

Accepting Joy: An Allegory

I changed my name last year to Accepting Joy. It was a process of change realized by finding myself and finding love. Previously, I went by Despair. With the sole companions of Bitterness & Self Pity, I barely functioned emotionally and wallowed in pain. To those around me, I may have appeared to be an underachiever assigned a sorrowful lot in life. Inside I knew that I spent time in the valley of What's If's and Why didn't I? I spent time regretting my past and drowning in sorrow.

Like those around me, I trusted that my state was all life would allow me. I never questioned the validity of that assumption. I never attempted to question the good choices I chased away in love, work, and life because I agreed with the negative whispers of so called friends and well-meaning family.

I spent my day at a job that caused me to avoid learning new skills. I spent eight hours commiserating with others who didn't see the significance of how we'd chosen to spend our lives. I took on the belief that life was a highway to something better rather than a destination that was intended to be significant and meaningful. The spice of life - Vitality, Spark, Optimism - reserved for those I saw on television, my favorite entertainers. The special people who I thought figured out a way to have it all. Having such at my disposal? First, shouldn't I figure out what I wanted?

While, I sat night after night facing the screen, I neglected proper diet and movement. What about my own goals or aspirations? I knew there was more to life. I didn't realize I was reveling in Despair and had made it a comfortable bed fellow. It allowed for that comfortable numb that helped me to move through life with a coat of armor that wasn't easily ruffled. I was subscribing to that popular notion in life, "there is no disappointment when we do not set our expectations too high."

There are some activities one can enjoy that allow the creative spark inside of us to challenge the natural surroundings. For me, plants and flowers did that. One day, a small inner voice said, 'you moan that life gives you the bare minimum, but what is your responsibility in receiving that?' I couldn't argue. In fact, I thought about it for

days. No one was out there looking out for my best interests because they needed to tend to their own. It was the spark of change that was needed; A seed that would blossom into a wildfire of motivation. It took a while, but I began to see myself: This Diamond in the rough, Precious Gold made for honor.

Husbands love their wives and cherish them as their own bodies. This outward expression of excellence came in the form of my neighbor.

I had watched him wistfully for over a decade. I had seen him go through his Season of Change. I had seen him go through relationships. Yet, all without ever saying a word or holding a glance to his gaze.

Good looking though he was, his confidence and outward success, brought up the insecurity in the girl I was yesterday. Relationships with men had been confusing and eventually painful in my past. It was a toll. I didn't want to pay again. Yet, what was once a sure doubt, now gave way to hesitation.

I began to wonder and prep myself to at least hold up my head when I saw him and try to smile back. "How much would it cost?" I playfully asked myself. I put it out to the universe and then let it go. Just as I had done with the job, where I now had a promotion.

Not long after, I was tending to my flowers. Their opening buds brought a song to my heart and the warmth of the sun a smile on my face. I was lost in the moment. I didn't realize Ben caught me, until I heard his voice. Like something I had always anticipated and someone I had always known, he said, "beautiful voice. I'd love to hear it every day."

"Mine?" My smile remained. He was pleasantly surprised.

I had forgotten my role. I had forgotten that identity of Despair. Little by little even the Bitterness and Self Pity were finding no room. Caught off guard obviously, he continued. "Nice meeting you, finally." My whole body was bathed in the warmth of that exchange.

But the good feelings didn't last long. I didn't anticipate the self-loathing that would come from our small interaction. I didn't know that self-loathing could run so deep. It

seemed when I closed the door, I was accosted with self-doubt and painful memories. It was a chorus of critical voices that danced in my head. "You'll never be good enough for love."

But Patient Love proved different; Insisting that he saw in me what he was looking for? And what could that be? His words shocked me: someone who was Beautiful, Capable and Kind.

Still for a while, I was on guard.

I read God's word on love. I compared that with Patient Love's words and actions. I read God's word on a suitable mate. I compared that with Patient Love's behavior. I read that to everything there was a season and I saw that this season was one for Joy. Like a rose, I was blossoming. It wasn't the girl cred of just 'havin' a man', but that life could offer light & laughter. My diamond formed where bitterness once was. I became Accepting Joy by letting go of the assumption that holding on to Bitterness, Despair and Self-Pity were necessary.