

# *Pain Defeated*

by kamichi jackson

We had met before, Pain and I, on more than one occasion. I'd felt him lurking in dark shadows nearby; nearly collided with him as I turned corners that appeared suddenly in my straight, narrow path; seen him staring at me from behind the eyes of ones whose spirits he'd snatched and held captive.

It wasn't that I'd never felt his touch. Even now I nursed bruises where he'd grabbed me, scars where he'd nicked me, scrapes where he'd caused me to stumble. I wore the wounds of several battles with Pain, but I pressed on as a soldier fighting the finest fight.

And then I'd opened my eyes one morning to find Pain staring down at me from his seat at the edge of my bed. He spoke not a word, but he followed me everywhere that day, looking over my shoulder, whispering in my ear, beckoning to me whenever I turned away. By evening, he'd led me to cold, dark corners of my mind and I found myself settling comfortably there in that space, concealed from those who would guide me back to safe, warm places with the light of their love. They tried to find me but Pain told them I wasn't with him. They called out to me but I pretended not to hear.

Still they persisted. They wouldn't leave me there. With gentle whispers they soothed my spirit. With psalms of healing they consoled me. With fervent prayers they oiled my head. With kingdom smiles they shined blinding light into my darkness. Pain became a lesser foe.

They stretched out their hands and pulled me to my feet. Pain called my name, but I ignored him. They embraced me with arms of comfort. Pain grabbed hold of me, but I shook him off. They surrounded me with the strength of an army. Pain looked for me, but I remained hidden. Without my own negativity as its ally, Pain faced defeat and took its leave.

I still see Pain from time to time—lying in wait at a distance; peering from around treacherous corners; reflected in the eyes of those still lost in dark spaces. But I do not rely on my own strength in this struggle, for I walk in step with others who have survived and will continue to survive their battles with Pain—until it is forever defeated.