

Thursday, July 3, 2003 – 4:14 a.m.

Once again, I find myself up at 4 a.m. unable to sleep because of the many thoughts racing through my mind. It's been almost two weeks since my last journal entry, and so much as gone on in my world I'm not sure where to begin. I haven't written any entries mostly because it has been all I could do to make it through these days. I'm not sure whether the fact I'm HIV-positive has just begun to sink in or because we're under the Cancer sun, but controlling and understanding my emotions has not been an easy task. Part of me was very glad that I was back working again. At least when I'm at work, all I have to do is focus on my guests. I don't have to think about the fact that I can't pay my bills or that my phone should have been cut off today (but thankfully wasn't), or that all but one of my credit cards were past due and now today, I received another stack of bills to sort through.

I had already decided that bankruptcy was the best decision for me. I didn't need the stress of worrying about my accumulated debt month after month. But the perfectionist in me still found it hard to accept defeat. I had pulled out of rough times before, but could I do it again? More importantly, did I want to go through another attempt to try? All I do know is I feel like I have failed myself. I've been waiting so long for a miracle to come, and yet all I seemed to be attracting was obstacle after obstacle. All the while asking myself why? The last week and a half has been the hardest I've experienced in some time. I was even having thoughts of giving up, even though I knew that wasn't an option I would allow myself to take. I suppose all the heartaches and disappointments I've dealt with over the past six years have been to prepare me for this challenging period. I knew, even if just on an instinctive level, that all of this was for a reason, even if I didn't currently understand it. Still, each day I found myself questioning my ability to get through this. I have been constantly feeding myself with positive motivation: listening to my hypnosis CD's every night before bed, reading my self-help books, and talking to other poz guys online. I think I'm having more trouble accepting my financial defeat than I am with being HIV-positive. I had worked so hard to get where I was, but the debt I had accrued was more than anyone should have to handle. Despite all of my resources, nothing seemed to be able to console my spirit. I saw this whole situation as though I was in the middle of raging flood waters, rising up around me over the past several years. Being the trooper I am, I kept climbing the stairs as the water level raised. But now, the flood waters had completely enveloped my house and I was left holding onto a mere tree branch praying that someone would see me from above and throw down a life preserver. As stubborn as I am to do things on my own, my one free hand was waving for anyone to help. Even in the middle of these flood waters, which kept rushing past me, I was somehow able to count my blessings for all that I had. "There are people worse off than me," I kept reminding myself. On Tuesday, I was given a perfect example. After spending some time at my cousin Jackie's, swimming in her pool, I stopped at the 7-11 to get something to drink. I only had a dollar in my wallet and the spare change in my car, so I counted it all and thought to myself that it had gotten pretty bad that I was now reduced to counting change to buy a hot dog and drink. After I bought my hot dog, chips, and Super Big Gulp, I went back to my car where I started to eat. As I looked in my rear-view mirror, I saw a man digging through the dumpster

beside the 7-11. I watched him digging, my heart immediately going to him as I began to think of how I could help him. Just then, he jumped inside the dumpster (I guess to have better luck at finding food). I kept watching him and could see boxes and other things moving inside. After I finished eating my hot dog, I counted what change I had left, \$1.20, and drove my car over to where he was. He was getting out and onto his bike as I got out of my car to hand him the change. I felt bad that I didn't have more to give him, but figured he needed it more than me. To my surprise, when I held my hand out to give the piercing-blue-eyed-stranger what money I had, as he took off on his bike he said, "No Thanks!" I said to myself, "I guess he doesn't want my help." As my mom always used to say, "At least my heart was in the right place."