

Two Sides of Darkness (Endarkenment)

by Clara Carter

I wrote this devotional in response to our series Learning to Move in the Dark. But it also seems to me to reflect two sides of Lent, both the knowing I am in the wilderness and the reality that I am there with Jesus.

As a small child, I was afraid of darkness. I don't think I was born that way. I learned to be afraid. For several months I grew in comfortable darkness, and at the end of those months, was thrust suddenly into a room full of bright lights. "She is not crying," a voice says. I held my eyes tightly closed against the light as the voice who was holding me upside down attempted to make me breathe a lung full of air. "What's wrong with her," she's refusing to breathe." In frustration he whacked my bottom hard for the sixth time making me swing like a pendulum. Keeping my eyes close, I emitted an angry scream, and tried to immerse my being back into the safe darkness from which I was abruptly pulled. The warm darkness that had comforted me and cared for me during the first nine months of growth was no more.

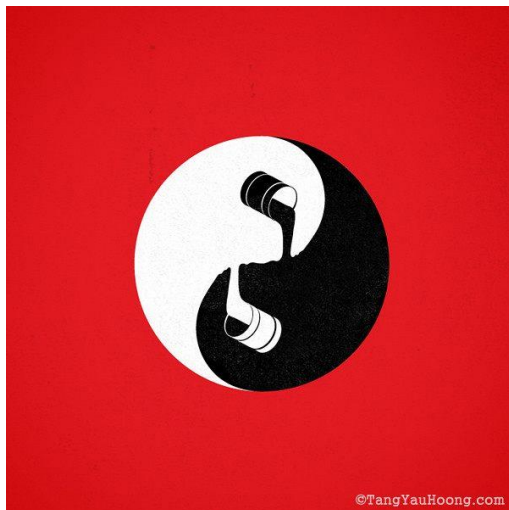


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How did I learn to be afraid? "The bogey man" was a means of control used by grownups to make children behave in a certain manner, to be more

manageable without the parents having to expend a lot of energy. “Wait until you go to sleep the bogey man will get you.” Can you imagine trying to sleep with the bogey man waiting in the dark to grab you and take you away? Eventually, I came to realize that the bogey man was not real, just an imagination fueled by fear.

As I grew, darkness became my friend. I could sneak upon people and scare them. If I wanted to read in the dark, it was possible to do so with a flashlight (*we still did not have electricity*).

Living in the country woods there were no streetlights to compete with the stars. Lying on homemade quilts with my sisters in the yard at night in the summertime, the moon shining, and the Milky Way stretched across the heavens, the darkness felt like a fuzzy blanket wrapping itself around us as one by one we’d fall asleep.

Darkness is beautiful, especially in the summer when the stars shine brilliantly in the heavens at night. There is the North Star, once used by early travelers as a guide to find their way home or arrive in distant lands. Now it reminds me that when obstacles or undesirable circumstances arise, by keeping faith in God, it’s like focusing on the North Star (Jesus) to guide you.

God’s love makes a way.