

THE DARK CORRIDOR OF MY MIND  
An Allegorical (but true) Story of a Survivor of  
Childhood Sexual Abuse

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A child's life begins when two molecules of DNA material twist together in one of billions and billions of possible configurations. The result is a special code that defines each person in a unique way. No one else from the beginning of time to the end of time will ever have that particular code. Each child is precious because every child is a unique masterpiece of God (Ephesians 2:7). What makes this truly amazing is found in the meaning of the word masterpiece. A masterpiece is the greatest work of its creator, an outstanding example of both skill and creativity. God does not have just one greatest work, He has billions which means that the world is a walking museum of masterpiece after masterpiece. If I am the equivalent of the Mona Lisa then you are the equivalent of Michelangelo's David. On any given day the local mall contains more and greater masterpieces than what can be found in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Yet we often do not understand our marvelous nature nor see the masterpiece in others. What is most tragic is that parents sometimes lose sight of the unique masterpiece God has given them in their children.

What would you do with the Mona Lisa if it was given to you? Would you hide it in a corner so it will not get in your way? Would you allow it to gather dust as you ignored it? Would you treat it as an ordinary commodity that can be bought, sold, or rented? Would you allow others to build its frame made out of the material of the street: hate, fear, disappointment, discouragement, and abandonment? Would you build no frame at all degrading its worth allowing it to fade into the background of the world? Most importantly would you leave it unprotected so that anyone anywhere for any reason could just walk away with it?

Of course not, it is a masterpiece, one of a kind. You would display it proudly. You would go out of your way to be in the same room with it. You would build a frame around it that is worthy of its beauty. A frame constructed from love, encouragement, your experience and knowledge of the world, and your pride in the painting. The frame would provide a boundary between it and the ugliness of the world. Most of all you would protect it. You would never allow it to be taken from your home to be used by others for their own pleasure with no respect for its unique beauty. Others who may return it dirty, stained, torn, or burned so that it no longer looks like the masterpiece it once was.

If that is the way you would treat a mere painting how much more should you treasure your children, the masterpieces of God, entrusted to your care? Happily some children are treated the way you would treat the Mona Lisa. But many are not. I was not.

I am not sure where my story begins because I cannot remember. I might have been 5 or 6 years old. I just don't know. It ended when I was 14 - old enough to call a halt to what was going on. Old enough to protect myself by forgetting all that happened in those intervening years.

Perhaps it is best to say my story began in a modest home in a quiet neighborhood. A home with a well-trimmed lawn. A home where the flowers were gently tended giving color to what was ironically a white home - a symbol of purity to the neighborhood. But this home was anything but pure. It contained a deep dark secret that would forever change the direction of my life.

It was my favorite uncle's home, my mother's brother. I spent a lot of Saturday's at that white house. My parents dropped me off or he picked me up. Sometimes I spent the night but most of the time I came home after dinner. It all started as it usually does - innocently. He took me out to fancy restaurants and let me order anything I wanted. He took me to toy stores and allow me to select any toy I desired. He sat and listened to me. He took an interest in what I had to say. When I was a little older he taught me how to work on cars, change the oil, change spark plugs, and fix common problems. He was an avid photographer with his own dark room. I didn't think it strange at the time that I never saw him use the dark room. He showed me some of his photographs but the prints always arrived in the mail. As I admired his work he told me how he used light, camera speed, and aperture settings to bring the best out of each scene. He said one day he would give me a fancy camera like his. These were good times but they only accounted for less than half the time I spent with him. I never thought it was odd that I could not remember the other half. I was having too much fun to risk jeopardizing our relationship.

I had no idea why I broke it off when I was 14. Why I went from love to sudden haltered. Why I never wanted to see him again. The reasons were hidden deep down in my mind in a place I would never allow myself to go.

So for 40+ years I went on with my life. Suffered recurring depression, hated myself, bound to shameful thoughts, afraid that people would discover the secret that I didn't even know, unable to make close friends, feeling dirty and unworthy. I didn't understand it. No one else around me did either. I was plagued by little short flashes of memory, like the time I was upset when he took me to nude swimming

and I was the only child in the pool. Or the times he would pull his car into the basement garage and have us wash it in the nude. Or the times he would take me into his bedroom where the walls were covered with gay porn. I once complained to my mother about the gay porn and she did nothing but tell me “Oh, that’s just your silly uncle.” I found out later that she knew about the nude car washing as well. He never stopped and my mother continued to take me to his house. As those memories flashed through my mind I dismissed them as innocent acts that meant nothing. After all no one else seemed to find them strange or alarming.

That is, until my uncle wanted to see me just before he died. So many years had past that I no longer harbored the hatred of my youth so I went to see him. At that time he said six words that would haunt me for several years. He said “I am sorry for what happened.” I said that was okay and left. I didn’t ask him what happened because I didn’t want to know. For the first time, I suspected that those “innocent” acts flashing through my mind were just the tip of a big scary iceberg.

Now, God has chosen to allow some of those lost memories to come back and they are horrifying. I was the victim of constant sexual abuse. The memories were hard to deal with because I saw myself not as a masterpiece of God rather as a dirty, stained, commodity that had been used and discarded. But recently I gained a new perspective on what happened to me and strangely enough that perspective came from something I found in the white house with the evil secret.

The time came when it was necessary to sell my uncle’s house. The family wanted to go through it to see what anyone might want before the estate was auctioned off. I arrived at the house first and discovered that I could not enter the empty home

unless the front and back doors were wide open. Even though I was an adult I was terrified by the thought of going into the upstairs bedroom. So terrified I would not go in it even if someone came with me. I stayed downstairs while the rest of the family went up to look for keepsakes. But there was one place in the house I had never been before. One place that I could go, now. A place that some how reflected my life. Down in the basement half hidden by the furnace there was opening to a long dark narrow hallway. There was a row of 7 to 8 tall file cabinets lining the right wall of this corridor. Some were locked and others were unlocked. I opened a few of the unlocked drawers and discovered they were stuffed full of gay porn, magazines and photos my uncle had accumulated over the years and could not bring himself to throw away. I was tempted to pry open one of the locked ones. I knew they didn't carry any of his important papers because those were all upstairs in his office but I was curious why they were locked. Yet, something stopped me. Perhaps it was the memory of those cameras and the unused dark room. Maybe the locked cabinets contained special personal photos that he could only develop at home. His favorite stash of porn that might bring him trouble if anyone else found it. Perhaps even photos of me. What I might find in those locked boxes could destroy me. To this day I am glad I had the good sense not to open them.

I have recently come to the conclusion that my mind has been lost in that same deep, dark, damp and narrow hallway for over 40 years. In my mind I was trapped. I cowered on the floor of the corridor in a fetal position laying in front of the cabinets but at the same time trying to stay as far away from them as I could. These were the cabinets of my mind containing memories that I could not bear to face. His

secrets had become my secrets. What he feared would be revealed became what I feared would be revealed. What had been hidden I now had the responsibility to keep hidden. I had to protect those secrets locked in my mind at all cost. No one could ever know not even me what really happened in that house. Even though there was a faint light at the opening to the hallway I could not bring my mind to move toward it. I was not worthy to leave that corridor. For the rest of my life my mind would be trapped in that dark place. Every thought, every feeling, every hope, every dream would first have to go through the darkness where the secrets were hidden where they would be twisted, distorted, perverted and sometimes just abandoned and rejected. I felt that somehow my presence in front of the cabinets was the only thing that kept them closed. Kept me from really knowing what had happened to me. I was like a guard. If I saw one opening I could quickly jump up and slam it shut before any damage could be done as it leaked into my consciousness. If I left then all the cabinets would open and their contents would spill out into the light where everyone could see them including myself.

So that's where I lived for most of my life. On the inside lost in a corridor I couldn't leave while on the outside desperately trying to hide the truth. I was filled with doubt, fear, and self-revulsion. The masterpiece that I was when I was born had been stolen from me by my uncle who did unspeakable things to me, by my parents who failed to protect me even when I tried to tell them what was going on, by the doctors who examined my obvious injuries but asked no questions, by my teachers who saw my unusual behavior but ignored it. I was now stained torn and

beyond repair. I could not even look at myself in a mirror without feeling like the abomination I had become. Worse, I was alone.

But then two women came into that hallway of my mind where I had spent my life alone. Bonnie grabbed my right arm and Michelle grabbed my left arm. They lifted me up and convinced me to begin to take just a few steps toward the light. At first I cooperated but moved slowly needing their constant reassurance that each step forward was going to be okay. When I left the first cabinet behind my worst fear was realized. It opened. Part of my long kept secret was exposed not only to the world but to me. I wanted to rush back and close it as quickly as I could but Bonnie and Michelle encouraged me to look inside. They said they would protect me, stand by me no matter what might be in the open cabinet. So I took a tentative peek inside. First I was almost overcome by the evil stench that hit me even before I could see the contents. When I mustered the courage to look in what I saw was vile, filthy, horrid like rotting flesh. Yet somehow as foul as it was I had imagined it would be far worse. I stood there transfixed. I had feared this moment all my life yet when I encountered it I could not turn my head away. Like the compulsion that draws spectators to the scene of an accident I had to examine it, smell it, taste it, immerse my mind in it. I could only do that because I felt the protection of Bonnie and Michelle standing by me. What surprised me the most was that as I inspected the contents, the memories long hidden, from every angle they turned to dust. They had no real power. They had thrived on the power I had given them all those years.

As I continued to slowly walk by the other unlocked cabinets some opened some didn't. What I found in the newly opened ones also turned to dust as I examined



each memory My confidence grew with each open cabinet as one by one horrible memories vaporized. But when the time came to pass the locked boxes, the most horrific of all the cabinets, those places in my memory that had been forever closed, fear welled up inside me. I started to resist and drag my feet. I became manipulative in an attempt to change Bonnie and Michelle's focus on to something else. I became abusive as I struggled. I simply could not leave those locked cabinets behind. Someone had to guard them. Someone had to keep their hideous secrets hidden. To their credit neither Bonnie nor Michelle gave up on me. They just pulled harder as they assured me that the locked boxes would remain locked as long as I wanted them to be locked. I had the keys all along. I could throw those keys away and these cabinets would never be opened or I could save the keys for the day I would be strong enough to face the worst of the worst. I had the power not the cabinets.

As I continued to be escorted pass the remaining locked cabinets I noticed something strange. The middle drawer of the center cabinet was not like all the others. For years I thought these cabinets were all painted in a sinister dull gray but this one part of the center cabinet was white reflecting a little of the light from the entrance to the hallway. I wondered how my mind had missed that one. It stood their inviting me to open it but it was a locked box. I had already decided that I was going to throw away all the keys. Those boxes were never to be opened. But Bonnie and Michelle encouraged me to use my key and open this box. They assured me that what it contained was different from all the others. They reassured me that they would still stand beside me. So, I opened that one white locked box. I first noticed

there was no foul odor rather a fragrance like the cool spring air after a gentle rainfall filled the dark hallway. When I looked in, I saw it contained just seven words that floated up and out one at a time. The first three formed a sentence in my mind. I read it one word at a time savoring each: ***I - have - won.*** They just hung there as a proclamation of victory. Then the next four floated out and formed a second sentence below the first. ***I - am - a - survivor.*** I watched in quiet peace as the words danced before me in my mind's eye. These were words I had longed to hear for over 40 years - words of healing. My uncle's secrets were no longer my secrets. His fears were no longer my fears. I no longer had to hide what he had wanted to keep hidden. Now that I know those unimaginable words are true, I am working to make them a part of me, to embed them in my heart and mind so they begin to define me, to find the courage to accept them without question.

I would never have opened that white box or even noticed it if it were not for Bonnie and Michelle, two masterpieces of God in their own right. I would still be cowering in the corner thinking that I was guarding the cabinets of my mind. But the reality is they were never my prisoner, I had always been their prisoner. What Bonnie and Michelle did for me is what God's masterpieces just do. They lifted me up when I was frozen to the ground, guided me when I felt lost, shared my burdens when they overwhelmed me, hugged me when I need reassurance and at times even carried me when I thought I could go no further. It's what God's masterpieces do for each other all the time. It is called love.

Today, I am still not out in the light. I continue to need to be held up and encouraged by Bonnie and Michelle. But I am closer. There are just a few cabinets

to pass by but they no longer scare me. I look forward to the day when I can step into the light and fully believe those words that danced in my mind when I opened the white box. I long for the day when I will see I am not the stained and torn masterpiece I thought myself to be all those years. Rather I will be a restored masterpiece, the fullness of God's handiwork.

I have decided to keep the keys to my locked memories. I may never use them or when I am strong enough I may go back into that hallway. I will bring light into that part of my mind that has been dark for so long. I will open any cabinet I chose. I will face my demons and watch them turn to dust because they no longer have any power over me.

I understand that when I finally get into the light my work is not done. I have to find a way to believe what I now know is true. I accept that there are over 40 years of habits, beliefs, thoughts, and actions I have to confront and change. I know that there will be a lot I will have to learn about living in this new world without secrets. But this much I do know: no matter how unfair life becomes, no matter how often we are abandoned and rejected, no matter how much injustice we experience, no matter how many times we are used and discarded nothing can ever change the true nature of the masterpiece God made us to be.

There is a sad postscript to this story that I discovered a month after writing it. My mother let it slip that for the last 5 years of my abuse at the hands of my uncle she knew exactly what was going on but chose, for reasons that are just sick, to continue to take me over to uncle's most Saturdays. In short she pimped me out to my uncle. I have had to come to terms with this and it is a continuing struggle. But in spite of this new revelation I have not lost my faith that I remain a masterpiece in the eyes of God.