**Cover Letter/My Story**

*“It’s no trick for talented people to be interesting. But it’s a*gift*to be interested — interested in big problems, interested in the talents and struggles of your colleagues, interested in the enduring mission of the enterprise and in new ways of bringing that mission to life.” – Randy Nelson, former Dean of Pixar University.*

For the longest time, I was adamant. I wasn’t coming back. And why would I? I lived in Chicago, a city whose passion and vitality I had come to love. I was blocks away from Wrigley Field, my favorite place on Earth.

My job in entertainment PR took me to glamourous places, introduced me to colorful characters and rolled out the red carpet, quite literally, for me to practice my craft at star-studded events. I even won a few fancy awards and met some childhood heroes along the way. I imagine the intersection on the Venn diagram of people who have eaten breakfast with both Will Ferrell and Bozo the Clown is a rather exclusive group. If nothing else, I was always a hit when I came home, because I had good stories.

And yet, I longed for more. Champagne and buttered popcorn alone couldn’t satiate my ambitious streak. Sure, in Chicago, I always had a story to tell. But amid the aggressive and often self-interested Chicago landscape, my story often felt more like a footnote. I wanted to write my own narrative, but at the same time, I wanted my narrative to be part of a larger one; something bigger than myself. I didn’t need to find myself, I needed to lose myself.

But where? As I sat down with my family, we considered many different cities. Nashville? I’m more rock and roll than country. Madison? As if Chicago wasn’t cold enough? Des Moines? Does Adventureland have a PR department?

But wait. The more we researched Des Moines, the more attractive it became. When we made the decision to leave Iowa nearly 15 years prior, Des Moines hadn’t even been a consideration; although that had more to do with my stubborn insistence to go somewhere outside of our comfort zone and to challenge ourselves to experience new things. But as we grew older, our priorities changed. And so did Des Moines.

In Des Moines, we discovered a city full of vibrancy, creativity and collaboration. Both the city and the people are accessible. Functional yet aspirational. Emerging and inclusive.

Having grown up in Iowa, I was acutely aware that our people are our best export; but what struck me about Des Moines was the sense of authenticity. A sense of authenticity that permeates every touch point, from the authentic people who are comfortable in their own skin to authentic tenderloins (expected) and authentic Ecuadorian food (delightfully surprising).

In short, Des Moines was the perfect place to lose myself in. Where my story could be part of this larger story.

Skip ahead a chapter or two and I currently work for a fantastic company where my growth has been spurred by never saying no to an opportunity (or challenge) and unearthing skillsets that I didn’t even know I had by surrounding myself with talented people who I’m eager to learn from. Did you know I’m (allegedly) a good public speaker? I still have my doubts, but after (again, allegedly) nailing a couple of keynote speeches, it’s become my thing. And I embrace it, in part because I’ve learned to embrace the mantra of “we is bigger than me”. Leadership is about service and about the mission to serve.

Two years into my journey here in Des Moines, and I’m still navigating that mission, figuring out where and how my talents are best deployed. Over the past year, that mission has involved a lot of late night diaper duty, but going forward, there is no shortage of things, big and small, that I want to accomplish: from applying to the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute for 2018 and getting on more civic boards to opening a gourmet tenderloin shop/craft beer hall and lobbying for a year-round Des Moines public market. And in Des Moines, a city whose renaissance has been fueled by collaboration, I’m confident that there’s no such thing as Mission: Impossible.

Make no mistake, I’m not applying for the Forty Under 40 award to add a line to my resume or collect another award for the mantle. I’m doing this to be part of the larger narrative and to be part of something bigger than myself. And to say yes to another challenge.

Win or lose, my story is just getting started.

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