

## Fairy Tale - The Land of Unlovely

Once upon a time there was a family of six sunflowers who grew in a thistle patch at the top of a hill. Yet you couldn't really tell they were sunflowers because of the snow, ice and cold. Rather they looked like brown clumps on top of their withered flower stalks. The mom and dad did their best to provide for and love their four flowers. But with a shortage of sun, water, and heat, one thing was always lacking--the fertilizer of "you are lovely." Life was more about survival and self-protection and fertilizer seemed like a frivolity in the cold.

As the years went by the snow and ice started to melt away, along with the anger, frustration, and crazy emotions the parent sunflowers had. Their four sunflowers started to see yellow petals growing but their hearts never heard "you are lovely."

As they each reached that age, they began to go their separate ways. And although it was very faint at first, Daddy the Gardener, started to gently whisper, "you are lovely" in their ears. He called the second sunflower, "Loved by Me" and as He persisted she received it as her true name and destiny and her sunflower grew in strength and beauty.

Loved by Me longed to be a friend and not a freak to the brother sunflowers she knew. How wonderful she thought it would be if they would enjoy her as their beauty and partner in life. Yet each one seemed to conclude the same thing, "You're nice but not lovely; gracious but not gorgeous; good but not great." She was amazed at how she would hear it again and again year after year in place after place. Brother sunflowers that in some way saw her as second-rate.

"you make me uncomfortable"

    "your feet are so loud"

        "you are an anomaly"

            "you care too much"

                "you don't get out enough"

                    "your voicemail is cheesy"

                        "you're over the top"

                            "I know no one else like you"

                                "I like you because you give to me"

                                    "you're hard to manage"

  "you bother me"

  "you're a great sister and friend but my wife you'll never be"

"I want you to be close enough to care for my needs but disposable enough to push away when I'm ready for someone who's a little more normal than you"

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2002, a group of people prayed over "Loved by Me" who was very sick and fatigued. Her heart was beyond broken by having to leave her students, her friends, and her ministry in New Jersey. As they prayed one woman saw an image of a sunflower in her mind and she said, "You are His sunflower reflecting His radiance and spreading many seeds." And for the first time, "Loved by me" began to realize that she actually was a sunflower. And although the years ahead brought much weeping and more brothers treating her as second-rate, she sowed seeds through her tears and reaped with songs of joy as she partnered with her Daddy who saw her as lovely through and through. She was prayed for in May of 2006, this time another woman saw a sunflower again and said, "You are a sunflower—tall with wisdom and confidence. Daddy is helping you keep the balance of you and Him." What joy "Loved by Me" had in knowing she was perfectly who Daddy made her to be.

In July of 2007, Daddy told Loved by Me that her trusted, wise aide, Connor was coming very soon. Loved by Me's fears made her grimace at the thought. Yet Daddy promised she would not be

disgraced or put to shame (Isaiah 50:7) and Connor and her together as one would reflect His radiance and spread many seeds. He told her that there would be an immediate bond of love between them and they would become the best of friends (1 Samuel 18:1). It all seemed too wonderful to believe after 32 years of being found second-rate.

On November 16<sup>th</sup>, Loved by Me's sister in Seattle sent her a gaudy silver sunflower ring. As Loved by Me wore it the next day, Daddy told her that it was her Isaiah 50:7 ring and she was only supposed to wear it if she was willing to believe that she truly wouldn't be disgraced or put to shame.

Most of her life, Loved by Me had been disgraced and put to shame by almost every brother sunflower in her life. She was a Leah among Rachels. She was the best friend but never the bride at the weddings. She was the one they loved to have close by but not "in" their lives. Singleness seemed like a much safer place; a place she was very content with; a place she enjoyed being after years of longing to leave it.

Yet Daddy wanted to give her His gift which He had been preparing most of her life. So Loved by Me puts on that ring every day and says, "Daddy, I am going to walk by faith and trust that you will not let me be disgraced or put to shame." And Daddy smiles and holds her close to His chest and says, "Loved by Me, my perfect love will always drive out your fears and dry your tears and hold you close when Connor hurts your feelings or wounds your heart." But he is my gift to you; and I only give good and perfect gifts to you (James 1:17). I see him not just for who he is right now but for all he will be as I mold and shape the both of you into one sunflower that will reflect My radiance and spread many seeds in ways that you could never have asked or dreamed (Eph 3:20). And Connor will see you as lovely in every way because you are not and have never been second-rate.