

# Running from Demons

By Laurie Nicholson

# Running from Demons

## Chapter 1

*Wandering in the Darkness*  
*Running in the night*  
*Wandering in the Darkness*  
*Too weary to fight*  
*Falling, no escaping,*  
*Crying out to hear*  
*Only the echo of my own fear*

There is no guessing how many days I had run. They had long since blurred together amidst the hunger, the sleeplessness, the pain. Twice I had smelled the demons inches away. I was hidden from them only by their own stench.

I could feel them coming again, an instinct that had long ago become familiar, a mixing rise of nausea and dread in the pit of my soul.

Quickly scattering leaves over myself, I lay, face in the dirt. I needed more time to plan, more time for escape, but there was none. The demons and I both knew I was running out of time and space. I could only run so far; the edge of the world was already in view and then 90 degree cliffs dropped into nothingness.

Nothingness would be better than this, except that the demons would chase me there. I had heard legends of the darkness there, that it was so thick, a person could nearly drown in it. Nearly, but not. And that it made it easier for the demons to hold you down.

I smelled them first. The smell of decay grew stronger and stronger, until I was holding my breath to keep from choking.

I suddenly realized they had found me, were closing in around me, for the games. Demons always play with their food.

# Running from Demons

## Chapter 2

I bolted. Tripping and grasping at branches, I stumbled to my feet.

A demon clawed, ripping through leather, gripping hold in the flesh of my back.

I tore free, screaming.

The demon, temporarily satisfied with my blood on the claw, sat down to lick his fingers.

And once again, I ran.

I had been running, it seemed, since before I could walk, always scooped up by a parent or sibling as she ran for safety, later by compassionate strangers--the stronger ones trying to fight the demons back, the wiser ones just running. You can't fight demons.

I don't remember the day that darkness exploded on the Earth, when the edge broke off, leaving only cliffs and darkness. No one in my generation remembers the day. It was so far back, that some say it has always been dark, that light is nothing but a myth.

# Running from Demons

## Chapter 3

I have to believe there is light. The only strength I find to run from the demons is the gut certainty that there must be light. I need there to be. I need to hope that just as I reach out toward the light, it is reaching back at me. And that it knows how to fight demons.

# Running from Demons

## Chapter 4

The end had come.

I had run all my life and now there was no where to go. I could not go backwards. The demons had stretched across the land, sweeping the life from it. If there were more among the living, I didn't know of them, and they wouldn't be long. They now moved toward me as one flesh.

I backed up and tripped, over the edge.

I held my breath and reached up as I fell.

Maybe, for some people, it's easier to say the light isn't real. Maybe it's somehow rejecting the light for leaving us.

Once, when I was about 10, I hid with some neighbors in the loft of an old barn. There was an old man there, telling stories in a whisper. Someone had asked why the darkness had come. He said that when he was a boy, he had found an old dusty book, most of the pages chewed by rats, half the book burned by fire. There were only a few lines, here and there, he could make out.

He tore them out and kept them with him.

# Running from Demons

## Chapter 5

You know when you're dreaming, and time seems to be suspended, and everything happens in slow motion?

I fell, slowly, backwards. There was no going back, no catching myself.

I reached up at the sky, tears streaming down my dirt-stained cheeks, and pointed at the light I could not see.

*You have always, only, been my hope.  
If you don't save me, I am lost. Please.*

As I fell, my finger was still outstretched to the empty sky.

When I hit the darkness, sound shattered in my ears, like a million crystals smashed on concrete.

From one end of the horizon, rippling overhead,  
and crashing into darkness,  
light splintered into shards like glass, refracting blinding prisms,  
piercing through the demons  
who screamed long and loudly and were no more.

The sky swirled with color and painful pulses of brightness.

I covered my face with my hands. All my life, I had hidden from the demons, feared the darkness. Now I was filled with a deeper sense of dread. The demons meant to destroy me, no doubt about it, and yet what made me ever think the light was safer?

I hung, suspended over the cliff, filled with horror at the realization that this light was pure and harsh and had come to destroy, as well.

And now I was exposed, with nowhere to hide, needing help, yet aware only of my filth.

Light came to destroy the work of darkness, but there was darkness in me, as well.

I had called for light to save me, but had not reckoned on the ferocious tidal wave I had released, now coming to wash over me, too.

From the distance, where the light had begun, I heard a roaring. The light grew in intensity and I soon realized that the coming sound had been fire.

In an instant, the fire exploded across the sky, over me.

There was no stopping its force, no escaping its intensity, no arguing its right to power.

I screamed in pain as the fire washed over me, scourging me of impurities, as dross from silver, cleansing everything in its path.

And then, from nowhere and everywhere at once, came a voice,

*"I make all things new."*