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## The Small Dark Room

by Barbara Dunbar

Pam couldn't stand it anymore. The shouting and pounding was getting louder and more persistent. "Go away," she screamed, "leave me alone." All she wanted was to be alone and hide.

But it didn't stop.

She thought she had finally escaped when she'd retreated to her secret place, the small dark, room, that only she knew about. Whenever she'd fled there before, no one had been able to find her, it was inaccessible to everyone else, or so she'd always thought.

So many times in the past, she had hidden there, giving herself a chance to heal and recover and hopefully, to face life again. When her ex-husband John, had given her his regular beatings, she would crawl there and hide and eventually the pain would stop. John had finally got bored with her and left her for a younger, more challenging victim.

Things were fine for a while and she began to believe that she wouldn't need the small, dark room anymore. When she met Rick, she actually believed that she had found happiness again. He was charming, attentive and did all he could to please her, she couldn't remember a time when

anyone had treated her so considerately. When Rick suggested that they should live together and be a family, she readily agreed.

It took a while, and at first she thought she was imagining things, but it seemed to her that Rick was far more interested and attentive to Becky, her 13 year old daughter. Becky was the apple of Pam's eye, she loved her above everything and would have given her life for her. Unfortunately, things didn't work out that way.

Becky went missing one day and was eventually found on a patch of wasteland, beaten, raped and dead. When the police came to arrest Rick for her murder, the only thing Pam had the strength to do was to run back to her small, dark room. But they were there, outside the door, shouting at her, telling her to open her eyes, put the knife down and come back.

No way, Pam thought, this is my secret place, my small dark, room, it's all I have left. She was not about to let it be invaded. With a smile she plunged the knife deep into her chest and was surprised that she didn't feel a thing. She was going to see Becky again. She had finally escaped and bolted the door to her one and only private, sacred place. The small, dark room, the last bastion of her tortured mind.