

Clare's Diary

1 September 2010

Wednesday

Today the reality that I will soon be homeward bound kicks in. Although I will certainly miss the buzz of living in such a diverse, fast paced city as London, moving home to Athy feels like the best thing to do at this point. Both my family and I have been so overwhelmed by all the support and kindness of our community in Kildare; I have received hundreds of cards from friends old and new and people have been so generous. On a practical level I have so much to organise over the next few weeks including how to get my things home; I am surprised by all the stuff I have managed to accumulate over my years in London! At work, I am surprised by a dozen red roses and a lovely card from my long-suffering boyfriend James; it means so much to me that I have made him proud.

Thursday

I am in constant contact with Valerie in the Festival office in Tralee. Every time a new email from her pings into my inbox I feel excited by the prospect of what it might bring. Already my diary for October is filling up quickly with all sorts of events ranging from a wedding fair at the Carlton Abbey Hotel in Athy, to a fundraising evening for Breast Cancer Aware in Adare Manor. I am delighted to receive an email from Caroline, the manager of the C Spa in the Carlton Abbey, Athy. She very generously offers me gym membership for the year and a treatment the next time I am home. If the amount I ate when I was in Tralee is anything to go by I will certainly need the gym membership! It's a pretty tough decision trying to decide which treatment to have; their brochure lists a wide range but I eventually settle on the dry floatation which promises to make me feel like I have had six hours sleep-a miracle worker it seems!

Friday

I am thrilled to learn that I am going to be working closely with the Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland (CFAI) over the next year. Cystic Fibrosis is a debilitating disease which affects the glands and damages vital organs and Irish people are more likely to develop this genetic condition than any other population in the world. The CFAI is a well established charity that increases awareness of the disease and supports people living with it. Both my parents and I have worked with a number of patients with CF over the years so I really am looking forward to getting involved with the great work the CFAI do. In the evening I meet up with my London pals who watched the selection night online. Libby and El admit to shedding a tear when I won which touches my heart. We natter away for hours about what the next year will bring us all; one has bought a house, two are getting married, another is off to volunteer in India and I of course will be a Rose!

Saturday

My sitting room now resembles a florist and every morning I wake up to the gorgeous scent of fresh flowers, I could definitely get used to this malarkey! I go for a run and ponder on getting myself a fancy dress outfit for the half marathon, one with a large head to cover my humiliation if it takes me 4 hours

to complete...I find it difficult to project myself twelve months into the future when I am no longer the Rose of Tralee but force myself to as the applications forms for next years intake of Clinical Psychology students are out and I need to get started on mine. In the evening we get to see The Trials of Frankie Flynn, a London Irish Theatre Production written by Peter Hammond, a very talented playwright who also happens to be the Director of the London Irish Centre. We are in stitches laughing at this comedy about the life and times of this hilarious Dublin character and now we cannot wait for the next instalment!

Sunday

I huff and puff my way around Clapham Common again this morning although it is a beautiful morning and I am glad to be out in the fresh air. On the way home I pop in to visit El, my friend who has just bought a house. We have a chat and a cup of tea before I run home to pack. Today I am travelling up to Leeds where I am on training with work for the next couple of days. I arrive in the early evening and have a very relaxing time with a big bath, some nail varnish, a giant bar of chocolate and my book.

Monday

News of my leaving has spread around those that I work with and Gemma, who is from Belfast and is one of the trainers today becomes very excited when she realises why! We have a long chat about what the next year could bring and she takes a picture on her phone to show to her family as she says they won't believe her otherwise! In the evening I catch up with a couple of friends, one of whom, Ailsa, is my oldest friend in all the world. She and I first met in Leeds aged 1 and we have managed to keep in contact ever since. We don't get to catch up often so when we do it is epic. Her very patient fiancé Mark, listens to us as we chatter excitedly over dinner.

Tuesday

I return to London from Leeds today after another day's training, using the journey back to write a few thank you notes that have been playing on my conscience for the last fortnight. I am saddened to learn that Sr. Helen Keegan, my principal in secondary school has died, she was lovely woman who will be missed in Athy. Mum calls to tell me that the infamous horse has arrived! Grayface, as she is now named, is happily trundling around the paddock. She hasn't told Dad yet and for the second time I am outing her to the nation. But if anyone is looking for a horse, you know who to contact...