

THE CASUALTIES OF THE DARK NIGHT

THE
DARK
NIGHT

However lofty or petty his concerns, everyman cares. Prompted to take action yet unable to assure the desired outcome, he is exposed to humiliation, filled with resentment and battered by his own weakness. This experience has been called the Dark Night of the Soul. Trusting that there is a justice in life which ought not permit such unfounded abuse, he presumes a flaw to explain his suffering.

THE
FALSE
HOPE FOR
A BETTER
SELF

He may look for this flaw within himself. Blaming some educational, moral or spiritual shortcoming, he turns his care inward. This caring for his own self-growth exposes him afresh to the assault of the Dark Night. His hope for a better self has failed.

THE
VICTIM:
Dark
Night
Casualty
#1

If he decides this flaw within is inherent, he resigns from the struggle. From the sidelines he offers passive encouragement to those who continue, those who, in his mind, unlike himself, are strong. Feeling helplessly inadequate in all but the most circumscribed and predictable endeavors, he is the victim. He is Dark Night Casualty #1.

THE
FALSE
HOPE
FOR
A
BETTER
WAY

He may decide the flaw is not his own shortcoming, but rather was some misplay in the staging of his care. He blames the feeble performance of his colleagues, the unresponsiveness of those on whose behalf he acted, or the ill-conceived nature of the cause itself. He seeks out a different community, enters a new setting, takes up a more promising cause. This new found care again exposes him to the assault of the Dark Night. His hope for a better way has failed.

THE
CYNIC:
Dark
Night
Casualty
#2

If he decides the flaw is inherent in any set of circumstances, he concludes that all attempts are doomed. Embittered by his own frustrated efforts, he feels that he was deceived by life itself. He resolves to never again be taken as a fool. An armchair observer, he greets every venture of care by pointing out the weaknesses of the involved, the unresponsiveness of the needy and the futility of the cause. He concludes that anyone continuing in the fight is either naively deluded or hypocritically working for self-gain. He is the cynic. He is Dark Night Casualty #2.

THE
ROMANTIC:
Dark
Night
Casualty
#3

Despite his experience, a man may be unwilling to surrender his belief that there is a justice in life which ought not permit his abuse by the Dark Night. He spends a lifetime in vain search for that external situation or interior state which promises to protect him from It's assault. He dwells in false hope, flitting from one cause to another, from one means of self-growth to the next. He is the romantic. He is Dark Night Casualty #3.

DISCOVERING THAT THE DARK NIGHT NEVER GOES AWAY

By his care impelled to action, thereby exposed to humiliation, resentment and weakness, still feeling abused, it may be revealed to a man that the Dark Night of the Soul never goes away. This realization annihilates all vestiges of hope and destroys any trust that there is justice in life. It calls into question every relationship which has given his life significance.

THE ZOMBIE:
Dark Night Casualty #4

Though his consciousness is forever ruptured, he may try to hide from this knowledge. Like a clown putting one suit of clothes on top of another, he dresses himself in some other consciousness. However composed in his outward expressions, he harbors an irreconcilable schism in the bowels of his consciousness. He is the zombie. He is Dark Night Casualty #4.

THE SUICIDE:
Dark Night Casualty #5

Rather than refuse his knowledge, he may decide to reject his care. Turning his back on every concern, he necessarily surrenders care for even his own self. Through self-neglect or self-destruction, all at once or over a lifetime, he commits suicide. He, the suicide, is Dark Night Casualty #5.

THE STOIC:
Dark Night Casualty #6

He may decide to live with his knowledge that the Dark Night of the Soul never goes away. This cursed fact of existence he endures. Presupposing that there is some moral or spiritual virtue in sticking it out, he continues in the struggle nevertheless. He carries the Dark Night as a burden and is self-righteous for his forbearance. As a trooper in the campaign he is a reliable worker. But beneath a veneer of dutiful activity, he is embittered. He is the stoic. He is Dark Night Casualty #6.

THE FAITH RESPONSE

However absurd, it is possible for a man to decide that the Dark Night of the Soul is not a mistake. Knowing that it never goes away, he needn't waste another moment of his life in vain search for some external situation or interior state which is protected from its assault. His entrapment is thus transformed to freedom. He has nothing to seek and nothing to escape. He knows that everything that life provides is already given him in the here and now. His embitterment is thus transformed to gratitude. He has made his peace with the Mystery. He is the Man of Faith. The Dark Night of the Soul is his friend.