

Sometimes the Rain

Written by Laura Packard



When it rains, it pours, or so the old adage goes for having a "Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad" day. Then sometimes it dumps buckets, flooding our respective streets, shorting out the power we so desperately exist upon, blocking our every escape.

I was driving down the road not so long ago. Well, I drive every darn day; have the gas bills and squashed insect deluge on the windshield and grill to prove it. But on this particular day, I was driving in an attempt to outrun the mother of all summer thunderstorms.

You know the kind.

Where the sky is an ashy slate to begin with, streaked with a broad brush tinted with gritty gray. Then, out of nowhere comes the underbelly of the beast of wickedness rolling as deep, and as sure, as the Kentucky bluegrass hills and the Gulf Shore waves combined.

It doesn't really matter what went wrong that particular day; nothing went right. It was all the same story, beginning to end. You see, there were internal storms I was running from, too. I ended up beating one of these storms at the front porch, the icy sharp rain narrowly escaping my tank topped exposed arms and damp papered grocery bags filled with needy want. But the inner ones still found their way in, and followed me inside as I unlocked the door.

People who purport to know better say STOP RUNNING. The pain will inevitably track you down like a bounty hunter with 90 lb. arms of muscle and sinewy joints, elbows and carnival strength and missing teeth. Pain WILL find you, they say, and do hurricane damage along the way and rejoice in the path of utter destruction and dance a jester's jig in the cruelest of

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courts. In the deepest pockets and most secret of rooms you can manage to squeeze in, contort and hide matters not the least. It will COME. Whether we like it or not.

So . . . welcome it on in?

Live the pain, they say, invite it swiftly in and with a stiff upper lip through the breeze way, make room on the couch; offer it an heirloom afghan, maybe a tea biscuit or two with homemade apricot jam. Say, "Pain, sit and stay awhile, why don't you? What'll you have to drink?"

We are told WE CAN DO HARD THINGS even if we have to bathe in it and stew for an uncomfortable while chatting idling or delving to the abyss. And I am like, of course we can do hard things. If we don't do hard things then we are no longer alive. I only don't wish to be reminded of the steel pointed toe, kicking you in the a*# repeatedly over and over again. I'm just asking, "Pain, are we done yet?" I AM doing hard things all the damn time, trying to absorb then process all the lessons you insist I learn at a tortoise pace. My legs are numb and my feet rage with sharp stabbing needles of hurt and longing for relief. See, I don't need, or want to discuss it to death. I'm like "Pain, or whatever your name is? I am just driving around, trying to Get. Stuff. Done... Can we chat later? I have a thing at noon."

But in the end, pain all comes back to . . .

Come hell or high winded, warped water, we either sink, float or swim.

I have a friend, let's call him Don. He is a marketing guru, after all. I love him. Oh, and he really, really loves action verbs; power words . . . 'cause, you know, he brands stuff for a living. He'd tell me right now to get rid of all the come hell and high winded what with all crap and stick to the verbiage . . . as in, action is where it's at, people. Red hot action verbs draw attention. They are powerful. They command people to stop, drop and listen. People want, no are starved, to be powerful or, at the least, powerfully in control of what ails them, right?

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Float.

Swim.

My friend Don would then eliminate the first two words because, well, the first is wimpy and negative and assumes you suck at something . . . like swimming or life. The second would have to go because it implies stagnation; not moving forward, just lying there flailing your weak skinny arms and under-muscled legs a little bit here or a tiny bit there so you don't, you know, sink because you'll be sucking at something again.

This leaves us with one word and one word only: swim.

Only, if we did sit and stay and chat it up with that annoyingly persistent Pain, he'd have told us straight off the bat that:

You can't swim without first sinking to the bottom of some kind of stinking pit. And no one, even those with Herculean strength, Super bowl trophies, Golden Ticket wins . . . you know the ones, who never seem to sweat. Even they have to float for a while so they don't sink, and can later . . . you get what I'm saying . . . swim.

At times, as an ole Aesop fable goes, we urgently need the rain so our gardens grow and we are fed. Others, we frantically need the rain to cease so our vessels can bake in the sun and can collect the water we so desperately need to drink. Pain is seasonal. It comes and goes. Whether we are the master craftsman of our very own storm or an innocent bystander caught in the eye, on the brink.

Recently, I came across a picture of one of my girls when she was around 9. She was wearing a bright blue parka, holding a UGA striped umbrella; her acid jeaned butt was planted on the asphalt and firmly glued into a bright orange inner tube she'd pulled out from the garage one rainy day.

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Sometimes, you just need to sink into what comes at you and float awhile.

You can always swim another day.