

JOHNNY JUMP-UP

For a year I didn't feel good. I understand why people don't want to talk about their depression once it has passed. It's a sad place to be. When you're finally through it, you don't want to go back. So I'm not going to tell you a story about my depression. I'm going to tell you about a miracle.

One night as I was closing my living room drapes, I noticed a tiny pansy. It was a Johnny Jump-Up. As I would soon discover, that was the perfect name for it. Three deep violet petals were on the bottom of its delicate face. Two brilliant white ones were on the top. Its stem was two inches tall, if that. When I saw it, I was awe struck. "Wow!" was all I could think. "Look at that!" And look I did.

Johnny Jump-Up was a surprise plant that had sprouted from a flyaway seed. My mother the gardener would have called it a rogue. Its ancestral home was one of my summer flower boxes. Now here it was, in freezing cold November, growing up between my patio paving stones in the nutrient starved sand. Beauty that had long ago faded from my sight was right outside my door waiting patiently for me.

I marveled that it had flourished in the pelting rains. I wondered how it had survived windstorms that knocked out power and littered the streets with debris. I thought about the frost. Surely it would not be able to withstand that. Each morning I looked out the window fearing the worst. Each morning I found my flower standing tall, face to the sky. Oh, I smiled!

One night the temperature really plummeted. Johnny Jump-Up was leaning low in the morning, beaten down by the cold. "Ah," I thought. "It will not be here much longer." I believed its last day had come. Glancing outside after the sun had risen above the trees, I saw that I was wrong. Lifted by the warmth, it stood straight and strong.

The next morning it was lying down flat against the concrete. I was sure this time it had been utterly defeated. Wrong again. As the sun began to shine, up it came once more, a little worn around the edges (wouldn't you be?), but still a vision of pure beauty. I felt its energy infuse my heart.

Then it started to snow. I watched the heavy flakes begin to bury the quivering stem. I searched my kitchen with a friend and found a clear jar. Carefully, we placed it over Johnny Jump-Up, being sure to leave a crack for air. For two nights the wind was so strong it blew over all my patio furniture, but the jar stayed exactly where it had been put. Inside, safe and protected, my pansy lived on.

I sat by my window a few days later reading a book about the Buddhist traditions. I read that when we cherish, preserve and protect life in all its forms, we improve karma. I felt a warmth inside me as I looked out at the sturdy glass house. I knew I had connected with myself and the world around me again. I knew my depression was falling away.

In a blessing of grace, my gaze was guided to a flower. I was told a daily story about perseverance and faith in tomorrow. I was reminded that I have strength and power. The energy of life in a tiny, perfect pansy was used to rekindle the energy of life within me. Above all, the eternal presence of beauty and love was confirmed, and I was shown how the power of that beauty and love can accomplish great things, even in the smallest ways. It was all done with one little flower.

That's what I call a miracle.

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