

# The Dandelion

by Holly Love King



I've worn this house like an overcoat. These walls like gloves. Even these windows like glasses. From the coziness of my home, complacency has become my companion. My head convinces me chores and to-do lists matter

more than the very oxygen I breathe. My heart lies silent, waiting for its turn to be heard, as yet another pile of laundry is folded and the head roars on...bills to pay, floors to clean, children to tend.

But a winter coat worn in spring is stuffy, cumbersome and on a warm day like today, it can smother me. Sipping my morning coffee, staring out my window-pane glasses, in a hurry to get on with the day, I see them everywhere. Yellow buds telling me it's safe now, to come out and join them. The thousands of wishes just wishing to be made. Living and dead dandelions seem to wake me from my slumber, and suddenly, I realize I'm suffocating.

Something deep within me needs to shed this house from my skin and cancel the morning. To run barefoot in the grass, lay and look up at the clouds...natural, messy hair...sun-kissed, freckled cheek...at one with nature.

Leaving my coffee on the clean countertop, slowly I take off one sock, then the other. With my feet to the grass, I quietly sneak into my backyard—a never-ending field of space, quiet and heaven. Pajamas are my only coat now and grass clippings my socks. The soft ground seems to make room for me as it cushions each step and I know I am welcome here.

With my ear to the earth, I kneel and listen. Alive and living. Gentle and giant. She lives and moves just as I live and move. I am one with her as she is one with me. She speaks loud and clear with no need for man-made language. I can hear her and feel her. I witness her life all around me, even from within me.

If work calmed me down, maybe work would be my mother. If chores made me smile, maybe they would be my happy place. If paying bills and running errands put me back together, maybe I'd never need to venture outside again. But the truth is, nature nurtures me.

With my head to the clouds, I see blue and white paint all around. It's as if the artist's brush stroked the most carefree white to form hanging puffs of magic in the air. I see the mockingbird and hear her song. She sings of bravery as she chases away the large, black crow. Her gray wings marked with white medals of honor. Resting high above her I see the endless sky. Am I too, like the sky? Am I too, endless? Am I more than skin? More than bone? More than work and chores and winter coats?

Walking back toward my house, I pass the herb garden. The overgrown sage is due for harvest. Clipping it back, gathering it in my arms, with my nose buried in its fragrance, my hurried mind feels swayed to sleep. The lingering scent soothes me as a mother rocking her child. Letting my nose linger in its love—I know this is not just a simple harvest. It's a gift. This doesn't just feed my stomach, it feeds my soul. Laying the bunch down beside me, I rest on the back step, soaking in the morning sun. Every morning the sun shines the same promise, "Today is new."

With my hair in the wind, I close my eyes. I let the breeze gently blow my cares away. I embrace my wet, grassy feet, my untamed hair and the wrinkles that befriend my eyes. I welcome the life that I can't control or clean up. The wind tells me it's okay to let go and moves me to breathe deeper. This big blanket we all breathe, that fills us with more than simple oxygen, as if life support was all we needed to live. No, this simple, invisible air does much more than fill lungs. Breath by breath, breeze by breeze, it unravels the rigid things within me and puts me back together, even though I rarely notice its handiwork.

With my back to the past, I see the truth of what I have now...now is all I ever have. Yet, years have been spent re-working the past in my mind. Even more, fretting over an unknown future. A life filled with just that, life. Messy, unfixable, untamable life. Looking down at the

herb garden by my step, I see more untamable life...weeds. Weeds crowd my herb garden like worry tries to crowd my present. And listening deeper, I know nature is showing me the way. Should the jungle look like a manicured lawn? The forest like the vegetable patch? Are some things not meant to be left wild? What would life be if all was perfect before we even woke? What promise would the sun hold? Could messy houses and problems be okay? Could purpose follow pain?

With my heart in my hands, I remember the mockingbird and her song of bravery. I remember her chasing down the big, black crow as if to say, "That's enough! Not today!" Am I the black crow? Could I, too, be the overcoat? Does my own heart need to shed the skin of my own mind? With my face toward the sun, I ask for my own new day.

Silently my heart begins to speak, "I need beauty, as I need air. I need sun, as I need water. I need rest, as I need movement. And I need to be heard, as I need to be loved. I don't just like nature, I need nature, for I too, am nature."

Water begins to mark my cheeks as I envision the tears like white horizontal painted lines, just beneath my eyes, revealing my own inner mockingbird.

Slowly, I gather the sage-harvest in my hands, wipe the grass socks from my feet and return to the more human part of my life indoors. After binding the herbs in twine and hanging them to dry, I pick up my cold coffee cup. Gazing out my window-pane glasses, I return to the dandelions, even the dead ones, all wishing to be wished. And I know now why they called me out in the first place. Why they promised me safety. It wasn't to merely enjoy them and the nature they live within. It was to become one with them. To call my own heart out of its own human overcoat. To show me that I too...

am the dandelion.