



"DINNER OF CHAMPIONS"

Dorothy Corwin "Spirit of Life" Award
Acceptance Speech

by

CHRISTINA HORNE

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DOROTHY CORWIN "SPIRIT OF LIFE" AWARD

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Dinner of
Champions

I can't possibly explain to you how honored I am to be standing here in front of you tonight.

I can *promise* you this. Your gift of being here will inspire me – the rest of my life.

I've known something my whole life, but in the past couple years, it's really come into more focus for me.

The luckiest day of my life was being born in the arms of Lisa and Lew Horne.

And to grow up in the same house with Laura, Lewis and Kimmie. To have 4 grandparents. All my cousins, aunts and uncles.



To have the experiences, and opportunities my family and I have had. To have been able to go to my dream school, USC.

To have the greatest, most caring friends. So many that I'm looking at *right* now.

I'm the richest girl in the world.

All of that being said... I'm hoping it's okay if I can get very real with you.

I've been through some tough stuff.

Carrying my brother Lewis in my arms out of our home on the worst day of my life – is something that stings me every single day. I see him everywhere.

Finding out a month in to the first job after I graduated from USC that I have MS – hasn't been easy.



I love how they tell you stress may be a contributing factor to MS, so you don't want to be "stressed out." I'd say throwing MS into the equation of boyfriends, and jobs, and everything else – goes right to the top of the list of... 'things that get you stressed out.'

I've been in the *best* possible hands for the past 18 months. Dr. Pelletier. Dr. Amercula. Keck Medical Center. I couldn't *dream* for *more*.

Brain scans, IV's, steroids, a spinal tap. *They're* not the pain. And I wouldn't wish a spinal tap on *anyone*.

I'll tell you what *hurts*.

It's the uncertainty. It's the fear of the unknown.



Here's how MS works...

Because of the incredible medicines and therapies that I'm getting now and significant developments that may be right around the corner, in my case -- this could stay dormant for the rest of my life – with MS being no more than an inconvenience.

Or it could evolve, at any time, and create the worst possible scenarios.

The thing I fear most is not how my illness will affect *my* future, but how it will affect the ones I love most.

Will I be able to walk down the aisle to marry the man of my dreams? Will I be asking him to sign up for more than he can handle? Will I be able to run and play with my babies?

How can you promise someone that you won't be a burden?

I'm not mad. I'm not scared. I'm a *little* scared.

I'm scared of losing the picture that I've always imagine.

Sure, it frightened me when I couldn't sign my name on a form in the hospital. When my mother had to hold me up in the shower to bathe me because I couldn't stand on my own.

But tonight, I'm standing here on my own, in front of you to say – I'm moving forward.

But the truth is, I can't worry about my future more than *anyone* else. *None* of us know what God has in store for us. It's the *uncertainty* in life that makes it so wonderful.

I'm going to live a beautiful, rich life. And like everyone, it's going to have challenges.

But I'm up for the challenge.

And I'm going to surround myself with people that are also up for the challenge.

The best of me are the best of my mother – and the best of my father.

What more could I ever want than to be a reflection of both of you?



Mom... I talk to you 5 times a day. I could talk to anyone I want to – but I talk to *you*. Partly, it's because you like to talk about my problems. But it's because of what you *give* me in return.

Dad... The two greatest gifts any kid could get from a parent? Love and respect. *Equally* important. You give me *both*.

You told me not to let my illness *define* me. It really doesn't.

What honestly defines me are both of you, my friends here tonight, my family, my brother and my sisters.

I'm not going to let moments of weakness define me. I want to be remembered by my moments of *strength*.

Thank you all for giving me this moment of strength and for giving me 1,200,000 reasons to have so much promise in my life.

Mom and Dad, the best way I know how to tell you how I feel is in a song...





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