

## UNSPOKEN LINE

The prince stepped forth to say his line,  
But hesitated on the Stage. . .  
The script was clear as Word Divine.  
The old Director made a sign—  
“Does he forget his simple line,  
Or read another page?”

He'd not been forced. . .that's frankly true.  
He gladly took the offered part.  
But now he stared at her he knew  
Beyond a passing scene or two,  
And if emotions spoke what's true,  
The scene would never start.

What would it be, to change the play?  
Launch out impromptu, speak his mind?  
Pretend another stage and day,  
Create a scene in his own way,  
Destroy the Playwright's plot and play,  
His part as prince resigned?

He was the prince. His role was clear.  
His character would have to speak.  
But she again was standing near  
Whom he would send to disappear  
In one brief phrase he knew so clear,  
And now he felt so weak. . .

“Please, stay awhile. . .” was his whim.  
“Be to your work,” the story read.  
His view of Audience was dim.  
He knew the Cast awaited him.  
What price to all, to speak his whim?  
“Be to. . .” a Whisper said.

“Be to your work!” and it was done,  
And he was back into his role,  
And she was off, the scene begun:  
What a relief to everyone!  
(Even to him, when the Play was done),  
So the actor saved his soul.

— *David L. Hatton, 6/7/2002*