and body. Easier said than done. I am as blind to how I can accomplish this delicate balance as I was to the circumstances that would clear my way to this lowcountry.

Recently, I have been visiting a man with cancer. In our few encounters, we have shared intimate exchanges on the subjects of fear, sickness, and the loneliness of dying. With another friend, I had a conversation about growth, finding purpose, and the struggle to follow our calling, and how to do so inside the challenges of tending to our relationships and the practical and economic necessities of life. All around these human encounters, there is water... there are red-tailed hawks, red ripened tomatoes, deer, crabs, the slow glide of pelicans, palmettos, live oaks, juicy peaches, wood storks, osprey, lavender-red crepe myrtles, squirrels and bunting, cresting dolphin, and afternoon thunder showers.

I love Lucy, but I have to change her lyrics around a bit to suit my circumstances.

There's a line I've crossed somewhere
I left the worst of me back there.
Never thought I'd end up here
Guess all the best things do appear.

Now, I have to find time, and make her my friend in the finite landscape of my life. I have to work toward balance. If I can cross over that line, and live inside that new border, more of the best things will be visible. I believe that.