



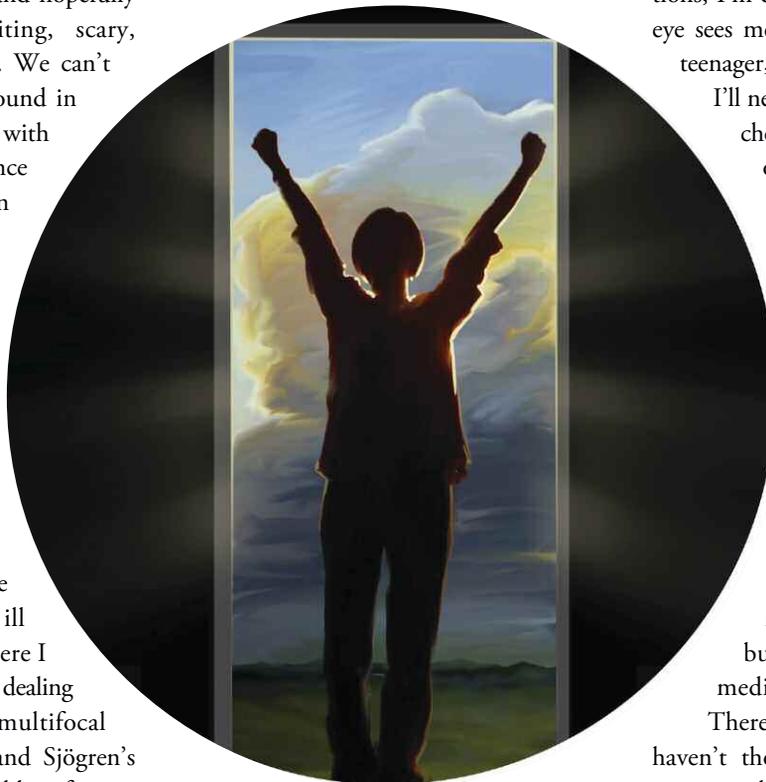
Moving Day in So Many Ways

By Stacy Oliver

AS I WRITE this, I am sitting in the midst of a mountain of boxes, bare walls and floors, and am clutching a to-do list that rivals the length of Santa’s list right before the holidays. My husband and I are moving into our first (and hopefully forever) home. It’s exciting, scary, thrilling and nerve-racking. We can’t wait for our dog to run around in her own yard, but dealing with contractors is a new experience worthy of being a sitcom on television. We are blessed to be in a situation to finally see this dream come true. However, there’s a twinge of fear and anxiety for me with this particular move. I’m packing up not only my possessions, but my feelings and health issues as well. I’m leaving the place we lived when I first became ill and was diagnosed, and where I have spent the last seven years dealing with the challenges of multifocal motor neuropathy, lupus and Sjögren’s syndrome and getting monthly infusions of intravenous immune globulin (IVIG).

When I moved in my 20s and 30s, it was a breeze. I was young, everything I owned fit in a van, and I zipped about living where I wanted. As I got older and married, our “stuff” grew, in a good way, but it was time to hire movers. (Friends don’t find beer and pizza a reward for back problems after helping you lift heavy objects.) Even through those decades, I was a moving machine. I could unpack the house in an entire weekend after moving in. I had energy without end. Then, like a needle scratching across

a record as it was playing, it all stopped. All my autoimmune and neurological illnesses make me feel like I have a leash on my energy. I’m yanked into submission



by fatigue or neuropathic problems with my hands and legs. I am now in my mid-40s, but I don’t even think about the age problems I’m supposed to be obsessing about: bad back, gaining weight with a slowed metabolism, slowing down, etc. All of these issues have been overshadowed by my bigger health problems. At one point, before I was diagnosed and started receiving my IG infusions, I couldn’t walk half a block. I was hunched over, and lifting a fork to eat felt like I was holding a lead paperweight. So once I

started receiving IG (which I refer to as magic juice, because it truly is!), I felt like a new person. Not like my old self, but a perkier, more functional version.

As I age and deal with my health conditions, I’m different from how my mind’s eye sees me. Part of me still feels like a teenager, even though I am well aware I’ll never be that agile again. In fact, choosing our home meant getting one that didn’t have an upper level because I can’t handle the stairs. My neurological issues are a determining factor regarding where we live. That was a startling realization. Right now, my health is remaining steady with medications and IG infusions, but I have to think about the future — not only the factors involved with nature taking its course as I become older, but those involving my special medical needs.

There’s a song by Soul II Soul I haven’t thought of in ages: “Keep on moving, don’t stop, keep on moving, don’t stop.” Whether it’s due to time, age or illness, there are going to be changes. I’m putting the welcome mat out for the new chapter in my life and walking through the door. ■



STACY OLIVER was diagnosed in 2008 with multifocal motor neuropathy (MMN). She is the assistant director of the Center for the Writing Arts at Northwestern University, and she is working on her supersecret identity as Neuropathy Girl, who will one day save the world after her infusion and a nap.