

PEGGY SECURE

With pigtailed and freckles, and dangling from a bough,
In echoes of laughter, she hears him beckon now
To trust him to catch her—she drops down from the tree,
And Daddy embraces his little girl with glee.
But Daddy departed upon a bed of tears,
And Peggy still lingers in dreams above her fears.

At first there was Mary, the girl just down the street,
A friend and a sister to hug when they would meet.
In whispers and giggles, they shared their childish play,
Until one cold winter her playmate moved away.
And Peggy still ponders the games invented then:
She never saw Mary or heard of her again. . . .

With Mother's employment, another person came
To light up the darkness: Miss Olson was her name,
A tall, aging spinster, who fixed delicious food
And told Peggy stories, when she was in the mood.
Then Mother remarried, and came home for a while,
And Peggy remembers Miss Olson's parting smile.

Her new father, Henry, was very rough and cruel,
And often he slapped her and called her "little fool."
But sometimes he held her in ways that made her chill,
And one night he fondled and kissed against her will.
Then Mother discovered, and Henry moved away,
But Peggy still trembles in fear of him today.

When Peggy met Richard, he seemed so kind and warm.
His words were so gentle, his voice could calm the storm
Of feelings all churning within her wounded heart.
Yes, Richard was skillful, deceptive from the start,
And left after quenching his lust upon her bed.
The ghost of his promise still dances in her head.

She carried the baby, a little girl named Jill,
And left her with Mother when working at the mill.
It felt good to hold her, to buy her clothes and toys.
How soon she grew older and went out dating boys.
How quickly she married and moved off with her spouse
And sent yearly postcards to Peggy's lonely house.

So often she wondered if suicide was how
To finish the heartbreak that marked her life till now.
Then Mother departed, and wine became the thief
To rob Peggy's future of healing for her grief.
At last, she lay dying upon a bed of tears,
Her sole contemplation: the bitterness of years.

The woman beside her upon the cancer ward
Told Peggy God loved her, that Jesus was her Lord,
That Jesus would meet her with healing in His hand
And take her forever into another land
Where God's peace and presence and promises endure,
Where love ties and friendships forever were secure.

Dear Peggy believed her, but it was hard to pray
With morphine distracting, and not sure what to say.
The pain tore her belly; the room was getting dim . . .
But light filled the darkness, and she was there with Him.
"You ready, my sweetheart?" He said, and she was sure,
Then Jesus embraced her, and Peggy was secure.

— *David L. Hatton, 1/12/1990*