

## THE WARRIOR LORD

The dim light danced on the farthest wall,  
As flames in the hearth-fire rose and fell.  
A loud wench bawled from the tavern hall,  
And the drunken warrior thought of hell.

The church bell tolled, for the hour was late,  
And the weary warrior felt his sword  
With its gilded, blood-stained hilt of fate,  
In fealty sworn to his liege and lord.

The bell struck thrice, and the knight looked up.  
Cold breeze blew in from the entry door.  
He clenched his fists on his sword and cup  
And stared to see, but the light was poor.

“Who is it then?” cried the knight, “Who came?”  
The gloom was deep on the entry stair.  
“By God, come forth with a face or name!”  
His wide eyes sifted the darkness there.

Some snow flew in with a gust of wind.  
A shadow stepped on the creaking wood.  
“Speak now, mysterious foe or friend!”  
He shouted, drawing his sword, and stood.

The figure moved near the hearth-fire light,  
Still hidden beneath a hooded cloak,  
Then turned to the trembling vassal-knight,  
And lifting two wounded hands, He spoke,

“I come from the battlefield of hell.  
All demons fled as I swung my Sword.  
I slew your death, but I died as well  
To buy your fief from the overlord.”

“No longer now as a vassal serve,  
An oath-bound knight to a feudal king.  
Come prove your boast of a soldier’s nerve:  
Come try the mantle and cross I bring.”

The stranger vanished, melting away,  
And left His cross and cloak on the floor.  
The sky was red with the break of day,  
And church bells rang through the open door.

The cloak was a robe that monks should don,  
The cross was wood on a leather cord.  
He pledged, as he stripped and put them on,  
To fight and die for the Warrior Lord.

— David L. Hatton 9/16/1994