

Into
the Light

Tammera Mart

Into the Light

As the brightness of God's truth shines upon us, a shadow falls behind—an extension of what we are when the light illuminates. When the truth is obstructed, no shadows exist because what once illuminated us is blocked by the very shadows that are not yet an extension of ourselves ... for what we think is not really what we see ... at all.

In life's simplest form, wanting only of basic needs, Walks in the Dark was born into a world of shadows. They were unrecognizable, for in the innocence of childhood the shadows that existed were as much a part of her world as life itself.

She smiled, laughed, and played along with her older brother, Walks Alone. But he did not laugh nearly as much. Older and wiser, he held a suspicion of the darkness. At times, a movement in the shadows caught his attention. Walks Alone and his sister would stop playing and try to pierce the darkness by tossing in small fistfuls of light. The shifting would stop, but the shadows remained, even darker after the light dissipated.

On most occasions, the two children romped near the edge of the dark expanse and ignored it. But one day, with her spirit running high and the temptation too great, Walks in the Dark started towards the mysterious place. Walks Alone pulled on her hand and tried to stop her, but she jerked free and ran ahead. He followed. The two ran fast, exiting on the far side, out of breath and laughing.

The unknown that slowed her before became a curiosity, and a day later, Walks in the Dark stepped into the shadows behind her parents, Weary and Wanderer. A dark fog engulfed them. She could see little except the swirling darkness. Along with everything familiar, her parents disappeared.

Alone and scared, Walks in the Dark walked and groped. Tears spilled down her face. Different times, she stopped and turned in circles. Finally, near the shadow's edge, she stumbled and fell into the arms of her brother.

Many days passed before their parents emerged. Walks in the Dark ran to her mother, but she was gently pushed aside. She didn't try to approach Wanderer. The distant look in his eyes

showed his focus was elsewhere. Walks in the Dark sat against a far wall, pulled up her knees, and for a long time, watched the shifting movements of the abhorrent place.

The next day, while Walks in the Dark and Walks Alone were playing, Wanderer gave a wave and with a quick backward glance, he stepped into the shadows, never to return.

In a new home, life fell into a routine where much to Walks in the Dark's surprise, there were no shadows ... inside. Uncertainty came when she stepped onto the front step. A gray cloud hung overhead, casting a dim cover.

Walks Alone noticed his sister hesitate, went to her, and grabbed her hand. "It's okay ... the shadow is dim, you can't get lost."

Walks in the Dark smiled. That was a happy but short time for, in despair, Weary had fallen prey to the wolves that circled her world. She found solace in the form of Conqueror, whom she said chased the wolves away. With relief and gratitude, Weary picked up her children and carried them to Conqueror's home. Walks in the Dark glanced at her brother and pointed toward the eyes and mouth of Conqueror. Walks Alone nodded secretively, hinting that he noticed the well-concealed fangs and shifty eyes.

The young girl stood outside the door of their new home, hesitant to enter, for inside all was darkness. Walks Alone came up beside her and smiled. "It's not so bad. C'mon, we'll stick together." But she couldn't make herself move. She remembered the darkness from before, how she had gotten lost once and how darkness had swallowed her father. And this ... this was deeper and darker.

She squeezed her brother's hand as a small animal, named Fear, leapt all around her, nipping and scratching. It forced them to enter the intimidating place.

Weary and Conqueror worked much of the time, and the two children found escape from the darkness by venturing outside. They laughed and played in the sunshine. In small jars, they captured sunshine and hid them under their bed. Then, whenever they had to walk through the darkest parts of the house alone, they carried a light to help avoid wrong turns that led into frightful corners where Fear might lurk.

One summer night, Walks in the Dark stood in her bedroom doorway and watched as a pinhead of light approached. When it came close enough to illuminate the bearer's face, she saw it was Conqueror. Fear stood by his side, his haunches up as a low growl escaped his snarled mouth. Walks in the Dark pressed back against the door jamb, her knees weak and gut sick with the sight, for the man had forgotten his costume and the wolf was clearly visible.

She stood paralyzed as Conqueror ravaged the room, snatching up jars of sunshine. "There is to be NO MORE sun in this house!" He pulled her down a dark hallway, shoved her into a small room and slammed the door. She backed herself against the opposite wall and hugged her arms around her small body. Then she heard it—a whimpering. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Walks in the Dark knelt and wrapped her arms around her brother.

Walks in the Dark and Walks Alone spent two years in the tiny room, growing accustomed to the darkness, barely able to hear the yipping of Fear. In fact, Walks in the Dark wondered if he had died ... yet she didn't care.

When the door finally opened, both children shielded their eyes to the stinging pain of the light. Whisked away, they were placed in the backseat of a car. Once inside, the driver turned, and both kids gasped.

“Mother.” Her face was pale and blistered. The kids learned Conqueror had locked Weary in another room. She had freed herself and threw open the shades, filling the house with a blinding light that forced Conqueror to leave.

Conqueror never returned. They were now on their way to a new home. The feeling was familiar. Walks Alone held her hand as they entered with Weary. The light was dim enough it didn't hurt, but it wasn't so dark to be frightful.

Walks in the Dark followed Walks Alone outside but stopped at the edge of the porch. “I don't understand why that dark cloud looms over the house. It's darker than before.”

“But it keeps us safe from the blistering light. Just accept it ... it's no big deal.” Walks Alone gave a quick wave and jogged down the sidewalk.

But I want to understand! She wasn't afraid; in fact, she'd lived so long in the darkness, it was the bright light beyond the shade that troubled her. But she chose to follow Walks Alone, and together they learned to skirt the brightest spots where light caused their skin to sting and their eyes to burn.

“It's not so hard, is it?” Walks in the Dark commented to her brother as they skipped from one dimly lit shadow to another.

“No ... I told you. There's nothing to be afraid of.”

Walks in the Dark spent many hours in the shadows. Even the darker places became familiar. With each passing day, the light became more intense. She closed the curtains in the house and left the room if anyone brought in sunshine. She thought the jars were pretty, but the light hurt, so she turned away.

A world of comfort opened for Weary when she met Disciple. He was kind and helped her blisters heal. From the shadows, Walks in the Dark watched and believed his sincerity, but she felt a pull to step back deeper into her protective corner of darkness.

Sunshine filled Disciple's home, and the cloud that had loomed overhead disappeared. The light burned with painful intensity, so Walks in the Dark fashioned a cloak and fastened it firmly around her entire body. The disguise allowed her to pass through the home and stand in the light for short periods. Most importantly, her blistered skin was well hidden.

After a time, the cloak wore thin, the light sifted through, and Walks in the Dark retreated to her room and the comfort of total darkness. There she rested.

“Walks in the Dark, won't you come out?” said Disciple.

“No, thanks, I'm fine.” The girl laid on her bed, content with her own company. For two days, he tried to coax her out, but she only came as far as the door between them.

The solitude came as no real concern until Walks in the Dark heard voices filtering through the house. She wanted to venture out, take part in the excitement, but as her hand rested on the doorknob, she caught sight of the light that seeped through the crack at the bottom of her door. Surely if I open this door, I'll be blasted ... I can't take the pain. She let her hand fall from the door and returned to her bed.

Rest eluded her, for her only thought was getting out that door. Disciple returned two days later. Walks in the Dark sat atop her bed, a quilt wrapped around her body, as chills swept through her.

“Walks in the Dark,” Disciple called. “Won't you please come out? There's someone here who wants to meet you.”

“I-I-I ... c-can't.” She sobbed and shivered.

“Walks in the Dark, what's wrong?” The voice demanded.

“I-I ... d-don't know. Please c-come ... in.”

Silence. “I'm sorry. It's too dark. I can't see. You must come out here so I can help you.”

“N-No ... I-I ... can't.”

“I know you don't think you can, but it's safe. We want to help you.”

“N-No ... It ... h-hurts ... too much.”

Disciple sighed. “It will hurt at first, but then it'll get better.” Silence followed and for days Disciple pleaded with Walks in the Dark to come out. They talked through the closed door, neither wanting to enter the world of the other.

“W-Where's Walks A-Alone?” The girl asked Disciple. There was no answer. “Please ... tell m-me.”

“He's gone. He walked into a shadow and hasn't come back yet.”

“Oh...” she fell to her side and covered her head with the quilt. The darkness itself burned within her.

Minutes, hours, or maybe days passed. Then someone pounded on her door. Covered with the quilt as chills pulled the life out of her, Walks in the Dark groaned.

“Walks in the Dark, answer! There is someone here to visit you. Can he come in?”

Was she hearing correctly? Someone wanted to enter her room? She lifted her head to reply but fell back, weak.

Another knock.

Desperation clamored deep inside and forced out a fragile, “Please, come in.”

The door opened. She covered her eyes with the quilt. The door closed, and the nearing shuffle of steps told her the person stood by her bed.

“Walks in the Dark, pull the quilt back so you can see my face and know I have come to help you.”

“How ... c-can ... I see ... y-your face ... in the d-darkness?” There was no reply but the echoes of the soft command enticed her to withdraw the quilt and open her eyes. Before her stood a man not of brightness, but of clarity. The room was dark, but none of it touched him. She reached out, sure it was a dream, but he stepped back and said in a soft, distinct voice, “Do not touch me yet ... not until you know who I am.”

“Tell me who you are.” Walks in the Dark noticed for the first time she was not chilled. She lifted her hands and looked at them. Still blistered but the shaking had ceased. And how was it her eyes did not burn? She touched them with her fingertips then glanced back to the man. He remained silent, smiling as she soaked up the respite.

“I don't understand.”

“Follow me Walks in the Dark and I will help you understand so you can leave this darkness.”

She scooted off the bed and stood before him. He turned, leading the way deep into the shadows. The darkness that filled her entire room, her entire being, he penetrated.

She was not scared, only sorry she was trapped in this desolate place that lay broken up and exposed by the man who walked before her. He laid open the darkness. Walks in the Dark covered her mouth to stifle a shameful cry as ugly ghoulish faces swirled in the darkness, crying out in a familiar voice. Did she know them? She touched her face and felt the blisters, the disfigurement.

“Look here,” the man motioned to the mirror on her wall. She stood in front of it and stared. The man stepped behind her, beautiful in contrast. Shame retracted in her gut, and she doubled over, sick over the ghoulish figure she had become. “I’m so sorry that I allowed this to happen.”

“Look again.” His voiced soaked up her guilt. She stood to her full height, and her mouth fell open as she glanced in the mirror. The blisters were gone. Her face had been restored and held color and life. “This is who you are. Are you ready to walk out of this darkness into the light?”

“But ... the pain—”

He reached out his hand.

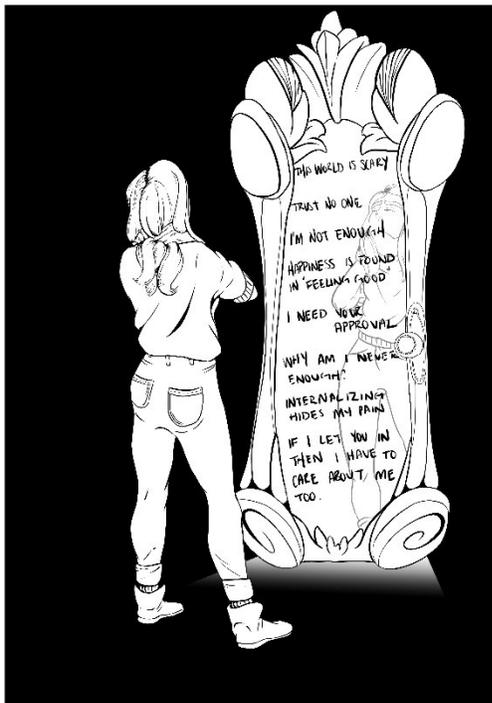
“Do you know who I am?” His eyes emanated a kindness that attracted Walks in the Dark. She shook her head, half-afraid he would leave her for not knowing. He smiled. “Walks in the Dark, I am the light. And there’s nothing to fear.”

She looked at his extended hand, glowing in the surrounding darkness, and placed hers in it.

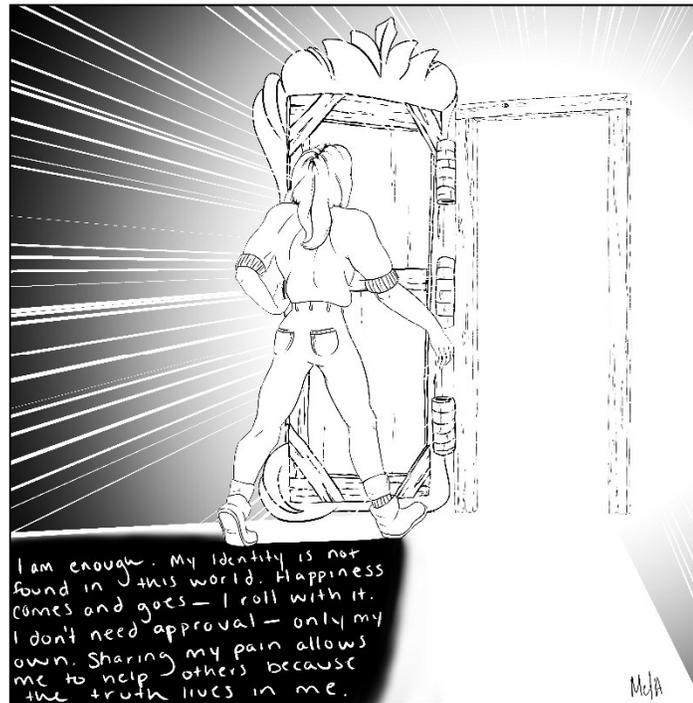
The joy and warmth that radiated from his eyes flowed through his hand and into hers. She continued to stare afraid that if she moved it might end. When he gripped her hand and ushered her into the light, she followed. They stepped over the threshold and out the bedroom door. The pain burned through her, but the grip on her hand held fast. She wasn’t alone.

She did not let go.

Living in Darkness



Into the Light



Author's Note

In the darkness, as a child, my source for all truth came from my parents and other adults. In school, I listened to other students and teachers. In the community, I listened to neighbor kids, bullies, and wretched babysitters. My truth was based on their depiction of me. The Living in Darkness diagram shows a girl looking at her reflection. Infused with her image are these beliefs and ideals the world (made up of good and bad people) taught her. But she doesn't feel good about her image. See her anguish. There is an illusion happening here. The ornate mirror, big and attractive in its appearance, reflects only the truths we've learned from the world--that's worldview--and worldview lies. It's not our true reflection. It's not our true image because truth is obstructed.

No one taught me a different way to measure the truth until I was a thirteen, and I went to church for the first time.

I took my mom's Bible, a little white zippered book with gold tipped pages so thin and crisp, they snapped with a quick turn. I was so proud to have this book that proved I was someone. When the song leader instructed us to open our books to a certain page, I *unzip-zip-zipped* my little book.

My brother elbowed me. "Stupid. That's a Bible not a hymnal." He pointed to the book on the backside of the pew in front of us. Age thirteen, I didn't know the difference between a Bible and hymnal.

Just like I didn't know there was a difference between the way I saw myself (my truth) and the way God saw me (His truth). But it was a beginning, an opening that allowed him to pierce the darkness and show me that I am a beautiful, unique creation, hand-made by God with a soul that craves the light.

The second diagram, *Into the Light*, shows a girl ignoring her reflection and how the world defines her. She looks beyond the glamour of the world (mirror) and opens her mind and heart to the brightness of God's truth. As the brightness of God's truth shines upon her ... a shadow falls behind. In that shadow is an understanding that what she has experienced in life is an extension of herself, but it doesn't define her. It's not her image. As long as she stays in the light, the girl has the ability to discern and control the shadow. If she closes the door, truth is obstructed, lies return.