

CHAD

One of my favorite summers was the summer of 2016. I road tripped out West with my cousin, Amy. We left from California and ventured all the way to Nebraska and back. We saw amazingly beautiful parts of the United States. Perhaps the best part of our adventure was Utah. We stayed with a friend right in Zion National Park, and there was but the tiniest of moments that happened during our stay that still haunts me, and to this day, shapes some of my decisions.

At the time, I was devastatingly single and trying desperately to make a relationship work with a guy, who in hindsight, had zero real interest in me. I would call him daily on my road trip to giddily relay my latest adventures and what I was learning about life along the way. Sharing my intimate thoughts about my daily occurrences is my currency of love. The key to my soul. So here I am, sitting on a dirt road, idly toying with the fine red sand of Utah, with the sprawling backdrop of the Kolob Terrace, when my host's neighbor, Chad, interrupted my phone conversation to invite me to go swimming in the nearby river. I politely declined, and he continued ambling towards the river simply with his dog, Callie, and a towel.

What I declined was an opportunity to quite literally jump in and experience life. Real life. Right then and there. For a one-sided phone conversation with a man that did not value me. I am positive Chad has never thought of that moment since, but I can tell you that I remind myself of that moment probably more than I'd like to admit.

Later that night, when I was laying on a cool, wooden bench in Springdale, Utah, I looked up at the stars, and vowed to myself. I vowed that I would never not suck life in when given the opportunity. I vowed to make a change. To stop living in the ghosts of a phone conversation and allow the heartbeat of life to thump within me. I firmly believe that this memory is etched on my heart as a gentle reminder to always opt to swim in the river rather than sit in the sand.

To this day, I can't say I have always chosen the river, but I will say, more times than not, I have. And that's what Chad gave me that day--an invitation to swim the current of Life.