

Simplicity

By Sheila Johnson

I rose early that morning wanting to complete a paint job that went unfinished because I ran out of paint. The day before, Colorado experienced one of those 364 days of sunshine for which it is famously known. To my surprise, this day was grey, wet, and temps barely exceeded 40 degrees. My mind and heart wanted to forge ahead, drive to Home Depot, buy the paint, and get the job done. My body wanted to get back under the covers and dream some more. It was a real struggle to make a seemingly simple decision. I could sleep in, hope for a warmer afternoon, or simply wait for the next day.

There was no simplicity in my decision, because there had been no simplicity in my life's choices leading up to this fateful day, September 12, 2012. It was no simple decision to file for a divorce from a man whom I had wed over forty years before. It was no simple decision to tell my three adult children that I had made a final decision to leave for my own personal safety; no simple decision to tell the members of my small congregation that our marriage was over, and we, as a congregation, could not move forward because their shepherd was struggling with Godly decisions; no simple decision to face so-called friends who were just waiting for a reason to further judge me; no simple decision to step out in the world as a single, black, jobless, impoverished, abused female who was screaming her mind out in silence.

I decided to leave my warm bed behind, take the trip to Home Depot, get the paint, and finish painting over the sounds of a wall that had absorbed so much negativity over a period that surpassed the stretch of time it took Moses to lead God's people out of captivity. I decided to step back into a relationship that was dark and dreary and dead because the thought of being a divorced woman in her sixties was terribly frightening. It was even more frightening than what I found when I arrived at the place I called home for over two-thirds of my lifetime.

There he was sitting on the bed, rocking back and forth, glassy eyed, slurred speech, and veins visibly popping out of his forehead and arms.

Going forward: 911, fire trucks, sirens, well-meaning neighbors, a ninety day ICU stay, an unknown bankruptcy, medical bills over 1.5 million dollars, adult children, family and friends helplessly standing by in anticipatory grief for the next two years.

My life was surprisingly changed after September 12, 2012. I'm free now. Because of the divorce, the medical bills and bankruptcy were written off. My credit score is very good now. I own a home in my name now. When I paint the walls in my home—it's to change the color and not to cover the sounds. I live and breathe in simplicity now. Thank You God.