

# 'LIONS, WITCHES and WARDROBES'

..... Daniel Rumsey

Okay, so there were no lions. Or witches. But there was a wardrobe and one out of three isn't bad. At least it caught your attention because "I met God in a wardrobe," sounds more like a coffee break magazine headline than a credible story. That's what happened though and I'm standing by it and whether you think I'm completely crackers or abundantly blessed I bet you want to read on.

All you need to know as background to this is that events in my life recently took a turn for the worse and I have been struggling through and trying to come to terms with issues that I, somewhat smugly, thought would never affect me. The details are not important because what I learned and want to share speaks into a thousand different situations of grief and heartache. If you are in one of those seasons right now, then please take me out of this story and put yourself in my place. This is my story, my experience. Please make it yours.

It was a Saturday and I was alone in the house. I was being uncharacteristically productive and had begun putting up new shelves into a fitted wardrobe.

At one point this required me climbing right inside the wardrobe and there I sat, crossed legged, trying to drill holes into the wall. This was not a magic wardrobe. It had not been made from the wood of a magical tree in a far off world. There were no mysterious, frozen worlds under the curse of an evil queen to be discovered at the back of it. It was also not the sort of place in which you would anticipate meeting your creator.

As I finished drilling I paused, my head dropped and I thought to myself, “Nobody knows I am here.”

It occurred to me that I could pull the door shut and stay in there for the rest of the day and no one would ever know. In that moment I felt as if I could sit there forever and never care about anything ever again. Then He spoke.

I hate to disappoint you but it was not an audible voice. It was just that quiet, calm, internal voice that I have slowly learned to recognise as the Lord. It’s difficult to explain and sometimes becomes muddled with my own thoughts so I try to be wary. But sometimes I just know.

“Come on little one. Get up. Let’s go outside. I want to show you something.”

The phrase ‘Little one’ amused me but gave me the first clue that I was hearing God and not me. I would have called myself something awesome like ‘warrior’ or ‘man of God’. ‘Little one’ was probably more accurate though. I crawled out of the wardrobe and walked towards the back door trying not to be distracted by the dishes and mess in the kitchen or by my sad and neglected phone. I resisted the temptation to grab a beer as I walked past the fridge all the while still pondering if this was God or if I was simply talking to myself.

Stepping out of the drive I felt the warm sun on my face for the first time that day and the early summer air filled my lungs. I began to walk around the side of the house where there is a path that leads to the garden at the front. To one side of the path is a bed full of a variety of plants and bushes. The first thing I saw was a plant with lots of purple flowers (I’m not the most gifted gardener so I can’t tell you its name and previously I had even wondered if it was perhaps a weed). It had been flowering for some time and many flowers were now withered and brown but then I noticed all the buds that were still waiting to bloom. Many more still to come. Next to it was a rose bush (I knew the name of that one) with seven or eight classic, deep red roses but they had passed their best already with many petals fallen to the ground. I

hadn't even noticed it flowering until now but once again I saw new buds. Flowers in waiting. Expected blooms. He spoke again.

"Good and beautiful things have passed away, but there are many more beautiful things yet to come. Old life and its beauty makes way for new. We can and we must mourn and remember what has gone but don't miss out on what's to come. Do not be afraid to celebrate a new and beautiful future."

I saw this repeated again and again along the path. A vivid green spear striking out from the centre of a palm as the old, discoloured outer leaves withered away. Fragrant mint leaves on a stalk that had been all but dead when I planted it. Vibrant rhubarb that pushed up fresh fruit from an ugly, buried stump; bright pink stalks under a canopy of green. Lavender with its spikes stretched out, waiting to open its purple, perfumed flowers.

I then passed a second rose bush with many rose buds but not a single bloom.

"This one hasn't even begun," He said. "Give it time though."

I turned into the front garden. The lawn was to the right of me and to the left there was a large bush. Growing from within it is some sort of trailing plant (I have been told it is Honeysuckle), which uses the bush for support to climb up. In the Spring I had cut everything back so that it was neat, level and shaped. The bush had remained in shape but the Honeysuckle had burst out all over with about a metre of new growth looking like wild, untamed hair. I thought I was beginning to get the hang of what God was trying to show me; don't let things get out of control, watch out for distractions bursting out and taking over, things that might smother and go wild.

"No," He said (and this is my favourite part).

"I want you to be wild. Let my Spirit burst from within you, as it desires. Don't try to shape it. Don't try to mould Me or control Me.

Don't try to make Me look nice and appropriate. Let Me be Me! Give control to My Spirit. My Spirit is wild!"

Even though it was only God's metaphor, I have left the Honeysuckle to do as it pleases and even though it looks a bit unruly, it has produced a huge array of beautiful, fragrant flowers. Beauty and life growing up out of chaos.

So I'm trying to let go and discover what His best is for me and I hope you can too. I can't change the past, but with God's guidance and love I can find His beautiful and fruitful future.