

Searching for Sunshine

Time stands still, reminding me of the cold January day when my dear brother, Eddie, passed away. Blandness surrounds me in a world of wonder that can't exist in my sphere of comprehension. Food has no taste, colors have no brilliance, but words people say seem to have sharper daggers than usual. I want to be creative. I know I can do it. I possess all the tools I need to accomplish a project. Yet there is one thing missing: motivation.

Memories etched in my brain pound at my sanity. I am a prisoner deep in the folds of that gray matter. I desperately search for a key to unlock the cold heavy chains to get through another day. Silently screaming to be let out, no one can hear me. Begging to feel the warmth of sunshine on my soul, it continues raining. Stormy images keep racing through my motivations, and I just try to avoid getting knocked down by the speeding traffic in my head. I hear Eddie saying, "Baby, you're so talented, you really ought to do your art."

So I begin the inevitable quest to find motivation. I set new goals. I reorganize my drawers. I read. I search Pinterest. I Google my topic of interest. I watch wonderful YouTube videos of artist's demonstrations. I binge on Netflix. I go shopping. I ask my friends to pray. I pray. I beg The Creator to help me create. I clean my studio. I listen to old music from my youth. I hit a brick wall.

I long to be mesmerized by the creative juices flowing through my veins that make all other heartaches fade. *To be in the moment, one with the clay, an extension of the brush or an author in the making...to become like a child who will see the kingdom of God.* I want to experience life in wonder again, with no expectations or predetermined outcomes. I hide behind

my laughter, hoping nobody will notice how screwed up I am. Depression is debilitating; I wish I could *just shake it off*.

Late night snacks become my bedtime comfort and the only way I can finally float into dreamland. Slumber becomes a priority but the childhood nightmares return. Profuse sweating and a racing heart awaken me to shadows that no longer exist. Tossing and turning burn the majority of my calories for the week. The few hours I do sleep are precious but never enough.

Day-to-day efforts become more difficult. Getting out of bed seems pointless. I simply lie there breathing, wondering just how few more days I will actually wake up. My warm and fluffy bed appears to be the brightest option for the day. My heart and my brain are clogged like the stinky rusty drain of a hundred year old bathroom pipe. Knees popping, back aching and eyes crusty, I carefully ease out of bed. *Brushing my teeth may be forgotten*.

Suddenly, through the twist of a serrated dagger of words, a careless assault on a spiritual journey that keeps me sane and alive pushes a button. Unaware in the moment of being used by the Almighty, a seed of inspiration is planted by stabbing me in the heart. Stunned by the cruel expressions of a friend, my body freezes but my blood begins to boil. Somehow, I remember how brilliant inspirations can ebb and flow through the interactions we encounter, and like a rainbow, God allows for each in His own time. However, I limp away with a tear in my eye, perhaps water for the seed, fighting with all that I have to keep that dam from breaking again, tucking yet another painful memory in the folds of my brain.

I begin to rehash every word that was said, trying to make sense of the insults hurled at me. They swirl around like autumn leaves, going here and there with no definite path. Then I start to write to the culprit to pinpoint every detail of what they said in order to bring them to a

revelation of how they had humiliated me. I know that if I press the send button it could have far reaching repercussions and it would hurt them, too, just as I had been hurt. The floodgates burst open and I begin to cry. I truly don't want to vandalize anyone's heart. *I push the delete button.*

Somehow, I have got to get a grip. The Art Festival is only weeks away and the impending deadline only adds to my pressure, and this pot is about to blow. The mud pies need to be rolled, patted, baked, glazed and burned again. "For Edward" won first prize a few years back. How in the world am I going to pull off another blue ribbon? So, after procrastinating by doing every unimportant task of the day, I finally go into my studio, my sanctuary. I breathe in the musk of the room and try to thank God for blessing me with a husband that would build this place for me. *And I feel guilty for the pain I feel.*

I squeeze the cool moist kaolin between my fingers. I listen to hear if the clay will speak to me this time, and slowly, the conversation begins...Gently, God tells me to pray for my friend, not for reconciliation or revelation, but for the Holy Spirit to fill them to accomplish their task at hand. Their kiln load is heavy, too. So I open my heart and I pray. Something miraculous happens. My vantage point is changed...Sunshine peeks through the clouds, and the frozen graffiti on my heart begins to melt. The warmth on my soul allows for creative juices to flow. *Clay takes shape. Paint glistens on the canvas. Words are crafted.* The seed gets watered after all. And just like that, through the River of Life, motivation returns...*Eddie would be so proud.*