

You Know Its Name

It's a weight to be carried every day,
heavier and heavier
constant in its persistence
wearing on everything
inescapable and old.

It's on the inside, an invisible load
always tethered, never free;
it sits on me when I sleep.
...Oh, to rest without that chain
and wake to freedom each day!

It's a mountain to be climbed with no summit
in often stormy weather
and no shelter to be found
outside of a rare sweet dream
like the story of Heidi...

It's a contender who demands attention
who beats me regularly
who stomps on my weaknesses
who ridicules my efforts
who's there at every turn.

It's familiar to many, old as time,
the subject of all stories,
the standard antagonist,
one's own ancient odyssey
shared by all in birth and death.

It's a shape-shifter, extreme in appearance,
gaudy or subtle or bare,
quiet or angry and loud,
ugly or beautiful –
all in the way one sees it.

It's not going away as soon as I like
nor will it seem gone for long –
still standing when the door's closed
with windows barred against it –
even when I'm not looking.

It's a challenge to negotiate with it,
to maintain one's dignity,
to retain one's sanity,
to face directly and smile
as it tempts hysteria.

It's a coat of many colors and textures –

remember Joseph's story
(no promise of quick release) –
it precedes a bright outcome
yet feels like an endless test.

It's a drama with despair in the lead part
until one finds the lost key
to unlock that fearful chain,
to loosen the grip of it
at its root deep in the soul.

It's my companion, and you know its name.
...It is Pain.

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