

Inspired by Desert Sand

I walk a path.
A path of broken glass,
sharp rocks,
pitfalls and perils.
Darkness.
Progress is slow.
Painfully slow.

I think I'm alone
on the path.
Focused on my next step,
I do not look left or right.
and when I look back on the path,
I see only my blood on the trail behind me.
When I fall, I feel only my pain,
hear only my curses.
I don't bother to cry out for help; I'm alone on this path.

But sometimes, if I listen,
Truly listen, to the darkness around me,
I think I can almost hear others
on the path,
making their way through the darkness,
almost make out their curses,
almost see, in the darkness, their even-darker shadows.

And I think that I could help them,
if they were truly there.
If I could see them
on the path.
If I could find them
in the darkness.
If they would only call out
for help.

Desert Sand

Listening to that old '60s song
(You know the one)
I ask my six-year old
"Where DO all the lonely people come from?"

With no hesitation, the answer:
"Desert sand."

With hesitation, my response:
"I don't understand."

With mustered patience, the reply again:
"Desert sand."

I am still not getting it.
As patient as a six-year old can be,
She explains:

"All the lonely people
It's like they're living in desert sand.
And all they need to do
Is to stick their hand up out of the sand
So that someone can pull them out."

Astonished, I say
"That's very insightful,"

The word confuses her.
"Whatever. Anyway, they'll be okay.
Unless the mummy gets 'em."

Ergo, Fate

Was it fate
that brought you into our lives?
It's easier to believe in fate
than pure chance.

There's no chance, with chance,
that we deserved you.
That we did something so right
that something as fickle as chance
dictated that you be ours.

Ergo, fate.

One too many

I've written one too many.
Now to decide
Which will go.
And which will reside.

I like this one here.
I like how it's ended.
But the beginning is flawed
The words somehow bended,
And twisted and turned
to fit into place
Perhaps there is one
that has much more grace.

This one, or that one
Which do I take?
Choose the wrong one
It'll be a mistake.
It's like trying to pick
between two roads once crossed
But who am I kidding?
I'm not Robert Frost.

The one less traveled
Can't help me here.
I need to decide
which touches the ear
as well as the heart,
the mind and the soul
Or draws out a smile,
being quite droll.

Now, I've really done it.
I've written some more
This was already tough
Now it's a chore.
I'm over by two
I need to now pick
The ones that will stay
The two I should kick.

I think I'll flip a coin
Take what I must.
Bunch them all up
It won't be a bust.
I'll pick two at random
To you, an apology
you can read all the rest
Once I have my anthology.

The Soldier's Ache

There once was a man
Born into war
A soldier

His mother was battle
His father, honour
Death was his godparent

War became all he knew
For there was nothing else
It was his family
As familiar as his face
Reflected in his polished shield.

After many years, one day, the soldier felt an ache
Deep in his heart
Unfamiliar, yet somehow, not unfamiliar
He could not figure out what it was.

He went to his mother, battle, and asked her
"What is this feeling in my heart? An ache, like never before?"
"Anticipation!" his mother replied.
"You long for the next fight. The next campaign.
The next victory!"

He left his mother, beaming in her pride
To speak to his father, honour.
"Hail, Father. It is I, your son." he said as he approached.
"Ah, my son! Sweet and honourable son!" his father smiled upon him.
His father smiled little. Honour was such a somber affair.

"I have an ache in my heart. I asked my mother what it might be
And she said it was Anticipation, for the next campaign, for the next victory."
At the thought of the soldier's mother, his father looked momentarily dreamy,
And a smile again flitted across his face.

"Your mother is a creature of the mind. All strategy and fervor;
she knows not of the heart.
That ache is Duty.
You long to perform the services to which you've committed your life.
Only then will that ache fade, it will be quenched only by sacrifice."

The soldier saluted his father,
and went to see his godparent, Death.
"Hello, uncle. It is I, your godchild."
"Hello, godchild," Death was irascible, but not unkind.
"Will you be staying long this time?"
"No, uncle, not this time." the soldier did not fear his uncle,
But he was in no rush to join him.

"I have an ache in my heart, and I don't know what it is,
though it feels like I should know it. Unfamiliar, yet familiar.
Mother says that it is Anticipation for the coming war.
Father says that it is Duty, quenched only by sacrifice.
I have known Anticipation, but this is not it.
I have done my Duty, sacrifice upon sacrifice. This, too, is not it.

Many men have met you, uncle, and those who have not met you, will.
You must know what is in men's hearts. What is this ache?"
Death smiled, but not the warm smile of honour.
A sad smile, as if remembering a happy time, now lost.

Death's eyes softened as he beheld the soldier,
His normally-hard expression now a mix of sorrow and sympathy.
"That ache is not Anticipation for battle, nor is it Duty, for honour.
It is Desire.

It is a yearning for what you do not have...can't have...as a soldier.
It is a yearning for peace.
Not the peace between battles.
Not the peace found after war,
when medals are given, and songs of praise are written and sung.

But the peace of a life where your days are filled with love
and your home is the bastion of your family.
Where your enemy is a rainy day,
And the sounds of battle are naught but children's laughter.
And Duty is reserved for promises to be home soon
when circumstances take you away."

The soldier looked puzzled
but he found his heart ached even more after Death's description.
"How do I end this ache," he asked.
Death shook his head
"It will not end, until you stop being a soldier and pursue the Desire to it's fulfillment."

The soldier thought for a moment
"What if I do both? Remain a soldier and pursue the Desire?"
Death chuckled.
"You can do this, but be aware:

Your mother will always call to you,
and even if you choose to ignore her,
your father will always call upon you.
And when you answer to him, he will send you to your mother
While telling you that your Duty is to your family, that you are doing it for them.

I've known your father a long time.
He believes that Death and Honour go hand-in-hand.
That the only good death is an honourable one.

Inspired by Desert Sand and Other Wise Words

As many who have visited me in honour, as many more have visited me in disgrace.
My house is the last stop on every man's journey, no matter how he lived."

The soldier asked

"Is there no other way?"

Death faltered, because though he was Death

He loved his godchild, and did not wish him ill.

"You can live with the Desire, and one day, you, too, will visit me.

But even then, that Desire, unfulfilled, will turn to melancholy.

You will not find the peace of the grave as fulfilling as a life of peace."

The soldier, who mother was battle

and whose father was honour

thanked his uncle, then turned

And walked away from Death's door,

An ache in his heart.