

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME

Another birthday coming. How do I feel about that? Hmmmm. Well, I suppose there is some sort of celebratory air involved with reaching this age, and yet, why is it different that any other day?

My earliest birthday memory is the year that I turned eight. On the day after my birthday, my grandmother, aunt and uncle were expected after dinner for cake and presents. I was positively giddy all through the meal. My sister was always a slow eater and I was required to remain at the table until she was done. On that night, her indifferent pace was maddening. Finally, she was done and I was able to move to the living room. I remember sitting on the sofa when Grandma and my aunt arrived. They came in through the back door and my mother went to greet them. I did not want to leave the cake. I heard the muffled greetings and movement in the kitchen, but something was not right. I peeked into the kitchen and saw mother whispering with my guests. The hush-hush conversation became crying, followed by more mumbling, and more crying. I finally got mother to speak clearly enough to tell me what was happening. My Grandfather had died. But when could I open my presents, I asked. I have no other memories of that night except that my Grandmother gave me a watch with Snow White and a Dwarf on the face.

My only birthday "parties" growing up as a child were immediate family gatherings. Neither my sister or myself were ever blessed with the joy of hosting other children for a party. We recently learned that my mother did have birthday parties with friends when she was a girl, so it is not as though there were religious or social barriers. It must just be that the occasion of my birth was not worthy of celebration. This un-tradition followed me right into adulthood, again only having immediate family. Sometimes, the gathering would not even be on my special day, but rather the weekend before or after, depending on what was more convenient to everyone else. The older I get, the less likely it is that I will even receive a telephone call from either of my parents. So, again, how can this day be any different when even my own parents cannot be bothered to reach out?

Last year, on my fifty-somethingish birthday, I treated myself to a three day weekend away. I had never spent so much on lodging for myself. For some reason, last year I decided that the un-tradition was going to stop. I would now be in charge of the birthday celebrations and I will do a much better job than my parents, or my ex-husband. I invited my sister to spend the weekend with me. We ate all of our favorite junk foods, and did all of our favorite activities: shopping, playing cards, and painting. It was a great weekend that I will never forget. And, it was a celebration by me, for me. And, it WAS a special day.

`Make peace with your broken pieces.`

Smudge