

Dead of Night



Sierra V. Fedorko

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All Scripture quotations taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover Artwork: Emaline Westbrook

*To my Grandpa Walt.
Your faithfulness to God has changed my life.*

when one door closes

What happens when grief tells you different, when joy
is found in the opposite...

Doors don't always open.

Maybe not every happy story fits between four walls, a
white picket fence.

story of a seed

How confusing for a seed to float through fresh air,
then land softly on the ground fast into darkness.

Quiet nothing—just silence—not knowing
sunless space meant breaking for growing to hold in
the light. Finally being, not floating.

Confusing, yes.

But not the end.

somehow

Half out of winter, but I can't pretend it's spring. What exactly do I call water from sky when I'm soaked through with sun?

How do I explain the tree collapsing in my soul but me no longer at risk to fall? What's the word for birds dancing in dead fields, and me smiling but longing for all things finally flowering!

How does the empty vase still feel like hope when I'm holding it in my hands? What do you call peaceful sounds on window panes that look like trailing tear stains?

I've no answer, but I do recall sidewalk cracks and yellow flowers bursting forth and through! I bet they had questions, too, but still they bloomed, how beautiful—and still we remember even now such goodness there somehow!

greenhouse

What will get in the garden tonight? What kind of damage will the roses bear? How many rats will come with teeth baring? If I bite my nails far enough, and hold my breath long enough, will I change the way this season will bloom? With bleeding nails in a black hole of minutes, I'm more tired than what sleep can give. But I can't be everywhere at all, I tried. And I can't be anywhere right now, I wish...

But in this chaos of my humanity, gentle Whispering, *I AM watching over you, and you will watch roses bloom, and many more beside.* But I dig my nails in harder. I'm better at erratic breathing. Better at frantic shaking. Better at restless sleeping. What if I knew? Every last rat, every last sickening grief? What if I knew? What if I knew? What if I knew everything? Imagine! (Can't! But still, still! I try! Madness!) I'm a sleepwalking, wordless praying woman—falling, flailing, faltering! But always finding out every black hole I've ever dug deep in the dead of night, becomes a Greenhouse instead.

I was never left without.

all that rattles

Rattlesnake climbing into flowerbed has me glad we made that—a place for flowers that is. Peril slithering somewhere good claims no indelible thing though it coils, poses, strikes...

And I smile knowing this.

A transient, poisonous thing—the snake—that ends in a shallow grave. The flowerbed wasn't made for snakes, or meant for shading them. I wanted roses, endured their thorns, and it took awhile, but every time I quaked, *"I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living,"*

I did.

Unrattled now by things that do, untethered now to what ifs—poisonous ribbon pressing in, venom teasing, slithering—but right to the grave as always, and I in the garden anyway. I in the garden. Still!

regardless

I don't see the roses, don't believe the daisies, can't recall the seed from which the sunflower bloomed, can't feel the sunshine resting on my arms, nor the breeze on my skin, nor the joy in my bones. But I stumble on the zinnias I never planted there, and I respond to my son calling out *Mom*. I can hold my daughter's small hands in mine, can't ignore the endless sparkle in her blue eyes, and I must harvest these late summer tomatoes spilling from the vine. So it would seem, though I resist, God's goodness to me remains regardless of my good feelings. Regardless of my falling apart, my forgetfulness, all my resistance!

Regardless.

Regardless.

Regardless.

I rinse the tomatoes in the sink. Tuck the children into bed. Sunflowers fill the strawberry vase. Bare moonlight where broad daylight had been. Even still, even yet! Light abides, abiding.

Regardless.

Regardless.

Regardless.

testimony

That *day* on your calendar probably feels like Fire Season, California. Thick smoke threatening your lungs, ash where it should have been good, a season not part of the four. Flames towering miles away still suffocate you somehow, but just barely and just enough to leave your throat scratchy and dry. Your eyes are desperate for rain, or tears...

Whatever comes first, you guess.

But I heard the women talking, and all their homes burned down. Right down to nothing! But they just kept mentioning their *roses*, and how they all came back. *Bright Hope Fury*, they chatter, *where fires can't go and never have the last word*. Sorrow is buried with seed, wreckage down with the roots, and all spring up together,

Roses back better than ever.

nightsong till daybreak

Night colder than I've ever been, but lullaby sweet
rises with moonlight, and I hear between numbing
mist—

Do you remember sunlight, morning dew on roses?
Do you remember warm, jagged stones, and soft green
grass beside? Do you remember birdsong, marigolds,
blue sky? Do you remember that hillside bathed in
such joy of life? Do you remember how hope wafts
from damp, broken earth? And how you sat in that
brokenness breathing in such promise! And also how
those seeds you housed in thick glass jars burst glad
from pressing darkness into homeward dwellings for
wildness!

You've heard this song before. Listen! You've lived the
impossible once. Breathe! You know how this story
goes. Rejoice! Broken is the way. Endure! Day, soon.
Remember!

thick of it

Not always, but perhaps sometimes the night feels long because it is not night at all, but these fixated, stubborn eyes of mine go self-exiled to the night. Full days of glistening light shut out in disbelief, stiff-armed by my self-pity, and these mechanical, manic fingers turn the eerie music up and notes ring long, rush slow, familiar...

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

Daybreak, dawn, sunrise. Higher, higher still! But I can't see, and I refuse! I'm busy again today!

Eerie notes I love to play...

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

Eerie notes I hate to hear...

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

Maybe I should smash this box, but maybe one more time.

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

Midnight-midnight Mine.

Wind up, wind up again.

spiritual warfare

~~I want you alone, dismayed. I want you frozen in time.
I want your limbs unmoving and both lungs
breathless, reeling. I want you pale with terror. I want
you doubting, spiraling. I want you preserved in
shame. I want darkness echoing in your mind. I want
you insane.~~

But I scream out for the LORD and He hears my voice.
And I remember there is *nothing* that can separate me
from Him.

~~Still the madness whispering. Midnight mirages ever
clamoring. Louder, louder lou...~~

Try, try again. Turns out I have the Truth, and every
single time you try I turn into your lost cause as the
Truth turns me into no lost thing. Unfortunately for
you I'm not afraid to scream!

And I go free.

prayer

Bombs bursting over cities, babies ripped out of the womb, women being trampled, mothers drowning in the deep. Men crushed under hatred, good fathers cast like lepers, and kids no longer falling from play but to suicide. And we're screaming! GOD, THERE IS INJUSTICE, THERE IS EVIL, SICKNESS, HORROR! But it feels like here we are just whispering to thin air.

Raging war just to bend in prayer to our God who says He is Peace, Just, Goodness, Love. But He's strong enough to calm us, and His Presence meets our questions, but we still don't understand. So we're shaking, quivering, shattering, then crying, singing, sleeping, and we wake up in green pastures to God singing over us. And while we writhed and retched in terror, His arms, His songs, His love always covered us.

More bombs, still waters. More death, soul rest. More loss, but joy steadfast. Questions linger, but we hand them over softly with ourselves. And we are made of sorrow, some doubt, all agony, but He does not scorn us or laugh at our offering.

So many lost things, such humanity—but we hold
onto Him—white knuckles, faith-hearted. And here
we find our faith in God is never put to shame.

Victory is ours.

Emmanuel, God with us.

The Lord is our Shepherd.

We shall not want.

groanings too deep

Thunder creeps on tiptoes, claps down, and always we least expect it. Coffins lower at every turn, and every fork in the road to sorrow. Sickness sits in tiny bones and mothers beg it be their own marrow, their own marrow, instead! Nights end to nightmares wake and dawn breaks to dull eyes, and all of us on tiptoes—on tiptoes to see the hope of our Lord...

And there we always find it when it feels impossible, where we least expect it to survive. And every fork in the road with flowers to accompany our sorrow. And every mother awakens a well of strength and peace for pleading with the Lord never comes to nothing! And nights end to new mercies to live nightmares without going under, to rise on tiptoes once again, to say in the dawn of all these broken things,

“I believe I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!”

And we shall!

sweet dreams

Night as dark as ever, but midnight hours into song
when shaking heart finds peaceful rhythm, and
quaking soul led back to Hope of which it never left.

Night as dark as ever, but stars ever delight as we look
ere long with pointed fingers at goodness in the sky
and Goodness in our lives.

Night as dark as ever but the uncanny quiet it
demands elbows us until we've nowhere else to go, so
we sink at last into the Rest of which we can't live
without.

Night as dark ever and ever hard to bear, but ever with
the Light so never borne alone, and foreboding cast
aside, and us asleep at last.

And to sweet dreams no less!

to the bone

For certain the end would be me in bed in endless pain. For certain the end would be barren womb and emptied me in gaping, bitter years. For certain the end would be me on the edge, cliffside forever, and no hope allowed. For certain, of course! For certain, I knew it!

Heartbroken, heartbroken! Heartbroken!

But very soon all my certain things broke open too...

Me in bed in endless pain and peace in me with no end. Me with emptied womb to fullest joy bursting in, and years go by with laughter present then babies in these very arms! Me on the edge but keenest hope pressing sure into stepping stones until on solid ground, and a crushed and broken heart cheered to the bone!

Heartbroken, heartbroken! Heartbroken!

But all my very certain things soon broke open too!

threshold

Like waking up in late winter to birdsong short and sweet is my heart unveiled at last to beat soft into sure joy, as though all that frost and all that darkness never held an icy grip or cast a chilling death stare. But of course it did, and it was thirsty war. Out for my blood. But acute hope carefully tending my wounds, always turning me back to wisdom, sat at my bedside waiting until I awoke at last to hear the Wellspring of my soul—

*Time to get up now.
You wintered fierce and well,
but flowers blooming loud and softly soon.
Don't miss this planting season,
the wildflowers for your hand.
Be on your way! Sun is warm today!
I know where the green pastures are,
and I can't wait to lead you there.
Over the threshold now,
no power in it anymore.*

eyewitness account

Dusk settles over, and I feel the change of day, but I feel no light within go out. Arms like wings spread in heartiness like I've never known aching emptiness, or had loss knit into my earthen bones, or felt the pulse of hopelessness, or cried scared though safe at home.

Wouldn't it be something if I'd never known these things?

But what one might call the ugly truth, I've found a sort of wonder...

These things have been so real, yes. And yet! But still! Even so!

Dusk will find me walking with arms spread like wings, healing in my soul, sure steps evermore, joy till Ever-on! Light has trained my dim eyes to work well in the dark, so all this darkness hanging heavy is known and seen and felt without vast despair!

Might that be the proof of goodness I'm always looking for?

riverface

Looking down into dark waters in the hush of shrill night hours, it is not the moon shining down the cold river, but my own face—clear as day—spilling over bright. Every feature rippling joy, eyes a radiant gold, hair made silver by every storm leaving deeper peace in its wake.

I'll cross this river in the dark, wade through these waters in the dead of night, and do so of strong mind and heart...

Dark waters soon won over. Night lost once again. And I go collapsing weak into the Shadow of His Wings...

Feel the courage twice ever stronger to keep steady, onward!

note to readers

Earlier this year I published my second poetry book, [*Swan Song of a Scarecrow*](#). In it I chronicle the first years of pregnancy, birth, and early motherhood—a poetic expression of how it has felt to boldly embrace God’s good gifts and to learn I could trust Him with my joy and blessings in the same way I could trust Him with my pain and grief. I could run headlong into life, into happiness, like a child! *Dead of Night* serves almost like a companion to [*Swan Song of a Scarecrow*](#) as it explores the complexity of one’s trust in God and the ebb and flow of that strengthening walk with Him. Nevertheless, *Dead of Night* delves so deeply into the spiritual wrestling, anguish, and triumphs of one’s faith that it stands a full story all its own. I often draw from my own personal experience, and you see it threaded throughout this body of work, but I *know* these poems span more than my own life. At the end of the day, we needn’t fear the dead of night. Light has trained our dim eyes to work well in the dark! We can walk this earthen life without despair, robust with hope, filled with joy.

Onward!

books

Hope Gives a Eulogy

Swan Song of a Scarecrow

free download

Girl with Good Bones

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