

When Unexpected Life Trials Turn into Broken Chains

I've always been told that God introduces people into our lives for a reason, a divine ordinance unfolding its chapters with time. This belief became a haunting question when my cousin was diagnosed with ALS, AKA Lou Gehrig's Disease. My cousin, an emblem of vitality - a triathlete, an engineer, making friends as naturally as breathing, his life vibrated with a kind of golden warmth that now seemed unfairly dimmed by an inexplicable fate. Beyond genetics, beyond reason, ALS felt like a cruel, random thief.

My cousin and I, linked through the bonds of family, drifted in and out of each other's lives, as is common, when life complicates the paths between family members, yet, connected by our familial ties, suddenly began to bridge that gap at a difficult crossroads. We unexpectedly found ourselves growing closer at a challenging juncture and it appeared as though it was God's time; a moment of beautiful convergence intended for reason we couldn't fully grasp at the time. Over the years, as each of our circumstances changed, our connection deepened. Amidst turmoil and confusion, I was searching for a sense of purpose, an anchor, and my cousin became that steadfast presence - a "brother-in-arms" in the most unforeseen battles. In essence, we became the support each other desperately needed at precisely the right time.

His guidance became my compass. From him, I learned the value of raw, untempered honesty, the strength found in vulnerability, and the joyous liberation of authentic self-expression. It was he who taught me life's pearls of wisdom, peppered with stern admonishments and the kind of loving encouragement that fosters true growth. Together, we laughed and leaned into life, discovering the beauty in simplicity and the power of genuine connection.

Navigating through my cousin's ALS and immersing myself in his care, I encountered aspects of my personality that I had previously hidden, deeming them imperfect. He often empowered me with his tenacity to embrace my true self, fearlessly, reassuring me with mantra, "That's not your problem." Gradually, my spirit began to awaken from its dormancy. What was once a source of regret, reasons other's gave me for having abandoned me - my assertiveness - turned into our most effective tool against apathy and neglect. My once-muted voice now carries weight and conviction. In championing my cousin's needs, and insisting on the care and autonomy to which he's entitled, I've undergone a profound transformation. The self-doubt that has plagued me, dissolved into a newfound sense of worth and recognition, affirmed not only by my cousin, but also by a community, that, for the first time, acknowledges, and appreciates me for who I am.

The support and care I extend to my cousin, mirrors back at me, the unwavering love and resilience I have always needed. People are beginning to celebrate the aspects of myself I had long suppressed, accepting me wholly and unconditionally. This metamorphosis, this trek towards self-discovery, serves as a testament to the enigmatic design of God's will, highlighting a path towards self-acceptance and the power of collective upliftment.

In the shadow of anticipatory grief and the complex emotions that knot within, I see now, the silhouette of God's plan. It is woven through the tapestry of my life, binding my cousin and me, forever, in a shared journey of growth, love, and existential reckoning. This chapter, undoubtedly, one of the hardest of my life, carries with it, a paradoxical beauty - the breaking and making of spirits, the liberation of true selves, and the profound gratitude for unexpected, but cherished hand-holding, and the breaking of life-long chains.

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