

THE KNOCK

Departure was sudden: no time to think twice.
Her body remained on the bed, cold as ice.
From dear ones and friends, all at once, she was torn,
Her soul as stark bare as the day she was born.
Then earth quickly shrank till it faded away.
She sped toward a Light that was brighter than day,
Until in the midst of an angelic host
She stood, an embarrassed and unprepared ghost.

A powerful angel stepped up to her side.
“Afraid?” was his thought. “Not so badly,” she lied.
He led her past mansions with beautiful halls,
Past gardens enclosed with impassable walls,
Past streets that were golden with musical names,
Past parks full of children enjoying their games,
Past God’s royal palace and pearly white gate.
She wondered, “Aren’t these to be part of my fate?”

Her life had been normal, as far as she knew,
And even quite moral. Her sins were so few!
She talked of religion, but not very much,
And prayer was for cripples who needed a crutch.
But proud were her thoughts about one thing she’d done:
She ridiculed all who claimed Christ was God’s Son.
By teachings and textbooks and lectures she knew
The Bible was myth! It could never be true!

“Then, we were not real?” spoke the guide to her mind.
Rebuke filled his gaze, “You were never that blind!”
Her conscience was pricked by the truth she once knew
But slowly rejected, the older she grew.
She groped for excuses to hide her mistake. . .
The Light unveiled all of her reasons as fake.
Both Nature and remembered miracles cried
To topple her arguments spawned in her pride.

At last she was led through a handleless door
To enter a room with a lamp on the floor,
A room with no corners, one wall in a round,
And one empty cup and a plate on the ground,
A single small window, no furnishings there,
No rug and no couch, not a table or chair,
No bed to lie down on, no closet, no shelf,
Not one scrap of clothing to cover her self.

The angel stood staring with sad, solemn face
With Light still exposing her naked disgrace.
Then, livid with anger, she lunged with a shout,
And slamming the door, she shut both of them out.
She locked herself in with a thrill of revolt—
On her side the door had a latch and a bolt.
“He comes! Even so!” from the angel she heard.
He left, while she cringed at his worrisome word.

As twilight drew on, from her lone pane she peered,
And coming on foot was the One that she feared.
“Oh God, for a curtain!” she screamed with a frown,
Then under the window she threw herself down
And packaged her nakedness up in a ball
As tightly as possible next to the wall
To shield, if she might, from the Holy One’s eyes
Her coldness to Him, her enthrallment with lies.

His footsteps fell silent, and gently He tapped. . .
Three echoes resounded. She felt herself trapped!
She sweated and shivered, with longing and fear:
“What is it? Who are You? Why come to me here?”
“I come to your heart and stand knocking once more.
We’ll feast here today, if you’ll open the door.”
“But You know I’m naked, and You’ll see my shame!”
A moment passed by, and again the knock came.

Forever, he knocked! She continued to wait,
And hunger arose, as she stared at the plate.
The cup also started to tempt her to thirst.
His knock was now urgent, much more than at first.
But dusk turned to darkness. His tap became dim.
At last, the Light vanished with it and with Him.
Her cup and plate, too, disappeared out of sight.
The lamp-flame alone stood opposing the night.

Then shortly, when gloom and its shadows were deep,
Approaching her doorway, she felt a crowd creep,
And drawn to peer out of the window again
She sighed with relief to see those wanting in:
“Familiar acquaintances visiting now!
But nothing to wear! I must fix that somehow. . .”
So, kneeling, she blew out the tiny lamp’s glow,
Then fell with Hell’s host to the torments below.

— *David L. Hatton, 3/17/2003*