STORMIE
OMARTIAN

Out of Darkness
Special Thanks

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Dear Reader,

For the first 30 years of my life, I believed no one had more emotional scars than I did. I know now that I was not alone. After I began writing books and went public with my personal story, people came out of the hidden places of their soul with similar stories of their own to tell me. All were heartbreaking. Some were horrifying. In fact, many stories were so shocking that it was difficult to even think about them. I had no idea that these suffering people even existed, let alone how great in number they were. I mistakenly thought I must be the only one.

You may wonder how I didn’t know about the countless people who have suffered emotional brokenness due to things that happened to them or mistakes they made. It’s because, at the time, these kinds of negative experiences weren’t talked about. They were kept secret in the unfortunate tradition of feeling that people might not believe you, or they would blame you instead of your circumstances, or judge you for your suspected part in the situation. We were in the dark ages back then about emotional suffering. And though we are not quite yet in the age of enlightenment about this, it’s far better now than it was.

Emotional damage doesn’t all happen in childhood. People can experience a wonderful time growing up and still be scarred later in life by abusive people who inflict their own brand of cruelty on them, or by their own bad decisions,
or through tragedies of one kind or another. Whatever the reason, people need to be brought out of the darkness of their life.

This is the story of my struggle to overcome the emotional damage of abuse in my childhood and the heartbreak of being a potential child-abuser. But you don’t have to experience any of these things in order to relate to the miraculous restoration I experienced. No matter what pain, disappointment, or situation has placed you in a dark place in your life, there is a way to come into the light of healing and restoration.

It has never been my intention to blame anyone for what happened in my past. It’s too easy to point out someone else’s faults, because we all have them. And because no parent is perfect, it’s cruel and unfair to hold them forever accountable for mistakes they have made. We have to let those things go and take responsibility for our lives now. We have to move on. It’s my goal to point you, the reader, toward the source of all restoration and wholeness.

This is a true story, but some of the names have been changed to protect the privacy of people. When that occurs, following the first mention of that name, it will be followed by an asterisk (*).

I wrote about some of the things that happened during the first 35 years of my life in a book called Stormie that was published in 1986. I began the story at the major turning point in my life that started my climb out of darkness. I’ve decided to again start at the point of deep darkness I was living in, in order to fully explain what drove me to the point of recognizing my condition and finding help. The facts are what they are, and I cannot leave them out because they are crucial to the rest of the story. The following 37 years after that point to the present day is all new, much of which I have not spoken about publicly before. But I feel the entire story should be told in order to prove that once you recognize the darkness for what is it, it’s possible to walk out of it and into the light for the rest of your life.

This book is about my life, but it is not so much about me as it is about living in darkness and finding true light. We have all been there in one way or another. Because of the overwhelming number of people who experienced similar or far worse emotional hurt than I did, and because so many have given up
hope of ever being healed, I’m telling my story so that they, too, can find a way out of the darkness of their past and onto the path of healing and wholeness that awaits them. I desperately needed restoration and I found it. And not only that, I found transformation such as I never dreamed possible. If I can find it, anyone who wants that can find it too.

I have prayed continually that this book will bring the healing, liberation, restoration, transformation, and sense of high purpose God has for each one who reads it. To all who desire to receive all that, may God so bless you.

With much love,

Stormie Omartian
That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

John 1:9
I never dreamed I would live this long. I thought I would die before my late-thirties. And I certainly never imagined I would write this book. I loved to write from the day I could hold a pencil. I wrote plays, stories, essays, song lyrics, and poems. There was something in me that made it impossible for me not to write.

Writing is like breathing for me. In fact, I feel suffocated if I don’t have time to write something every day. Writing always brought freedom to my heart and soul, and peace to my tortured mind—even if only temporarily. I wrote in diaries and journals about things that happened to me and the negative emotions I struggled to overcome. Writing released me and kept me alive.

I tried as hard as I could to overcome my situation and rise out of it. I wondered, Why can’t I be like other people who have never had to struggle as I have? I clearly remember the day in my mid-twenties that became a turning point in my life. It started with a terrible tragedy for other people that severely affected me.

That day I woke up late. It was 10:00 a.m. and sunlight blazed through cracks in the window shades. My head throbbed as I opened my eyes. The stifling air indicated that already the day was hot. Long into a California heat wave typical
of August, my tiny, two-room apartment never cooled down much. There was no air-conditioning, and it was too dangerous to leave the windows open even a crack. I sat up on my single-sized daybed and then fell back onto my pillow. Exhausted from a fitful night’s sleep, I was too groggy to get up.

I had found another rose on my front door handle when I arrived home around midnight. This made the tenth consecutive rose placed there every evening after dark. It was beginning to bother me. What at first appeared to be a flattering gesture by a secret admirer was now becoming creepy. Only someone with a sick mind would continue this odd ritual day after day without identifying himself. I had a longtime problem with insomnia anyway, and this wasn’t helping.

I had worked late the night before taping another television segment of *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour*—one of the top shows at the time. Originally hired as one of Glen’s four regular female singers who dance, I had begun acting in comedy skits as well. Working with different guest stars each week was always a challenge, especially when there never seemed to be enough rehearsal time and I suffered from chronic doubt about my abilities. Taping day before a live audience began before dawn and lasted into the evening. I had once been very excited about it, but lately all I felt was fear and exhaustion. It wasn’t the production. Glen and all the people with him were the best. It was me.

I sat up again, slowly this time, and leaned across the bed to turn on the television. I wasn’t much for watching TV because I was afraid it would make my mind irreversibly numb. However, this morning, in order to get my thoughts off the rose problem, I turned it on.

The screen was full of a news report detailing the grisly stabbing deaths of actress Sharon Tate and four others in Benedict Canyon during the night. That was not far from my apartment! I drove over that canyon and went by her street frequently. Horror gripped me as the details of what happened unfolded. I didn’t know Sharon Tate and her friends personally, but I knew who they all were. The slaughter would horrify anyone, but what I began to feel was beyond horror. Fear was growing inside me to a paralyzing terror.

It was the knives. Sharon Tate was stabbed! I had always had an unreasonable fear of knives. For as long as I could remember, I had suffered from
recurring nightmares in which I was stabbed repeatedly. The mere thought of knives made me deathly afraid—far beyond what would be considered normal.

My phone rang and temporarily broke the grip of fear that kept me riveted to the TV. “Did you hear about Sharon Tate and the others?” inquired a friend on the other end of the line. Many similar calls followed. No one could believe what had happened, nor could they even begin to understand why. There seemed to be no motive for the murders, which made them even more frightening.

That evening I went out to a restaurant with friends, and the murders were the total topic of conversation. We all agreed that the heat wave made people crazy, and that the flourishing psychedelic drug scene of the sixties had brought with it a kind of evil madness that pervaded everything. This was August 10, 1969.

When I returned to my apartment about 11:00, there it was—another rose draped across my front door handle. I shuddered with fear as I suddenly realized there was a pattern to this madness. The roses had started out as tiny buds. Gradually, they had gotten bigger each night. And now they were beginning to open. What will happen, I wondered, when the roses are in full bloom? I hurried into the apartment, bolted the door, and went to bed in terror.

The next morning I turned on the TV as soon as I was awake to see if there was further news about the Sharon Tate case. Desperate to understand what happened and why, my mind was filled with unanswered questions. Much to my horror, during the night there had been two more stabbing deaths. A husband and wife by the last name of LaBianca were butchered. The details matched those of the Sharon Tate murders, and the police suspected that the killers were the same people.

Fear spread like wildfire all over town. The rich put up security fences, installed burglar alarms, and purchased guard dogs. The rest of us bolted our doors and windows and didn’t open them for anyone. I couldn’t stand being alone, and my boyfriend, Rick*, was out of town. My apartment was too small to have people over, so I went out with friends again that night, as I desperately needed to be with someone.
When I returned to my apartment at around 2:00 a.m., there was another rose on the door handle. This one was beginning to blossom. I quickly threw it into the bushes, ran inside, and bolted the door.

As I dressed for bed, my mind sorted through the macabre details of the stabbing death of Sharon Tate. Here was a beautiful and wealthy young woman, nine months pregnant, living in a big house with burglar alarms and an electronic fence. She was totally protected and yet totally vulnerable. I knew that she, and the others murdered with her, were not the type of people to be involved in occult practices as was implied by certain news reports. They were also not the type of people you would ever think could end up murdered. If Sharon Tate could have the sanctity of her home invaded in that way, then what protection was there for me? And the knives—I couldn’t even bear to think about the knives.

But something more was bothering me. Something about the spirit of what had gone on there that was way too familiar. It was like meeting someone you know you’ve met before, but you can’t seem to place him.

I’d been heavily involved in the occult for years. It started with Ouija boards and horoscopes, and then I’d dived headlong into astral projection and séances to summon the dead. Numerology fascinated me so much that I considered changing my name when I learned that if the letters in your name added up to a certain number, you could become successful and fulfilled. However, I knew of a promising young actress who paid a numerologist to devise a new name for her. She changed her name legally, moved to New York City to begin her life of success, and was never heard from again. A numerologist sending me into obscurity was not what I had in mind, so I decided to go on to other things.

I took hypnotism classes, which were very popular in the entertainment industry. I frequently went into a trancelike state and told myself things I wanted to hear. “Stormie,” I would say, “you are a beautiful, successful, and wonderful person. You can talk, sing, and act, and you are not afraid.”

But as with all of the other things I had tried, whatever help I received was fleeting, and afterward I felt worse than before.

Next, I threw myself into a manmade religion—also very popular in that
town—that believed there was no evil in the world except what existed in a person's mind. And if you could control your mind, you could control the amount of negative experiences you would have. I bought every book available on the subject and read each one thoroughly. I associated with other like-minded advocates, which wasn't hard to do because so many of the Hollywood show business people, especially actresses, were into it. It didn't work out for me because, no matter how I tried to think good thoughts, I could still see evil everywhere, and the fear, depression, anxiety, and panic in me grew worse.

I became involved in anything that told me I was worth something and that there could be a life without pain in my future. I frequently visited mediums, hoping they could give me good news. When they didn’t, I was despairing. I rode an emotional roller coaster, and there was no balance to my life.

Devoting myself to Eastern religions, I began meditating daily. However, the God I searched for so diligently was distant and cold, and peace eluded me. Once, when I was in the middle of meditation, I opened my eyes to find that I was looking at my own body lying on the couch across the room. This was the out-of-body experience I had read about and wanted, but it didn't bring me the “oneness with the universe” I had been told would happen. Instead, it brought greater terror. The more involved I became, the more I saw strange things—odd beings and forms floating in front of my eyes. I didn’t understand what was happening or why.

Despite the frightening aspects of the occult, I was irresistibly drawn to it. I knew there was a real spirit world because I’d seen it. And the books promised that by pursuing these methods I would find God and eternal peace. Why did it seem to have the opposite effect on me? Yet because I was desperate for anything that could possibly fill my emptiness inside, soothe the intense emotional pain I felt constantly, and quell the unreasonable fear that threatened to control my mind, I continued my search. There had to be an answer for me, and I was going to find it.

Something about my occult practices reminded me of the Sharon Tate murders. I felt I was a part of what happened even though I knew I wasn’t. Remembering the old adage “You always recognize your own,” I found the events all
too familiar. Somehow, I was aligned. I could feel it. I feared that if I continued the path I was on, what happened to Sharon Tate could happen to me. Yet I felt powerless to stop it.

_I can’t think about it anymore_, I thought to myself as I slipped into a thin summer nightgown and headed into the bathroom to wash my face. I flipped on the light switch and was startled by the sight of hundreds of large cockroaches scurrying everywhere on the tile floor. I had lived there for more than a year and had never seen a single one before. But I had also never come into the bathroom so late.

I dashed into the kitchen for a can of pesticide and sprayed the bathroom ruthlessly until every bug was dead. The thought of sleeping there with even one living cockroach drove me on. When there was no sign of life, I finally stopped. By then the smell of poison was deathly strong. In my tiny place I knew I couldn’t stay in those fumes for long, yet at two o’clock in the morning it was too late to go anywhere else. I opened the bathroom window as wide as it would go to air out the room and the whole apartment.

Then I went to my closet right outside the bathroom and began to hang up the clothes I had tossed there. As I put the last garment in place, I heard a rustling of leaves through the open window. My apartment building was located in the Hollywood Hills and surrounded by trees and bushes. I would often hear small furry animals scampering about outside.

I held very still and listened for more sounds. The rustling came closer and sounded more like footsteps than small animals. They stopped directly under the window, and I heard something slide slowly up the wall. When I saw what I thought was a hand grab the top of the windowsill, I was terrified. Having no place to hide, I screamed with every bit of bodily strength I could muster and ran for the front door. Thoughts of Sharon Tate, the LaBiancas, and bloody knives raced through my mind.

The one-story apartments in the complex I lived in were situated on a hillside, and each one was isolated in a checkerboard effect with bushes and trees in between. For me to run to someone else’s apartment would be risky, especially if no one was home. Once outside, I stopped screaming and hid in the thick bushes.
I hardly let myself breathe. My heart nearly pounded out of my chest. I stayed like that for what must have been close to a minute. Then I heard movement again, this time on the roof of the apartment closest to me. That apartment was situated above mine and nestled into the hillside so that a person could hop on the roof easily from the street above it. I peered through the bushes, and a man’s form was coming cautiously over the roof. He held a flashlight and shone it to and fro on the ground just in front of me. In back of him I perceived another person. The glare of the flashlight made it difficult to see clearly, but it appeared that there were two men dressed in black. One man yelled in my direction.

“Is anyone down there?”

I was silent.

He shouted it again with more conviction. I held my breath.

The third time he yelled, he turned in such a way that I caught a glimpse of a gun in its holster and what looked like a policeman’s hat. From the bushes I called, “Yes. I’m down here! Who are you?”

“We’re the police. Come out where we can see you.”

“Thank God!” I cried as I moved cautiously from my hiding place. “Someone tried to come in my bathroom window. I screamed and ran outside and hid here in the bushes.”

“We heard the screams from our police car as we were patrolling the neighborhood. You stay right there. We’ll check around back and see if we find anything.”

I was filled with relief that they had providentially arrived with perfect timing, but I didn’t want them to leave me alone. I hid in the bushes again as they conducted their search. It was only a minute or two before they came to my door and said, “Whoever it was is gone now. Your screams probably scared him away.”

They escorted me back inside the apartment and searched it to make sure no one was there. The apartment was so tiny it took all of 30 seconds to check the kitchen, under the single bed in the main room, in the closet, and the shower. There was no place else to look. They could have just passed it off as nothing but a petty burglar, but I could tell that because of the Tate-LaBianca murders...
they were taking this event seriously. I desperately wanted them to stay because I was still afraid. Instead, I thanked them profusely, bid them good night, and locked the door and the bathroom window. After they were gone, I couldn't believe that in my fright I had forgotten to mention the roses to them.

I went to bed but tossed and turned. With every noise my body stiffened and my heart pounded. I could hardly breathe from the heat, and sleep eluded me.

The next day Rick called. He was back in town after a long tour with his band. We had sung together in the same group for a couple of years and then started dating. I told him about the events of the night before, as well as about the roses, and of course we talked about the Tate-LaBianca murders.

We went out that night, and on the way back home we drove over Benedict Canyon near Sharon Tate’s house because it was a direct route from Beverly Hills to my apartment. The road was deserted and appeared unusually dark. Terror crept over my back, inside my chest, and up into my throat until I was nearly paralyzed with fright. The fear was so strong that if someone had touched me at that point, I’m sure my heart would have stopped. I tried desperately to pull myself together so Rick wouldn’t notice what was going on inside me. Keeping up a good front was always a priority. I had to make sure no one would ever discover what an emotional mess I was.

He walked me up the long, winding stairs to my door, and there, draped over the handle, lay another rose. He picked it up. The beautiful red velvet petals were unfolding.

“Stormie!” A young woman’s voice penetrated our intense silence. It was my friend Holly*, who lived a few apartments down the hill. She was just coming in with her boyfriend. I grabbed the rose and ran down the stairs. “Holly, look! Another rose! They keep getting bigger, and I’m afraid that whoever is leaving them might be planning to do something terrible.”

She was concerned as well. This had seemingly started as a joke, and we had laughed over it just the week before. But now it wasn't funny anymore.

“I have an idea,” she said. “Let’s wait out in the bushes tomorrow night to see if we can discover who it is.”
“Are you serious?” My voice betrayed my fear.
“Don’t worry. He’ll never notice us. We figure he comes around ten every
evening, right? Let’s meet here at nine.” Rick and Holly’s boyfriend agreed to
watch with us.
When the time came, we positioned ourselves in four strategic places, hid-
den in the bushes outside of my apartment. In order to get to my front door,
the rose man would have to go by one or all of us.
We waited.
No one came.
We were silent except for a brief exchange at about eleven concerning
whether we should stop at midnight or continue on. We continued. Midnight
came and went, and still no one showed up. Finally, we were tired and aching
from staying cramped for so long and decided to call it quits.
Holly and her boyfriend went home. Rick walked me to my apartment,
came in for something to drink, and then left around twelve thirty. I readied
myself for bed, and then I went to the front door to make sure it was locked
securely. As I opened the door to slam it tightly shut, a bright, beautiful rose,
almost in full bloom, fell at my feet.
I gasped and my heart started to pound. Quickly, I slammed the door shut
and locked it. My mind raced. Always before, the roses had come around ten
and never after midnight. The only answer was that the rose man knew we
were waiting in the bushes. He knew Rick was in my apartment. He knew
when Rick left.
He had been watching me.
I quickly called Rick, who had just arrived home. Without giving him
a chance to speak, I told him what happened. “Obviously, we were being
watched,” he stated. “Perhaps it’s someone in the apartment complex.”
I called Holly, and she suggested that the two of us go door-to-door in the
morning, telling our neighbors about the roses and the near break-in, and ask-
ing questions. Maybe someone had seen or heard something.
The next morning we started knocking on doors. No one had heard the
screaming of two nights before, even though two policemen driving by had
heard it from inside their car. No one had seen anyone suspicious. But, yes, they would tell us if they did.

The last apartment we checked belonged to a large, dark-haired, mustached man named Leo*. He was in his mid-twenties and a would-be actor like nearly every other male in town. We had talked briefly on several occasions, and each time he had asked me to go out with him. I always assured him I was seeing someone and he always backed off. I tried to maintain a friendly but distant relationship with him because something about him was strange.

When we questioned Leo, he said he had heard the screaming. This was odd because other people who were home the night of the attempted break-in, and whose apartments were closer to mine, had not heard it. I was amazed that he’d heard me cry so desperately for help but didn’t check to see what was wrong. I told him about the roses, and he said he had seen no one suspicious.

“I’m concerned,” I said. “Anyone who would leave a rose on my door handle fourteen days in a row without identifying himself has got to be a weirdo with a sick mind.”

The moment I said “weirdo with a sick mind,” I saw Leo’s eyes wince and his expression darken. It was ever so subtle and only for a moment, but his look was exactly what one would expect if I had said that about him. In that very instant, I knew it was him. I had wounded him with what I said, and now I was even more afraid. Politely, I thanked him and we left quickly.

I knew I had to get out of my apartment as soon as possible, so that afternoon I found another apartment over Laurel Canyon and into the valley away from the Hollywood Hills. I moved quietly and secretly early the next morning while it was still dark. Because I had few belongings, the move was easy. I left no forwarding address.

Afraid that the rose man would find out where I lived and follow me, my first few nights alone in the new apartment were filled with fright. The Tate-LaBianca murderers were still at large and, as far as I was concerned, so was he.

But nothing happened. The roses stopped. Only the fear remained.