

Children of the Corn

We huddled together in the dark, but it wasn't the dark we feared. The dark was our friend, keeping us safe, blanketing us in its pure protection. It was the light that terrorized us so in the dark we stayed, and prayed to Kel to keep us safe from the light, but all too often our prayers went unanswered.

The Grand One lead our congregation in prayer. "The Evil One is upon us my children, but have faith. Only together, can we..."

"How can we can have faith?" My father, Hierro, interrupted his sermon to profess his doubt. "Every day, more of us our taken. I lost my wife, and others have also suffered heavy losses. How can you ask us to have faith? Faith in what!? Who will save us from this horror? Where is Kel? Does he not hear our prayers? Does he not protect his flock? Is it his Divine Plan that we should suffer so?"

The Grand One listened patiently as my father and then others, in turn, all voiced their doubts.

Finally, after all were heard, the Grand One spoke. "It is not our place to question our loving father Kel. Was it not He who created us? Was it not He who planted us in the earth, then nurtured the great stalks who bore us? Was it not He who provided us with this shelter to protect us? Was it n...?"

"Protect us!" My father again interrupted. "What you call 'protection' feels more like a cage. No, we are not free here. We are cursed in this darkness."

"The darkness is not a curse my son. It is what keeps us safe from the evil that haunts us, that preys on us." proclaimed the Grand One.

And then it began, and like always, it began with a rumble. The Grand One shouted out to our congregation, "Run from the light my children! Run toward the darkness! Only there will you find safety." Hearing this, friends and family clung to one another as the world shifted. My father, who was next to me, grabbed onto my younger sister, Harina. He then reached out to me, but the shifting world separated us. I struggled to reach my father and sister, but in the darkness, I was blind and lost sight of them.

"Father! Harina!" I kept shouting out to them but their voices grew fainter.

I felt others next to me, beneath me and above me. I couldn't move and the more I struggled the more trapped I became. I felt powerless, helpless, unable to move in any direction. Just then, the sky broke open and light poured in. It was a blinding

light to one accustomed to live in the dark. It was a light I knew, yet didn't want to know. It was the light that took my mother, and so many others.

Suddenly, our world turned upside-down and I found myself falling toward the sky. In vain, I grabbed onto others who were also falling. In my struggles, I heard the faint scream of a familiar voice. "Harina!? Is that you?"

"I'm over here! Help me brother!" shouted Harina as she was being consumed by the tide of others flowing skyward.

"I'm coming Harina!" I wiggled and rolled and fought my way toward my sister. Many others around me fell into the light and out of sight. There was no time to save them. I kept my focus on Harina. I knew she couldn't hold on much longer. She was wafer thin and weak. I had to save her.

"Hold on Harina! I'm almost there!" And just as the words escaped me, I watched as another kicked her aside to save themselves. Time stopped as I watched my sister free-fall toward the light. I wasn't going to lose her, so without thought or moral contemplation, I pushed off of another as hard as I could. I leaped toward my sister and before she fell from sight, I grabbed onto her with all my might.

At least now, we would fall together. As we fell along a very smooth wall, now made gray by the light, I could see there was nothing to grab onto. Nonetheless, with all my strength, I held Harina with one arm as the other searched the wall for a groove or something to grasp. In the end, it seemed hopeless and I was resigned to let go, but then the wall ended and my free hand found a firm grip on its edge. Harina clung to me just as tight as a little girl could.

Hanging there, holding onto Harina, I looked out into a vast illuminated world, a world I never knew, never wanted to know, and yet parts of me now yearned to explore this uncertain world full of wonder and danger. But for the moment, Harina and I were safe and that's all that mattered.

Once more, our world rumbled and turned upside-down, and just before we returned back into darkness, I saw a glimpse of the Evil One that the Grand One had warned us about, the one we all feared, the one known as Milk.