ProvingGround *(a Summer Series)*

Proverbs 19:21 'Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.' (NIV)

Suddenly. I felt like someone died. The news took something out of me. The wind, the air, my sails. Knocked it right out. And although surely, no one had died, something else inside me passed. Away.

What happens when something so harsh, so tragic, so unexpected, occurs? How, as a human being, do we react, cope, navigate, come through, storm-tossed waters and a fog-soaked atmosphere, where we cannot see beyond our own hand, let alone His? What do we do when we realize we are not in control—and more importantly, even God seems to have lost command of a situation that is desperate and crucial?

Tiptoeing through the unknown can feel like walking in taffy, with every pull of each step stretching out what is inevitable, worrying the uncharted fabric of what is to come in the tension of frantic fingertips. It's in these moments, the sovereignty of a holy God over our unforeseen circumstances can bring a peace surpassing human understanding (Phil.4:7). And if He has been trustworthy in the past to you and to me, we should be able to find solace in the proving ground of His faithfulness. Perhaps He sprinkled a seed of promise on the fertile soil of your unbelief, but instead of a tangle of weeds growing, rather, hope sprouted, and from hope, possibility and purpose sprang up. What seemed like an untamed field of rubbish instead grew a garden of grace, of provision.

The news had arrived deliberately, but we were so unprepared. Didn't see that coming. Never in a million years. Trite statements fall out of gaping mouths during unexpected times. Tears made maps down my cheeks, my mascara leaving black pathways I would travel back on later. I may never be the same. Later, I knew, the news shifted something. Changed me. I am older, jaded. My outlook is aged, wiser, matured, stiffer. I put hope away, in a safe keeping spot. Maybe i wouldn't take it out again for a while; perhaps I wouldn't run my fingers through its possibilities with as much abandon again. When it was time to talk about what we'd been informed, I peeked through a guarded soul, where age spots had shown up overnight, reminding me, maturing had taken its toll. It was as if we were going to attend a funeral even though no one, but belief and potential, had passed away. I wondered if anything ever would feel quite right in the world again.

God has planted eternity in the human heart (Eccl 3:11). The Bible tells me so. It is all right here, forever, inside of me. And you. While tragic reports can stun us, unexpected newsbreaks tend to knock us off-course, rumors and gossips can topple us, the Lord God truly is in command of every detail. Not one thing catches Him off guard, even if it does us. He does not wring His hands nor worry His head nor shrug His shoulder for lack of a better response. We will get through this and He will be with us all the way. No matter what happens, no matter where the news leads, as long as we go after Him just like He has run relentlessly after us.

Proverbs 16:9 'In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.' (NIV)