



All at once she began singing like a nightingale and dancing to her music with her eyes always turned towards the moon.

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Preface for Young Readers

The Hard Places

Life can be hard. Maybe you've noticed. I met a girl several years ago who grew up in a hard place. I'll call her Mary. Mary never knew her father. Her mother grew up in a hard place, and this caused her to struggle throughout her life. (Hard places can have this effect.) Mary's mother was often away for long periods of time, unable to be the mother Mary needed her to be. This left Mary to grow up fending for herself. It's the only life she ever knew. A very hard place.

I met Mary when she was a teenager. I served as her pastor at the residential childcare community that became home to Mary for her high school years. Mary was a beautiful girl with strawberry blonde hair and a mischievous grin. She made several high school friends when she was with us, but she was slow to trust adults, especially men. She could be rude and rebellious, and she didn't like Sunday morning chapel services. I don't think she liked me, and I'm ashamed to admit that I probably felt the same way about her at times. Mary was hard, and therefore was often hard to like.

After graduation, Mary fell headlong into a lifestyle of bad choices. (Like I said, growing up in hard places often has this effect.) I received a message one day about Mary. She was in the intensive care unit of a hospital a few hundred miles away. Her body was wrecked by the bad choices she had been making on the streets. Infections of the worst kinds had settled into her organs and into her bones. I was told that she was still talkative and alert, but her body was failing. Sadly, the damage was beyond repair and she didn't have long to live. Maybe

us, in some way or another, have been affected by the hard places in life. It's unavoidable. When unloved, we can easily become something hard and unlovable, believing the ugly lies that have been smeared on our souls like bad graffiti. Thank God there is One who truly knows us and always recognizes us, seeing through the ugly effects of the curse. One who understands.

Better yet, I've found this special Advocate helps us do the same for others. He enables us to see through the ugly effects of the curse to see the beauty and value in other people. Have you ever known someone like this? Someone who looks at you with eyes of love, recognizing your beauty and value, even when you're at your worst? They're beautiful people, with a special measure of wisdom and imagination. They have the wisdom not to be fooled by outward appearances. And they have a special imagination, always hopeful, seeing us as we will be once we are free from the curse of our hard places.

Do you want to know a secret? You are here on earth to be one of these special people for others—even though you might not know it yet! A “diamond in the rough,” perhaps, but a diamond nonetheless.

A Fairy Tale

Sometimes a fairy tale says it best. You're growing up in a world of addictive reels, TikTok videos, and social media platforms that capture the attention while starving the imagination. Fairy tales, on the other hand, are different. They won't take your attention captive through addictive technology. But if you give them your attention, they will feed your imagination and awaken your soul. This fairy tale, *LITTLE DAYLIGHT*, was written by a master storyteller named George MacDon-

ald. It comes from a book he published in 1871 called AT THE BACK OF THE NORTH WIND. It's a book I'm sure you'll want to read for yourself, packed with plenty of hard places and true friends. You'll also want to check out other books by MacDonald, like THE LIGHT PRINCESS, THE GOLDEN KEY, THE DAY BOY AND THE NIGHT GIRL, and THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN. (Try this one first. It's one of my favorites!)

In the meantime, enjoy LITTLE DAYLIGHT. I prepared this illustrated edition with the assistance of two helpers, Bob and Lucy, for some very special friends. I hope through this story you hear loud and clear that you are beautiful, you are valuable, and you are loved.

Yours truly,
Chaplain Wilhelm (Mike)



The king who was to be Daylight's father had a magnificent forest next to his palace, so grand that no one had ever reached its far end.

LITTLE DAYLIGHT

A PALACE CANNOT TRULY BE CALLED A PALACE unless it has a forest nearby—preferably very close. The closer the better. It shouldn't be completely surrounded by trees, as a palace should be open to the sun and wind, standing brave and tall with shining weather vanes and flying flags. However, there must be a forest on one side of it. The king who was to be Daylight's father had a magnificent forest next to his palace, so grand that no one had ever reached its far end. Close to the palace the forest was well-kept and clear of underbrush, but as you moved further in, it became wild and untamed, leading some to believe that wild beasts did whatever they liked in it. Nevertheless, the king and his attendants often hunted in the area, which kept the wild beasts far away from the palace.

One glorious summer morning, when the wind and sun were out together, the vanes flashing and the flags frolicking against the blue sky, Little Daylight appeared from somewhere. She was a beautiful baby with such bright eyes that she might have come from the sun. As lively as she was, it seemed like she could have come from the wind, too. There was great jubilation in the palace because this was the queen's first baby, and there is just as much happiness over a new baby in a grand palace as in a common cottage.

Living near a forest has one downside: you can't be sure who your neighbors might be. Everyone knew that several fairies lived within a few miles of the palace, and they were always involved



with each new baby that was born. Fairies live much longer than humans, so they can interact with many generations of people. Their unique homes were well-known—one was a hollow oak, another a birch tree (though no one could figure out how that fairy made a house from it), and another was a hut made of intertwined trees, covered with turf and moss. Recently, a new fairy had arrived, but only the other fairies recognized her as one. She was a wicked old creature, always hiding her power. She would provoke people, hoping they would do something in return that might offend her, giving her the perfect excuse to take revenge on them. The locals thought she was a witch, and those who had seen her were careful not to offend her. She lived in a mud house in a swampy part of the forest.

Throughout history, fairies have been known to give their special gifts to princes, princesses, and other special children during their christening. This tradition is similar to what many humans do as well. It is not surprising that wicked fairies would choose this happy occasion to do unkind things, though you would think that all wicked beings would be powerless during such an occasion. Still, I've noticed that whenever a wicked fairy causes trouble, it always turns out good in the end. Take, for example, the story of Sleeping Beauty. She avoided the hazard of unworthy young men, waking up at just the right time for the right prince to kiss her. I wish that more girls would have this experience, as it would be much better for everyone involved.

Fairies receive their powers by nature, but witches get theirs by doing bad things. The other fairies, knowing the bad fairy was a danger, tried to protect the neighborhood from her effects. But they couldn't remove her powers or figure out how to plan against her because they had no idea what she might do next.



All the fairies got invitations to the christening, but the king and queen forgot to invite the old witch. She came anyway, even though she wasn't invited. This was actually just what she wanted, because not being invited gave her the perfect excuse to cause trouble. Even the most wicked creatures feel the need to have a proper excuse for the things they do.

Five fairies took turns giving the child their best gifts. Just as the fifth fairy returned to her spot among the royal crowd, the wicked fairy hobbled to the center. She chuckled softly, her toothless mouth moving as she spoke to the archbishop. She said, with a bit of trouble in her speech:

“Excuse me, Your Grace, I'm quite deaf. Could you please say the princess's name again?”



*All the fairies got invitations to the christening,
but the king and queen forgot to invite the old witch.*