



Blythe (right) and her cousin Meagan, in Miami in December

The Best Medicine

THE TWO EVENTS WERE AT OPPOSITE ends on the spectrum of life.

My cousin Bradley, who grew up down the street, was experiencing the greatest day of his life. A football fan who played in high school and college, and now an employee of the Seattle Seahawks, it was his dream come true as he attended the Super Bowl, and days later, rode atop the Seahawks' bus in the victory parade in downtown Seattle. In his own words, "Favorite team, favorite band (Red Hot Chili Peppers) and we are World Champs!!! God, you have blessed me beyond my wildest dreams. Greatest sports day of my career and life!!" I was so happy for him and all I could do was smile

That same day, 3,200 miles across the country, another of my cousins, Meagan, who is only six months younger than me, was enduring yet another stay in a Miami hospital. The news from the doctors was not what we wanted to hear, and our hearts break for her, and for our entire family. I sat atop the counter in my mom's kitchen after getting the update, tears prickling and finally spilling over the brims of my eyes and down my cheeks. I was so sad for us all, and all I could do was cry.

It doesn't seem like the scales of life should be able to tip to such extreme highs and lows at one time. That life can, simultaneously, be so amazing for one person while so fleeting and precious for another doesn't settle well.

In December, I flew down to Miami to spend time with Meagan. I love being around my cousins as I always

feel like I am with "my people" when we're together. We have the same sense of humor, laugh at the same things, and have a witty banter that others can't enter into or understand.

Though our time was often spent at appointments at the hospital, we were able to fit such fun and joy into our time together. In the pockets of time when Meagan was feeling well, we milked it for all it was worth. We went to the nail salon, drove along Ocean Drive, drove through Fisher Island, dipped our toes in the warm Atlantic Ocean, walked along the beach and sat in the park, watching dogs run and play while we sipped the Miami must-have, an AC Icee's lemon drink. We even made it to the BB&T Arena for the Donny & Marie Osmond Christmas Concert. The lights came up, the music burst forth, and there they were, "a little bit country and a little bit rock n' roll" themselves, microphones in hand, belting out the tunes as they sashayed down the curving stage steps meeting in the middle. It was as cheesy, cornball and fabulous as we hoped, and we loved it.

The next day, after a morning spent at the hospital, we headed toward the port of Miami for a boat tour of Biscayne Bay. After purchasing our tickets, we waited for the boat at "Let's Make a Daiquiri," the outdoor daiquiri bar (pictured at left) that has been there for 30 years. Armed with our drinks in our hand and sunglasses on our heads, we boarded the boat and sat back to relax. As the boat cut through the water, carried upon the waves, we looked out over the edge. "It feels so good," Meagan said of the sun shining on her face. "I am so happy to be here, to be able to experience this."

That's classic Meagan. She is amazing, beautiful, smart and funny. She's finished the Washington D.C. Marathon as well as the Boston Marathon, and a 40-mile bike ride is what she calls a warm-up. But her greatest trait is her attitude. In every situation that I can remember, she always faces it with a positive attitude, and a quick joke is peppered in there at some point. She knows how to find the beauty in things.

The year after I graduated from college and moved back to Spokane, Meagan was finishing up her senior year at Whitworth. She would come to our house for dinner every Sunday night, and it was always filled with laughter – even the night my dad backed into her parked car, or the time it took three hours for the wild rice to cook, and we all waited at the table, weakened with starvation and laughter.

As I think about those times, it is hard to reconcile those great memories with what Meagan is now facing. It's even more difficult because, through it all, she is still the one laughing, cracking the jokes and making us feel better. Maybe this is because she has figured it out; there are joyful times and heart-wrenching times in each life – the Super Bowl highs and the hospital lows – and it is not so much whether they come, but how you face them and embrace them when they do.

Life is so precious. Appreciate and be grateful for the people with whom you have been blessed! Having them in your life may indeed be the best medicine there is. I'm so thankful for you and love you Meagan!

Blythe