

# Always There

Alone. It wasn't always this way, trapped in a prison of my own sin. I remember, before the darkness overtook me, when I lived in light and innocence.

My Father. I can still see His face, smiling. The first thing I remember is Him taking me to his garden. He knelt down beside me, looked intently into my eyes and talked to me lovingly. I can't recall everything He said, but I do remembered him saying; "My son, I leave you in this garden. You can play anything you want to, eat any fruit you want to. But you may not leave the garden grounds. Stay away from the gate, it will cause you to desire for the outside. I tell you this to protect you. You must trust me."

It didn't take long for me to start to wander near the gate. It's not that I didn't trust or believe my Father, I just thought it wouldn't hurt to look.

I peeked out the gate. To my surprise, there was a man standing there in a black hooded cloak.

He smiled at me and said; "Hello, there boy. What are you doing behind a fence? Shouldn't you be out here? Enjoying all life has to offer?"

I replied nervously, "My Father told me to stay in the garden. He says he wants to protect me."

The man laughed. "You really think he wants to protect you? If he wanted to protect you he would let you have what you want. Do you really want to spend your life wishing for more? If He truly wants what's best for you, He would let you make your own choices. Follow me, and I will show you the world, and wonders beyond your comprehension!"

And so, I followed. His flowering words snared me into his trap. I followed him, not seeing him for who he really was; a witch, a liar, a devil.

Or maybe I did. I just ignored the fact, like a fish ignoring the hook just to get the worm.

The man took me deeper and deeper into the mysterious overgrown woods. Every step led me further away from my Father. The man showed me some wonderful things. But none of it satisfied.

At last we reached the destination. A dark, lonely dungeon I created for myself. The man laughed and mocked me. I couldn't even fight. He took my happiness from me and thrust me into the darkness of shame.

For days I sat here. Empty and alone. The man stabs and condemns with his

words. I remember my Father and His desire to protect me. I wonder if He can see me now, here in the darkness. And if so, what does He think of me?

Then I remembered. The words my Father said at the garden.

“I am always there when you call. No matter how far you have wandered. And I forgive you even when you don't forgive yourself.”

I wonder if He really would help me. Surely He wouldn't forgive *this* much. But maybe...

I lifted my hoarse voice and whispered; “Father, please help me.” It was all I could say through the tears.

The Devil laughed, but there was something in his eyes. Something that almost looked like... fear.

Suddenly, there was a incredible light. A light that killed the dark. I fell to my face.

Then I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder. I slowly lifted my head, and to my surprise, I was back in the garden. Even through my tears, I could see my Father smiling at me.

He knelt down in front me, and said, “I am always there when you call. No matter how far you have wondered. And I forgive you, even when you can't forgive yourself.”

The reason you can connect with this story is because... it's your story. Because... I am you. And your Father is always there when you call.