

GHOST OF A CHANCE

The ghost looked very human, not haunting,
crouching on the bench, so sad and angry.
When fears lifted, I went and sat there too.

“Not fair!” he shrieked inaudibly. “Liars!
They promised rebirth to work off karma.
But here I am, same ME! Memories, sins,
all still here . . . no fresh start. It’s not right!”

Trying to comfort by patting his shoulder,
my hand felt nothing and jerked back.

“Damn religion! Damn gurus! It’s all wrong!
Pestered by thirst with nothing to quench it,
hungry but can’t eat, itching but can’t scratch!
Forever racked with regret, wounds still stinging
with no chance of revenge for unsettled scores!
Where’s God in all this? It’s just not fair!”

I wanted to speak, but a freezing-cold shadow
fell upon us from a dark, approaching shape,
faceless but for its twisted, gruesome grin.

“I can help,” slithered from blood-dripping lips.
“I’ll take you where revenge is food and drink,
where the very air you breathe is vengeance.
Touch my robe, and we shall go there now.”

But, as the ghost began to raise his arm to meet
this vile fiend’s extended, hand-less member,
courage swelled up from within, and I shouted,
“No! There’s healing! Don’t go!
Resist him! He’s the devourer of souls!”

Too late! Both vanished as the limbs met,
and I was left on the bench weeping, sickened
by the putrid, reeking, lingering odor of hell.

— *David L. Hatton, 4/19/2016*