



FROZEN

by Antionette Duck

My 27th year of life found me pining away to live on a mountaintop.
Sunrise every morning. Sunset every night. And think of the view.
It became a thing.
I began to talk of marrying a mountain man and having mountain babies.
I even joked with friends, testing their loyalty as I urged them to come visit me on my mountain.
"A true friend would, you know..."
I longed to live on a mountaintop. I hungered for it.

One day, a friend asked, "why the mountaintop?"
I avoided her gaze and laughed, stifling the words that bubbled up in reply.

The freedom?
The protection?
The escape?

I was running from the valley.
The valley of the past and broken places and hope that died.
The valley of the little girl who stood, frozen...



As a child, I hid behind my mother.

The first time I remember doing this, I was about five-years-old.
My mom was standing in an open doorway, leading to the kitchen.
I stood behind her, slightly taller than her waist, and held on to her skirt.
Slowly, I peeked around her side, careful to stay behind her frame.

My father stood in front of us, holding a butcher knife.
I watched him making slicing motions, like someone cutting through an apple.

What was he saying?

"If she does it again, I will do this to her hand."

What did he mean? If I did it again... he would cut off my hand?

I look back toward my father, watching him slice through the air.

My heart thudded in my chest, a sort of hollow thud that makes it hard to breathe.

I believed him.

I believed he would keep his promise.

It wouldn't be the last time my father threatened.

It wouldn't be the last time I hid behind my mother.

I remember listening from a room or two or three away, feeling such responsibility to do something, and yet, feeling complete paralysis, unable to do anything.

I never ran out into the middle of it and took the blow.

I hid.

I hid every time.

I hid behind my mom.

I can hear you already.

"You were just a child," you will say. "Of course you would have hidden."

I know.

I know.

I felt powerless.

I didn't know what to do.

Frozen on the surface.

Rage churning beneath it.

Have you ever experienced being angry that something bad was happening to someone you loved, while in that precise moment, being grateful that the bad thing was not happening to you?

I close my eyes.

I cover my face.

He might not have put his hand on me, but his hand touched me all the same.

I carry the scars. I carry the guilt.

Guilt that I could not stop it.

Guilt that it wasn't me.

How do you heal the little girl, frozen?



Years later, I'm driving home, gorgeous landscape to my right. The golden hour beamed radiant, and the light took on that golden glow. I kept glancing to the side, hoping to catch an uncluttered view of the sunset. Finally, as I turned my head, it was as though the trees parted just for me.

I stared into the most spectacular, green valley; and I marveled as golden sunlight drenched itself across grass and trees, the sun dancing through their branches.

I caught my breath.

And then, the Holy Spirit's whisper, "Do you see? There is beauty in the valley."

A cry rose in my throat.

Beauty in the valley?

I shoved the thought away.

"Yes. Beauty in the valley. Beauty in the broken places. Beauty in the pain.

There is purpose to the valley - and nothing - absolutely nothing passes through your hedge of protection unless the LORD knows He can use it for your eternal good and His glory. He allows the wounding, but, never without purpose."

I hold up my brokenness and ask again, "Even here?"

"Yes. Even here."



Today I found myself in an office with a young woman in her early 30s. She is running from her own valley of wreckage, and I hear myself sharing the story of the GOD who did not forget me, who even in this moment enabled me to speak life to the broken and purpose to the hope that died.

The realization hits me, and I catch my breath.

The LORD had kept His promise.