

A woman survives fungal meningitis, develops epilepsy, goes into a 17-day coma, and wakes up to become an artist.

The Flowers Were Talking to Me

by Robert De Filippis

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*The Flowers Were
Talking to Me*

ROBERT DE FILIPPIS



*Debbie
Motsinger's
story of faith
& discovery*

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Talking to Me*

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*A Story of
Faith and
Discovery*

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Foreword

The idea that art and epilepsy are connected is not new. For some time people have examined this relationship. Even today, the Epilepsy Foundation is still committed to this research. Debbie Motsinger, the subject of this book, is one of the epileptic artists whose brain is being compared to the brains of famous artists throughout the ages—artists such as Van Gogh and Michelangelo. These artists are believed to have had epilepsy, as Debbie has. Of course, the people of those times didn't have the scientific knowledge to prove that they were epileptic, so all we can do is speculate, yet anecdotal evidence has convinced historians and art scholars. All one needs to do is see Van Gogh's *Starry Night* to suspect that he saw the world differently.

The cognitive sciences, especially the study of human brain functions, are advancing daily, and the

discoveries are awe-inspiring. Even though we know a great deal more now, there still remains a great deal to learn about how our brains do what they do.

If we are to accept the old saying that we only use a small percentage of our brain's capacity, no one really knows our full potential. Every now and again, though, we get a glimpse of what's possible. This is a story about what's possible in one woman's life.

Debra Phillips Motsinger certainly didn't know that her brain trauma would unlock a talent that must have been dormant for the first forty-one years of her life. The only question that remains in her story is whether that talent is a by-product of her brain trauma. No one can answer that question definitively. Was it always there, or was it produced by the trauma?

This book will take the reader on an emotional ride through the stormy gestalt that has been Debra's life since her medical crisis. Each reader will come to his or her own conclusion.

Debra's art is delicate and beautiful. The artwork of many epileptics is stark and violent, as an expression of their pain. Even though she experiences her seizures as a sinking into darkness, her art doesn't reflect it. It is open and uplifting, pretty, and delicate.

She explains, "I myself can't help but wonder why my art is different from others. Do they have

deeper seizures? Are they closer to death than I have reached, or do I pass this dark place and go deeper to a place of peace? It is a celebration of nature and its beauty—a way of preserving the beauty to be found around us so everyone can enjoy it. I think another reason I gravitated to nature was all that I could do for almost three years was look out the window and see nature. I couldn't bend down to pick a flower, which I so longed to do. There is something about nature that calms the soul and brings you closer to God. If you look at a flower, you can see that no man can create a petal and its color. Only God can do that. They are so perfect—every petal.”

Once you know Debra, you begin to understand why her art is so inspirational. It seems to be the antidote that protects her from the grip of her current condition. It brings meaning to her life and provides comfort in her times of pain.

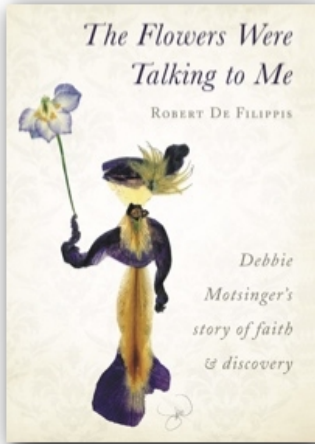
Enduring constant pain is part of her life. It does not show up in her art. In fact, her art makes her life of pain manageable. It is our hope that this book will do the same for the many people who live with pain and debilitating conditions.

It is in this context that her art and her story should be an inspiration for others who suffer, not only from epilepsy, but also from all kinds of chronic

illnesses. Being alone in illness is sometimes as painful as the illness itself. Even though she says that she was never physically alone, she explains, “You can be in a room full of people and still feel alone inside your head with your thoughts.”

Maybe her story will not only provide comfort to those with chronic illnesses but also the companionship that is so important in coping with all human suffering. Hopefully, once read, this book will forever be a companion for any reader who suffers as a part of their lives. If nothing else, simply viewing Debbie’s art is uplifting. For those of us who are fortunate enough to enjoy good health, it will be an inspiration and a warning. The warning—celebrate each good day you have and be thankful. This truly is the day the Lord has made. Please don’t waste it.

—Robert De Filippis
January 2010



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