

Dark Cloud

By Joe McCormack

When it began, everyone can tell you. The dark cloud that was on the horizon got everyone's attention because it never seemed to move. People who could, got into small airplanes and flew as high as the pilot permitted to see the horizon and the dark cloud. A few weeks later that nimbostratus cloud covered the sun and spread out its dark layer from one end of the country to another, then hung just above everyone's head. Why, you felt you could just reach up and touch.

First came the curiosity while shoppers and others went about their day occasionally looking up, but then one day it all changed. The cloud lowered itself and soon all traffic didn't dare move about. Everyone stayed inside or at best in the front yard for fear of moving too far away only to turn around and not know which direction to go. It was thick and no wind would move the cloud on its way.

What to do? They all asked in unison.

How could this happen? They blamed.

But it did and now there was nothing to do about it or was there?

Some smart people had so many ideas, so many talking points.

Some listened. Others didn't.

Some wore bags over their heads.

They called on Isaiah and Samuel and Elijah.

Some claimed to have found God and others weren't sure about that.

A voice cried out. "Turn on all the lights in the village, the province, the state and beyond." So, all the street lights and deserted shops turned on the fluorescents, the incandescents, and the reflectors, halogens and LED's to light up the darkness. Now everyone could see just a bit clearer all the ones they couldn't see before and knew something had to be done to go out

there and turn the lost and the forgotten around and head them in the right direction: the man who sleeps on the bench and the one who curls up in a deserted doorway and the woman who goes about talking to herself for no one would talk to her and all the ones who have an illness unclaimed. They and so many more were seen in this new light.

Now the road to wisdom does not end at the door to paradise. Wisdom is in the moment where there is clarity of thought to transform the present and imagine a future. The oldest resident of the village, chimed in and told folks these are the stories you'll be telling your grandchildren. He's right, you know. We live in narratives and they must be told because we live our stories. Our past and present and future are bound up in a narrative and will be told. If not by us, certainly by others. Then there are those that are kept in the regions of our hearts.

As far as any profound statements, that would be left to others for one person's profundity is another's joke, but everyone has a story to tell. Our oldest resident wondered if Memory's cousin, Forgetfulness, would bring an end to story-telling. Unfortunate. We live by stories. We are part of stories. To forget story is to forget we are alive.

The stories must be told so as not to forget the day when the dark cloud came and we saw the light to find those in darkness.

Stories must be told so we don't forget how we lived in fear and how we lived in joy and how we lived in sorrow; how we helped a neighbor and a stranger. It all will come to an end and when the story is done, we can rest in peace knowing we did our best.

