

Dear Hats for Hope Friends,

It is not often in life when we are recognized for a job well done. Good deeds seemingly go unnoticed without receiving the appropriate gratitude or merit. It is with that in mind, that I send you this note of thanks on behalf of someone who I have grown to love.

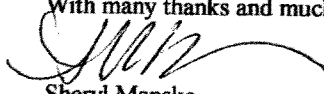
I first met Nicole when she came into my shop looking for a wig to cover the ravages of her chemotherapy. Nicole, at that time, was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. She had lost all of her hair but she proudly sported a Harley Davidson baseball cap on top of her bald head. Hats for Hope coupon in hand, we tried on wigs for several hours that day. Every mannequin in the shop was bald by the end of the afternoon. She is a proud woman with a stronghold of an exterior, with one exception, her unbelievable hazel eyes. It is said that the eyes are the seat of the soul and those eyes had a story of immense proportion and truly a story that had just begun. Needless to say, we didn't find the perfect wig that first day and she wanted to bring her boyfriend in for his opinion. Suffice to say, that women feel most beautiful in the eyes of their beloved, and his opinion was paramount to her decision making process.

A few days later, she returned with a mountain of a man. His presence in my dainty little shop seemed much like the proverbial bull in the china store analogy. He quietly took a seat, and lovingly watched as Nicole tried on numerous wigs. He was very decisive in what he wanted to see her in. He had a picture in his truck of what she looked like before she became ill and that was the look he wanted to see again. When we finally stumbled on the right wig, his heart melted and all of us could tell that we had gotten it right. During the course of that day, Nicole began to share her story. A story of neglect, sadness and bad choices. A story of salvation, rebirth and a love that she had waited a lifetime for. In those amazing eyes I saw a passion and wisdom so deep and a love for women like herself, who were lost. Nicole had an entourage of young women that respected and admired her. She had a different woman-child with her each time she came to the shop. It was through these visits that I began to see her impact in our community. She looked forward to getting well, getting married and continuing her legacy of philanthropy.

Nicole continued to visit me over the course of the next few months, so her recent arrival in my shop was nothing unusual except for the change in her eyes. A new sadness existed that had never been there before. As I held her in my arms, she told me that her breast cancer had returned and metastatic tumors had been found in her brain. The doctors predicted that she had between 4 and 12 weeks to live. With her unyielding triumphant spirit, she explained that her boyfriend had asked her to marry him and that she would need a special wig for her wedding. So with Hats for Hope coupon in hand for the second time, we shopped. It is an uncanny experience to discuss both a wedding and a funeral in the same afternoon, especially with someone who you have grown to deeply love. I am forever changed from that day. She has blessed me with a renewed sense of gratitude for what I really have. She has given me a gift that I can never repay and as I have promised, I will visit her where her ashes will be spread, so that I can continue to do "good" work for her.

This life experience was brought about by the generosity and kindness of the Hats for Hope organization. I hope that this testimony will assist you in describing the positive impact you have made in so many lives. Sometimes it is not just the patient who receives the greatest gift through each generous act, it's the many people in those patients lives that are touched as well. A daughter driven to tears because her mother looks beautiful, a son who can look at his mom and forget for a moment that she is ill. A lover, whose sense of passion is renewed by getting a glimpse of the untainted past, and me, who in gratitude, gets to walk this journey with many.

With many thanks and much gratitude,

  
Sheryl Manske  
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