



Into the Light

by

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While the world raged against a pandemic in 2020, the first in 100 years, I raged against a virulent strain of testosterone filled traumas

While the country masked up and used antibacterial sanitizer to keep the virus at bay, I lifted the mask that hid years of sexual harassment while serving my country

While the nation underwent lockdowns and faced months of darkness to protect its citizens from the virus, I came into the light, face to face with the betrayals of my fellow brothers in arms

While scientists researched innovative new vaccines, I reflected on my past military time serving alongside both professionals and hidden predators, and researched ways to heal

While businesses tried to keep people six feet apart to be safe, I began learning how to let people in, closer to a heart and body that is guarded

While most were wary and complained about isolation and quarantine, I felt safe hunkered down alone

While I missed my family terribly, I used the lockdown and self-isolation to begin the long road of healing that had eluded me in the past

While some courageously speak openly about military sexual trauma, I could not do that until one day in 2020 after a young Army Specialist was found brutally murdered on a military base

While Vanessa Guillen anguished over reporting her sexual harassment and the retaliation it might bring, I understood all too well the trepidation and fear of what reporting my own could have brought

While Vanessa's death astounded the country, I was affected deep into my Latina soul and her murder became a catalyst to acknowledge my own bitter truth

While Vanessa's family mourned and demanded answers from an inept military, I found my voice from their tragic loss

While the investigation into her murder revealed serious gaps within the military, I discovered my own repressed memories

While sexually assaulted in initial training, I froze, tolerating more than anyone should ever have to

While relentlessly harassed early in my career, I will not allow those early years to define me, I am a leader, a woman, a combat warrior, my bronze star shines bright

While other voices cry out for change within the Armed Services, I join them, my mask now lifted and walk into the light