

## The Life and Times of Calcareo Carbonica

As a developing child, Calcareo at first begins to feel somewhat anxious, wondering whether she will grow as the other kids do – whether she will be as strong as they are, as healthy as they are, as *able* as they seem to be. She doubts this and begins to fear for herself – she knows she is different, and feels she cannot get well and that she cannot measure up.

She will not be fast enough, strong enough, smart enough, healthy enough, or anything-else-enough. She knows it. In fact, she is a very stubborn child, and she is stubborn about hanging onto these insecurities and growing fears – as though she is closed around the thoughts. They become imbedded – a part of her. As she grows, she may wonder whether God will even save her. At bedtime, she prays that she will get better, that things will change. But they do not and so she begins to think perhaps she is forsaken. There is no hope for her.

She doesn't like the dark and would feel much better falling asleep with the light on. It is hard to go to sleep. Perhaps there are monsters in the closet, or under her bed, or worse, *right beside her* in the bed. It doesn't help that she isn't allowed to have the light on in her room. Her mom thinks it is enough that the light in the hall is on, but that makes the shadows worse. It is too scary at night. That's when bad things happen. And that's when she feels most awful. In fact, it would feel the very best if she didn't have to go to bed at all, and if she didn't have to close her eyes at all. It would be nice to be outside in the afternoon sun instead, or sit on the porch in the evening quiet before dark.

Farther along in her life, her fears and insecurities grow. Tragic events profoundly affect her. She feels simply awful after the tragic explosion of the Space Shuttle; the devastation caused by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center leaves her feeling so depressed and so hopeless about the world and about the future. Watching anything like that, whether fiction or real, on the television leaves her so sad and undone; she is too preoccupied with these worries and fears to be around people. And the kids at school tease her unmercifully. She is too fat, too soft, and not at all like the other kids. She doesn't do well in school academically, and often finds herself confused and unable to think clearly.

The kids watch her and make fun of her; she knows it. She imagines that if she were stronger, she would give them a taste of their own medicine. They should suffer like she does and like they make other kids suffer. But then, *that would really* mean she was a bad person and she might go to hell. By the time she is a teen, she suffers from very changeable moods, crying and tearfulness before menses, and overly sensitive about most things. She is often sad and moody, but can fly into a rage and be very quarrelsome with her parents and siblings. She is, deep inside, still easily frightened and startled, and she still wants to sleep with the light on. She's been told she is too old to be afraid of the dark and that she should toughen up. How can anyone toughen up in such a cruel, sad, scary world?

She was sick for several days after a schoolmate was killed in a car accident. Even after she was feeling physically better, she didn't want to go to school and didn't want anyone around her. Most of the kids at school look at her funny and she's sure they still whisper behind her back. "To hell with them, anyway," she thinks. Sometimes

she'd just like to kill them because they are so mean and cruel. It would serve them right. Now she sometimes frightens herself. These are such violent and damning thoughts. She is certain she must be crazy. No one can possibly think like this unless they are crazy. Crazy people are possessed and they go to hell with all the other demons.

She notices this about herself, and it must be easy for others to notice it too. What if they see her anxiety? What if they can tell how confused she is about everything? She withdraws farther and farther into her shell, pulling back from contact with her family, friends, and others. She builds a protective wall around herself to prevent anyone at all from seeing the *real* her, because they'll think she should be locked up if they really know what is in her head.

The more she fears and worries, the more she clams up, so to speak, to hide herself and protect herself, so that no one can really know what is under the surface. They would think she is crazy, too.