

Chapter 9

The Party: A Shadow Awakens

The pressure of a business, a wife, a mortgage, and one and a half children is a lot to take on at 24 years old, but there we were. My hands plunged into the hot soapy water searching for the bottle to wash. My eyes were focused out the west-facing window through the slits in the blinds and onto the walnut tree of the neighbor's yard.

My hands mechanically pumped the sponge up and down the neck of the bottle when I heard the squeak of the tires. I took in a deep breath to steady myself. Those were the brakes of my father-in-law. He was here to talk to Thad again. Again. Again. Nothing new came from these chats, just a time to rehash the problems and have no solutions--a loop like a record that is finished playing and you only hear the static popping sound repeating again and again in an irritating fashion.

That loop had no goal. No outcome. Without the goal, the work and effort anyone can get lost in a fog and your stable footing can start to stumble. With all the pressure of life, our unstable footing while walking in a dense fog with little to no direction, created a place that became slippery underfoot for our family.

At this time, Thad and I had been married for over two and a half years and our second son was about to be born. We had done enough small construction jobs to keep our heads above water, but John was always afraid to do another house because we still hadn't sold the first spec home.

However, Thad was still feeling overwhelmed by the mortgage, the growing family, and the pressure from his father. I didn't know how to help. In reflection, I was hoping that I could lift and ease some of the burden of having a family, a business, and a mortgage at a young age, but I didn't know how other than to pray and hope that he would feel of the strength.

One night my eyes gently fluttered open and reached over to the warmth of the bed for Thad. I felt for him in the soft blanket in the darkness, but he wasn't there. Feeling only cold emptiness, I sat up, look about the room, and saw his silhouette looking out the bedroom window. He was motionless; his figure was fixated on what was beyond the glass pane. I tenderly walked up to him sliding my hand across his back and around his tummy I hugged him from behind allowing my baby bump to rest against him.

I whispered to him "what are you doing? What are you looking at?" He sighed then spoke softly rubbing my arm, "can you hear it?" I was perplexed. *Hear what*

I thought? Then he asked again, "Can you hear it?" Again, perplexed I looked through the black pane into the darkness and could see or hear nothing.

"There's a party. A real party, I wish..." But he stopped his thought like a shadow stretching from a dark corner. He slowly pulled free from my embrace and grasped the casing around the window. The white-knuckled grasp seemed to nearly wrap the wood with his force. He stood staring out the window in silence. He was captured by it, and I was captured by his silence and stood frozen in it.

After some time, Thad's question shattered the long silence. He asked me if I could smell "it." "It?", I thought? I sniffed and pulled in a faint whiff of smoke rising in the air like a shadow from the past. "Yes," I replied. More silence. I was trying to figure out what he was wanting.

He just stood there and looked through the clear dark glass pane of the window, longing for the party that was out there. He wanted that, he was longing for that party. I reached out again for him, to give him comfort, but he did not respond. He was rooted to the spot his demon shadow from his past had been awakened. He had no desire to move away from the window. I slowly crept back to bed, and he stood there until I drifted off to sleep again.

The Party--that is what I called it; that was a pivot point for Thad. His longing to be out there with the party instead of with our family was a warning for me. Thad had just given a cry for help, and I should have continued the conversation from that night to the next morning, but I didn't. I just thought it was a strange thing and did not want to really face what was coming.

Thad's longing to be a part of that party was going to come sooner than I thought. I could not believe it. I could not accept that he was going to turn back to that world of addiction. I could not be a part of that world. I didn't understand it. To me the idea of doing drugs, drinking, and longing after it was so foreign. Hadn't Thad already give up all of those things? All I could think of was, "why return to the high school ways to cope with life?" I had no understanding of how to support or help someone that was crying out for help like that other than to pray and hope and to keep on denying what I was about to face.

I was dead wrong. I did *not* understand Thad's stress and coping skills had led him to become an addict once before. The desire and drive of that addiction needed to be fought every day to keep that temptation at bay. I thought that was why we had weekly temple attendance during our first year of marriage--and maybe it was. But we had not been going to the temple together now in about a year. We were not doing what Thad promised would help to keep Satan--the destroyer at bay.

For my responsibility, I had married someone that had this deep dark history. I knew it was a risk that I took. I simply thought that if we kept to the temple, and if I offered more love, or took away more of the stress, or helped out more, that he would turn back to doing good. I foolishly thought it was that simple. Again, it was not to be. The symbolic monster of Addiction had been released that night like a shadow with Thad staring out the window wanting the party. Its fiery breath had melted the foundation we were standing on.

Symbolically Thad lowered his sword and no longer fought the beast of addiction. The beast had already ensnared him by welcoming him back with open clawed wings. I did not accept this! I struck and struck and hacked at this beast with my might, but Thad was already enveloped in its own dark claws. I could not pry open those wings and I was knocked off my footing.

My world was starting to slide into more degrees of darkness for me. I felt like I had hit a hard ledge--the very edge of the cliff. Suddenly I heard a momentous crashing sound; I turned to look in the greying darkness just in time to see an avalanche of life tumbling towards my two children and me. We were going to be struck, and little did I know at the time that there would be more victims from this landslide into the darkness of addiction. The beast, the avalanche, the landside all hit to bring us down into the darkness.