

## The Choice

by Emily Puckett

The darkness loomed before me,  
 Beckoning, seductive.  
 I had been there before  
 And never wanted to return.  
 But there it stood;  
 Oddly, comforting.  
 I turned to get away  
 But it followed  
 Like a shimmering shroud.  
 Following me, calling me.  
 I used all my resources  
 To escape, to banish it.  
 This time no thing worked  
 And I was engulfed.

At first I welcomed it  
 For it was predictable,  
 comforting, familiar and  
 I hated myself for doing it.  
 Soon I spun out of control.  
 Lost all bearings, felt nothing  
 But fear.  
 Deeper and deeper into the darkness.  
 Fear and Guilt  
 Were all I knew,  
 Bereft of love, joy, God.

It seemed as if there  
 Was no place for one of no faith.  
 I longingly peered out  
 Of the darkness.  
 Looking, searching.  
 Returning my gaze were  
 Eyes of concern, eyes of confusion.  
 Only one was willing to  
 Enter the darkness with me  
 Yet I continued to fear.  
 The voices of darkness  
 Quietly whispered their secret:  
 Do not trust a heart of  
 Compassion and love  
 For it will fail you.  
 It can not withstand the  
 Confusion of your fear.  
 You are too frightening  
 And it will fail you.

And I listened, Goddamit.  
 I listened to the voices  
 And I believed.  
 I believed to the depth of my soul.  
 Darkness, despair, hopelessness.  
 My constant companions.  
 I cursed them daily  
 Yet held them tightly.  
 I prayed to God for freedom  
 But held them tightly.  
 I believed the darkness.  
 Goddamit it, I believed.

A phone call, a voice,  
 An off-hand comment.  
 A story shared, a nudge given.  
 God had spoken and I heard.  
 I picked up the word and  
 Locked it away for fear  
 The darkness would find it.  
 In moments of safety  
 I brought the word out.  
 I held it, touched it,  
 Yearned for it.  
 Each time, I held it longer.  
 It soon began to glow  
 And with it came warmth.  
 I continued to hide it away.  
 The voices of darkness still  
 Sang their song.  
 Not yet would I trust  
 The Word.

Flickering, sputtering, fragile.  
 It grew inside me.  
 The Word gained strength  
 and its glow deepened,  
 Calling me with its intensity.  
 Calling me out of the darkness  
 As Lazarus was called.  
 I stepped fully into the light  
 And quickly shrank back,  
 Shaking, shivering, shuddering.  
 Did I dare believe it?  
 This light, this Word.  
 The voices were quieted,  
 Waiting patiently their turn.  
 They trust me to return.  
 They knew I could not risk.  
 They knew the strength of fear.

It was here:  
 The Light, the Word,  
 The Dark, the Fear.  
 Which would I choose?