the GODFATHER #4 - the Return

✨***Luke 15:20-21, '"So, he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son."'(NLT)***✨

I spent years picturing a holy God as a vengeful and reckoning God, a mafia God who counted people's sins like money, keeping a tally of all the wrongs to bring back up every time the deposit of good behavior fell short. I was frightened; dreading to stand before this Ruler, this Judge, knowing the cost would be magnanimous and I'd never measure up. Until I ***really*** met Him.

I had spent all I had on incidental and careless living, my behavior audacious and negligent. The Godfather gave me the demands of my heart, but He sent leanness into my soul (Ps. 106:15). I knew I had overdrawn my account, the one the Godfather had deposited into already a wealth of grace and love. I had withdrawn all of it, a lifetime supply of riches, every bit of it, bankrupted on pleasures and passions and foolishness. I filled my gut with pods of worldliness, but nothing ever seemed to satisfy. I was dry inside, parched by the dust of circumstance, starved for wholesomeness, something other than snacks and unfulfilling treats of this life. I tried to rub away the grime left behind from worldly living and smear into obscurity the stain of sin, but I was tattooed by choices I'd made, preferences I knew now would always determine my wardrobe. And then it came to me! Why am I living this way when my father owns the cattle on a thousand hillsides and clothes the lilies of the valley and cares for every single sparrow riding on a wind gust.

The long dirt road stretched dusty ahead of me as I trudged in his direction. Along the way I rehearsed everything I would say. I repeated it over and again in my head, whispering all my transgressions as if by default. 'Return me to my factory settings, please!' I cried out. 'I was at peace then! Life was simpler.' I muttered. Maybe joy would come in the mourning; I thought as I plodded onward, tears burning my eyes, snot thick in my nostrils and mud caked beneath my fingernails and splotchy on my skin. What a sight, all my choices and mistakes spoke loudly through body language. And then, and only then, from a long way off, I saw him. I cupped my eyes to make sure I wasn't seeing things, as I watched my father hitch up anything that might trip him up as he took to the long dirt road, running with an incredible speed right toward me.

When at once He reached me, He threw His arms about me and pulled me close. The words I had been rehearsing began to fall from my mouth like spittle and gently He placed a shushing finger across His lips. "No matter," He whispered. "Shhh! You were lost and now you are found. You were dead, but now, you are alive! Come inside and sit with Me and let's celebrate your return home!"

O Father God, thank You. Thank You, that You waited for me. Thank You, Lord, that You never gave up on me. Please! I don't want to go anywhere if You do not go with me. Amen!

✨***1 John 3:1 'Consider the kind of extravagant love the Father has lavished on us—He calls us children of God! It is true; we are His beloved children. And in the same way the world didn't recognize Him, the world does not recognize us either.'***✨