



Kathleen Newhouse

Just a Breath Away

A Story About Survival

It was sudden. Lightning struck inside of her head, and the flash of immense pain shot from one side of her skull to the other. The magnitude was beyond any conceivable reality. She was rushed into emergency surgery in an attempt to reduce the massive amount of pressure that squeezed her brain like a melon in a vice grip. To Kathleen Newhouse, her world was crumbling from within, and death was imminent.

An accomplished musician and a martial arts school owner, this dedicated wife, and mother of four was about to embark on the greatest test of her life. With maybe a five percent chance of survival, and the distinct possibility of landing in a vegetative state, hope was fading quickly, and the outcome was looking grim. Kathleen was a just a breath away from the other side.

Blind and lost in a world of fear and pain, Kathleen awoke from a medically induced coma to find herself longing for a comprehensible voice to pass her desolate existence. Language made no sense, and the reality of her dark, lonely world made her question her own survival. Was this the world she was destined to live in, one that few enter and even fewer ever leave, or was this merely part of the journey as a severe traumatic brain injury survivor? She had enough coherence to pray for death and freedom from the isolation and pain, yet felt extreme guilt knowing that she had sinned by simply asking.

The challenges Kathleen had to face were, and still are, endless. She found herself reliving her infancy, entirely reliant on others for survival. In time she had to re-learn everything including how to talk, how to walk, and how to function with simple, everyday tasks. To her, every step was a challenge; every word was a lesson, every touch was anew. It was like starting all over again.

Throughout her journey, Kathleen would never know for certain what was in store for her each day. Her mind would open like a box of memory releasing a random story: perhaps a journey back in time to bring joy and comfort, or a dark emotion filled with obnoxious hate and throwaways that should never have existed. She learned to work through the memories, to cherish the good and to learn from but quickly dismiss the bad.

Before the severe traumatic brain injury, Kathleen's talents did not include drawing, yet somehow sketches of the visions she witnessed during her near-death experiences began to show up everywhere. They were on tablets and any paper for which she could get her hands. Mostly involving her recollection of Jesus Christ when he told her that it was not her time to go, these heavenly inspired drawings eventually led to paintings. The colors started out as pastel watercolors and later blossomed into magnificent oil-based hues.

Several times the visions came to Kathleen, always with the same magnificent colors and brilliance. The stars, the sky, the ocean, and life within our world all came flooding in like a never-ending story, so much so, that she felt that they needed to be released due to overload. There was so much input that it needed to be shared; to be released.

In her recovery, Kathleen promised herself that if she survived, she would find a way to give back - to help others who touched the edge of life as she did. Through her art, using oil on canvas, she paints every day. Kathleen knows that her newfound talent is a gift, offered in exchange for what she has lost. She can no longer play her beloved violin or guitar, her martial arts are an incapability, and even speech is sometimes difficult, but give her a brush and a canvas, and her brain comes alive with astounding vision.

Kathleen's journey has been one of strength, determination, perseverance, and above all, faith. Her need to share continues to grow day by day. It is her new gift from God that she openly shares with anyone who desires to know the true story. To Kathleen, every sunrise is a mystery and every day is a new canvas full of possibility, just waiting to be painted.

"We are all granted the gifts of life, and some are quite incredible, but when God takes them away from tragedy, we're left bewildered and lost. To wonder is natural, but to pity, is to waste. Move on, after the shock wears off and the senses have regained their stamina, for tomorrow brings a new story, new pages to your continuing story." – **Kathleen Newhouse**
