



Marta woke with a start. What woke her? Was it a dream? Where was she? Definitely not in her cot. Then the memories broke free, tumbling into her heart. Tears filled her eyes.

She sat up, wincing with the stiffness of her injuries and the after effects of sleeping on the cold, hard ground. Using the moonlight to guide her, she crawled to the cave's entrance. Her head felt a little better. At least the throbbing had stopped, thank the goddess.

She peered around the dark forest, it was different at night. Nocturnal bugs chirped and hummed, like a natural lullaby lulling the trees to sleep. She wondered if she should keep moving. But where would she go?

"Follow your own path, Child," Aunt Elaine's words sounded loudly in her ear.

Marta gasped, turning toward the sound, finding only the rock wall beside her.

Her eyes continued to search the empty cave, though she knew it wasn't possible. She had certainly lost her way in the forest, but was she losing her mind, too?

"You are not losing your mind, and while you may not know where you are, that doesn't mean you are lost," her aunt's words came in reply.

"What's going on?" Marta responded out loud. "How can I hear you when you're supposed to be dead?"

"It's true I've left the world you can see, but I haven't left you."

Silent tears crawled down Marta's cheeks. "I'm so alone, Aunt Elaine. I don't know what's happening. I have so many questions." She wiped the wetness from her chin. "Please stay with me."

"I'll help you when I can," her voice returned softly, "but you must make your own decisions. That's what life is about, making choices and living with the results. That's the one path each of us travels alone."

"I just don't understand. Why did my friends have to die? You knew. Why didn't you stop it?"

Aunt Elaine answered the questions with measured patience. "The right path is not always the easiest one. You'll understand that soon enough."

Marta slid her worn sandals along the moist soil, drawing her knees into her chest. "I'm afraid," she admitted. "Something happened to me. I saw a bright glow and...I flew somehow—"

"You've begun to see the light," her aunt answered. "This is the start of your journey as a LightWalker."

Chills ran along the tops of Marta's arms. "What does that mean?"

"I'm afraid that's all I can tell you, my dear. The rest you must discover on your own."

