

## **Nightwalk**

It is late, much later than I would normally stay out. I am riding the late night bus to my destination, home. I appear to be the last rider on. I sit on the bus next to the window listening to my mp3.

I clear a spot on the fogged up window with the sleeve of my hooded sweatshirt. I look out to see the still darkness of my town pass by.

Thoughts of sorrow and guilt suddenly fill me. I take a deep painful breath as I try to push the thoughts out of me. They only sink deeper into my head.

I see my slight reflection on the window. My face is pale and my eyes are somewhat bloodshot. I try to make my face appear a little more enthusiastic by attempting to smile or tilt my head up a little, but I only keep a look of fear and hostility.

“What have I become?” I whisper to myself quietly.

I think to myself of all the pain I have recently encountered. I have tried to be someone that I could not, and it only led me to crash and fall while my peers watched contentedly. I have wasted time with things of barely any significance only to lose grasp of the things I had set as my highest priorities in life. I tried to fight back, but the more I fought, the more I lost.

I keep telling myself that I can go back, renew my life, and leave everything that I am guilty of behind. But now, everything seemed much worse than ever before. Now I struggle to find the strength to forget about everything and move on.

The bus comes to a stop at the end of my road. I take my backpack and get up to depart the transport.

“Have a nice night.” The male driver politely says to me as I walk off the bus.

“Thanks.” I say sullenly without even turning around.

The autumn night air is cool as it brushes past my face. Low flying clouds cover the sky. Once the bus roars off it is near complete darkness. The only source of light is

the dim moonlight shining through the thin layer of clouds plus a few street lights in the distance. There are absolutely no vehicles.

I close my eyes and tremble as I feel the darkness swallow me up. I open my eyes and look down onto my mp3 only to see that the battery is dead. I turn it off and put it away unhappy that I no longer have it to help alleviate the pain. Now the silence of the night is revealed. I know it is going to be a dreadful walk home.

I put my hood on and start walking. Ahead I see my street cut into the narrow pitch black valley. It is a long journey into that dark place where I live.

I take occasional glances around me. The darkness wraps around me like a serpent constricting my body. The calmness and quietness of the night gives that feeling that something is going to jump out and attack. I feel unsafe and fearful about what might happen. But I only continue walking.

The dark memories are invited back into my head. I try to ignore them and just focus on walking, but the agonizing pain is too powerful to disregard.

I then feel a presence of some kind. No, there are multiple presences. It is something of evil, something that is coming to destroy me!

I look around and try to see what it might be, but absolutely nothing catches my eye.

“Is anyone there?” I ask frightened.

I hear or see nothing, but I know there is something out there. I just keep walking, acting like nothing is happening.

I am now enclosed by the valley walls. All I see is almost all black. I am still not alone. I can now hear the breathing of whatever is following me. My heart beat increases. I feel them come closer, closer.

My pace quickens and I clench my fists tightly. I am both angry and fearful at the same time. I try to stay strong and ignore everything.

The breathing grows stronger and I hear what sounds like the footsteps of these beings approaching behind me. I want to scream for help, but I was too terrified to even mutter a syllable.

*I deserve this!* I think to myself. *I deserve to suffer this pain for all of the things that I've done!*

Visions of my mistakes revisit me. In this vision I see all of my peers laughing at me, my parents scolding me with disappointment, and all of my precious time being wasted away. I try to imagine what I could have been, what I could have done with my life. But these thoughts only fuel the bitterness that I have locked inside. All of the eyes of the different faces in my vision stare down, watching the individual with a dream break down and shatter into pieces. That broken individual is me.

All of the faces fade into the darkness. I can feel my eyes begin to water. I can't stomach the thoughts that my mind is producing.

I suddenly hear faint noises of what sound like sound like evil laughter come from the darkness. I quickly look around and listen. I hear a voice come from the darkness.

"Failure!" I hear whisper to me in a quiet and eerie voice.

"No." I say furiously under my breath.

*Why was this happening to me?* I ask in my mind. *Why is it that I have to suffer through all this emotional torment?*

"Worthless!" other voices say. "Corrupt, sinner, hopeless!"

They each call out a different word to me trying to weaken me and slow me down. *Perhaps this is a punishment worthy for a fool like me!* My mind tells me.

I quickly glance at the woods surrounding me. I observe what appear to be numerous shadows moving from place to place. I hear footsteps surround me and grow louder.

"Go away!" I try to cry out.

But their presence remains. I try walking faster to get away, but I fail to escape from these beings of evil. My vision blurs from sudden tears and I am unable to see where I am going.

I am almost blind, but I can feel them beside me. I sense a hand reaching out from the darkness. I quickly move away and slightly lose balance causing me to stumble to the left. I try to regain my balance, but something grabs my leg tightly and I fall to the ground unexpectedly. My head hits harshly onto the hard pavement of the road.

I lay on the ground in pain. I feel blood violently pour from my wound. The beings surround me. I feel like I am suffocating. I get back up and wipe some of the blood off my face. I continue to walk away in horror.

I am in some kind of nightmare. It is a sickening nightmare that I cannot wake up from. I am the victim!

"I'm sorry!" I cry in despair. "I'm so, so sorry! I was dumb, I was wrong! Please just give me another chance! Let me go!"

I hear the sound of rushing water. I was at the bridge crossing the creek.

"Liar, sinner!" they continue to say.

"No, it's not too late!" I return.

I feel hopeless and devastated. I don't know what to do. Then the words come to me slowly and quietly.

"Give up." I hear them say.

They gather around me, reminding me of each failure I have suffered through. I then finally come to a conclusion.

*Perhaps I really don't have any more hope. I have failed too many times. The best thing I can do right now is remove myself from all of the damage I have caused in my life.*

I stop struggling with the darkness and surrender. I am pulled over to the side of the bridge. I feel the railing and slowly climb to the other side. I stand on the narrow edge of the bridge and hold onto the railing. Tears mixed with blood mask my face. I listen to the water raging below. It is a mere thirty foot drop that I know I will not survive falling.

I shake violently as I let out a long depressing moan. My life flashes before me. I reminisce about all the times in my life good and bad. Everything I have accomplished appears to me along with every person, place, or event that has shaped my life up to today. My most recent painful memories conclude my vision.

I let go of the railing. I feel hands push me forward and I prepare to fall.

Suddenly, a bright streak of light appears to me. A small spark of hope amongst all the darkness. A faint presence that calls out to me saying, "It's never over!"

I lose stability and begin to slip off the edge. I rethink my decision.

"NO!" I scream as quickly turn and grasp the metal bar of the railing, preventing my fall.

I quickly and carefully pull my self back to the other side safely. I sprint off the bridge as I hear the dark creatures wail in anger.

"Failure! Give up!" They repeat once again.

I ignore them and retrieve my backpack and continue walking but they continue following. The wind picks up and their whispers turn into screams. They pull on me and try to make me fall, but I withstand their attacks and keep walking.

I then look down and see a snake quickly slither past my feet. I watch it as it retreats into a large, dark opening in the woods. I approach the opening slowly. Beyond all of the horrid screaming I hear a slow, deep growl and see a pair of red eyes appear.

Emerging from the darkness, I see a massive savage beast approach me. It has numerous horns and spikes jutting out of its rough, scaled skin. Its teeth look sharp enough to shred skin and it breaths a slow and heavy breath.

I collapse to my knees. The beast comes up to me and stares down at me with its bright crimson eyes. I want to surrender to it, let it devour me, but I cannot let it end like this after coming so far. With all fear dissipating, I stand back up and look the beast straight in the eye.

“No, you cannot control me.” I tell it. “I will not give you my life, I will not surrender! You have failed!”

The beast pulls in closer. I feel its breath of hatred burn the skin of my face. I do not back down. “You have no choice.” I tell it. “Leave, you and all of your minions. Leave now!”

The beast lets out a roar that causes the whole forest to tremble. It retreats back into the darkness and the screaming fades away.

The wind dies down and the moonlight cuts through the clouds lighting a path for me. My wound ceases to bleed.

I turn to finish my journey home. The remainder of it is peaceful and calm. I think about everything that just happened. I have resisted the urge to surrender, stood up to the beast, and drove away the darkness. It all seems like a brave and heroic thing that I have done. I almost feel invincible. I know that I have been given a second chance.

But then another thought comes to my head. I realize that it was not I alone who has done all of these miraculous things. I know that it was my father who had protected me.