

# OMNIVISUM

literary magazine



who we are

## Thoughts on Darkness

Written by Joanna Messineo

### **Darkness is Fear**


The light clicks off and you're all alone in the room. Trust me, there are no monsters here, Mom had promised, but that was easier to believe when the light from the hall had seeped into all the corners of your room. Now, those same corners are blanketed in the darkness. You pull the covers tighter under your chin and wish desperately for the nightlight that you'd sworn you were too old for. The shadows move on their own, twining around doorframes and clamoring over furniture in their eagerness to get to you. You squeeze your eyes closed, praying that when you open them, the shadows will have frozen back to inanimate objects. The wind whistles like a dying stranger and something cold touches the back of your neck. It's no use. The darkness presses in around you whether your eyes are open to acknowledge it or not. Your closet shifts and you stare as hard as you can through the darkness, scared to blink. Please, please, please. Let this all be a bad dream.

### **Darkness is Blindness**

They told you the darkroom would be so dark that your eyes would never adjust, but you hadn't really understood. Surface level, you comprehended what they meant, it's a darkroom, of course it was going to be dark. But it wasn't until you stood in it that you realized that you've never been in this kind of darkness before. The door had swung closed with an anticlimactic swish, the thick, light-blocking material dragging heavily across the

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floor. You were supposed to be reeling your film. You came into the room with your arms piled high with film canisters, scissors, tape, and a reel. You'd practiced a hundred times with dead film, but this is your first time in the room. Practically just a closet with a counter. But the door had swung closed, and you couldn't see anything. The tiny canister containing your film could be two inches in front of your hand or a hundred miles away. You try to reach forward with a shaky hand and you catch the edge of something. It clatters to the floor loudly, making you jump. Your breath starts to come a little too fast. You can't open the door because what if it was the canister that fell and now your film is exposed? Opening the door would ruin it. You don't think you could open the door anyway. You're frozen. There shouldn't be anything wrong, but you can't see anything, and you don't remember how you're supposed to reel the film, don't remember the steps you practiced. Your hands are thick and trembling and won't respond to you. You can't catch your breath. They must have locked all the oxygen out there with the light.

### **Darkness is Claustrophobic**

You're having a panic attack. You know it, you can feel the truth of the words as they echo through your head. But they're hollow, meaningless kind of words. Your thoughts can't make it past your racing heartbeat and the chills catching at the back of your neck. You stumble through the doorway, blinded by the tunneling around the edges of your vision and the darkness in the room. Your legs give out as soon as you're properly in the space and you collapse on the carpet, dizzy and disoriented. The room is so dark, the walls feel like they're inches from your fingertips on every side. The strain of the day is pulling at all your loose corners, unraveling you piece by piece. You will never be enough. The words, solid and real like nothing else is right now. They lay on your chest like a weight. You can't breathe around them. The carpet digs a pattern into your knees that you barely feel. The day is too heavy, you've been carrying too much. Weak. Worthless.

### **Darkness is Lonely**

This bedroom has become a prison cell. Days stretch into each other, marching onward towards the indefinite. Pain is an aching reminder of the fact that you're still alive, if this meandering existence still qualifies. When you speak, your voice is rusty and tired. When you smile, it cracks around the corners of your mouth and the muscles ache with disuse. The pillows and sheets, scattered and crumpled around the double bed, form a vague nest, an enclosure that holds all your broken pieces together in the same place. The bed is large, but you twist into a tiny ball, taking up only a corner. You curl yourself around your pain and unhappiness, hollowing your chest of other things to allow the



misery to take up full residence. You haven't seen anyone in weeks. Your friends stopped coming by as you stopped being able to go out. You miss them in the vague distant kind of way that comes from having mostly forgotten what it feels like to be one of them. The darkness is your only friend these days. It keeps the sun out of your eyes and lets you hide how pale your skin has gotten from being trapped inside. It's a cold comfort and you start to hate it. The darkness stares back apathetically and you can't even be mad.


Sometimes darkness isn't as easy as just reaching out and turning on a light. Sometimes it's deep and encompassing and you can feel yourself sinking underneath the surface like you're drowning.

Sometimes you sink so deep into the darkness that you don't even want to find your way out anymore.

It doesn't matter if you're a scared little kid waiting for monsters to step out of your closet or an adult who lies awake at night and can't make their brain stop tripping over the same anxieties that they've spent the day not thinking about. I can't do this. I'll always be alone. I'm never going to be good enough. Our monsters that lurk in the shadows don't go away, they just grow up along with us. But the darkness didn't do that. The darkness didn't create your fears and the darkness isn't against you. It's just a place, like any other place. You are still competent, and strong, and loved, even if it's hard to see those things when it gets dark. You don't have to try to run away from the darkness, to spend your days cowering in sun to pretend those fears aren't there. The darkness is soft and asks nothing of you. It shows you only the things that you bring into it. If you don't like what's in the darkness, bring something else.

### **Courage**

It's the same bedroom, but the bed feels smaller and the furniture feels shorter. You flick the lights off yourself and walk across the room. There's a rustling from your closet and you turn. The shadows rise up like they always did, a threatening mass. A familiar sight. Like an old friend. You walk over and push the closet door until you hear the click. The draft from the hall pushes at the loose door when it isn't latched. An ordinary habit of an aging house. As you move to the bed, the shadows push towards you, agitated by the scrape of branches against the window pane. Your imagination twitches, ready to run wild and make up stories of murderers and ghosts, but it won't. And even if it does, you won't be scared. Even if there are monsters



waiting for you in this childhood bedroom, they can't hurt you anymore. You are so much bigger now and have accomplished so much, survived so much.

There is no need to be afraid, you have fought so much worse than these monsters.

### **Sight**

Take a deep breath. There's no need to panic. The darkness isn't your enemy. Reach forward with one hand, gently, and skim the surface of the counter. There are all your things perfectly laid out where you left them. The only thing that changes in the darkness is what you can see. Everything that was there before is still there. You do not need light to see it. You've dropped the scissors. One step at a time, crouch, watch your head on the edge, feel along gently, there they are. This isn't more than you can handle. Take a deep breath and steady your hands. You've practiced so many times, there's no need to see. You are just as capable in the dark, your hands know the motion that your eyes forget. You can do this.

There is no need to feel blind, the way is already laid out before you, and you know where to go.


### **Safety**

The weight is heavy. Sometimes life throws things at you that are huge and consuming and we find ourselves hyperventilating in the dark, overworked and exhausted. That's alright. You aren't needed anywhere right now. Lay your head on the edge of a bed and breathe. Today was hard and long and tiring. So rest now. Ease the storm in your mind and the pressure in your chest. When you are still and quiet, breathe in the cool darkness and be reassured. You are capable and strong. Tomorrow will be a new sunrise and a brighter day. A new challenge, and a new chance for success. But for now, you aren't needed anywhere. No one is calling, nothing needs your attention. The darkness offers a reprieve. So rest. Tomorrow, you can fight again.

There is no need to feel enclosed, it is merely a shelter from a storm.

### **Love**

You're curled up in the corner of a bed. Your head still pounds dully, but it's in the background and easily ignored. The sun hasn't risen yet and the shapes in the room are grayscale outlines. The room is warm and, though you can't fall back asleep right away, you're comfortable just being



awake for a while. The bed shifts and the form next to you turns. In the dark, you can just make out the silhouetted profile of their face. They're still asleep, and in the small bed, you can feel where they are by their faint movements. The bed dips in the center as they roll over to face you more completely and you sink even closer towards them. Their breathing is slow and deep, and yours matches up automatically, making you relax even further. You reach out slowly and just barely touch their shoulder. You don't want to wake them up, but sometimes, in the dark, you need a reminder that the person next to you is real and not a figment of an overactive imagination. Their skin is smooth and warm, solid and tangible. They stir a little, despite your efforts at being still. In the dark, you sense their sleepy smile more than see it.

There is no need to be lonely, you are no longer alone.