

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Where do you live, he asked,

“In Connemara” I replied. “Where’s that?”,

“Its in Ireland, on the Wild Atlantic Way. I live on the edge of the land, next step the vast ocean, next step the Americas”.

“What’s it like?”

“Its like living on a rugged piece of land jutting out over eternity...”

“That sounds dangerous”..it is, very. It is dangerous because everything is wild and rather unpredictable, just like my own heart, wild. Its dangerous living here for one thing, because the mists can come down at a moments notice obscuring your vision, and if your half way up Diamond Hill or out at sea thats anything but safe.

Ah, but living on the edge you don’t know whats going to happen next. And that can be exciting, if daunting.

I feel I have lived on the edge all my life...and most of the time I like it. I enjoy the frisson of possible danger and pitting myself against the elements. I relish a challenge and seldom take the ‘safe’ road or the highway preferring instead to take my chances on the side roads. And unlike those who maybe ‘test’ the waters of life, I dive in with both feet, no matter how deep or how strong the current is. Living on the edge means I take a lot of chances and try to have ‘no regrets’ if things go wrong or I stumble into trouble. Not surprising really since as a young girl, Edith Piaf’s immortal song ‘Je ne regrette rien’ became my motto as I strode forwards into adult life, determined to have no regrets and relieved to leave an uneasy childhood behind. Childhood for me, being born in extremely dangerous circumstances in this Wild Atlantic land, was already a rocky affair, so I got used to living on the edge, perilously balanced on the knife edge between life and death. I came to consider nature with its predicable cycles, as a hand I could count on, and a place I could lie down in. God was never a man with a fluffy beard living in the sky, God was more like a Goddess and lived in the land on which my frail house stood, and in the sea surrounding us. God was in the animals that nestled close to us for warmth, and in the wind that caressed me fiercely. God was in the earth, that very earth I came from and loved so deeply and with such a fierceness that I held it to my bones to stop me from falling off the edge.

Life here on this rugged ledge of the Wild Atlantic was what you made it. And in some ways it’s unpredictability and harshness gave you wings and an ability to survive no matter what. Being cradled by nature and having a trust in life itself is implicit to living on this edge, as paradoxical as this may seem. The constancy of nature reminds me I am part of the heartbeat of the world and restores in me some kind of order and calm when questions lie like opened paperclips in my mind. Nature eases the turbulent storms that might rack my heart and tear at my soul so that everything in me lies orderly like a neatly ploughed field. And the questions

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lie down like tired cows after a day's grazing. It seems to me that Living on the edge means having to have complete trust...not to fall into the sea and drown, not to be blown into the abyss, not to be burnt out of existence by the wind like the tender leaves of my trees fighting hard to survive the fire of the salt laden wind. Those who live here on the edge grow used to being moulded and remoulded and at times wonder how it happens without our even noticing.

Living on the edge means taking risks and I do, emotional risks. Falling for the lure of exotic but essentially unknowable and often dead ended romance means frequent tumbles some that draw blood when the sharpness of heartbreak cuts deep. But with no regrets I generally pick myself up and dust myself off ready for the next adventure. Living on the edge means being fearless in the face of adversity and I can say that I am that. Danger and a sense of adventure is implicit to living on the edge so that I open doors that have seldom been opened and travel down roads less travelled, and where there is no path, I forge my own and get used to the sense of aloneness that comes with the territory.

Now-After a life time of taking risks and chances and being burnt by the wind and the vicissitudes of the heart, I have however, at a more mature age, grown a little tired and a tad more cautious. And although living on the edge still has its charm, for the sake of my adrenal system I am seeking a more calm, peaceful and secure life where the danger of falling is minimal. And where I can rely on a fair dose of sunshine to strengthen my ageing bones. I may seek to rest awhile in smooth pastures although I doubt my wild heart will cease to beat to life on the edge.

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Sometimes, like life, the journey is hard, its tough, and we have to navigate fallen branches and stones on the way.

Life's journey is like walking in nature, sometimes its easy and sometimes more difficult and we stumble as we climb the mountains of our challenges. And often, if the road or path is a winding one, which it usually is, then we cannot see too far ahead of us but we trudge on nonetheless, trusting, because trust is all we have along with our courage and determination to pursue our path diligently.

Why do we fear our vulnerability, our gentleness and the tenderest part of us? We imagine that if we have a tender heart with all it's petals open like a flower, that we will be stepped on and crushed...but like a flower, our heart never dies, merely sleeps awhile.....and blooms again...

There are times when we have to cross the rivers or even seas of our pain and our sorrow and heartbreak, and when these come, it takes us time to cross. For there is no rushing of grief, of sorrow, and of the process of healing. Patience and endurance, those hardest of spiritual qualities, can only be achieved through LIVING and enduring.