

The Boy With The Lantern

By Glenn Currier

"You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary. But the stars neither require nor demand it."

- Annie Dillard -

What do I do with this death?

It feeds on my soul
like a lion on fresh prey.

This innocence lost
gashes my heart.
I fall into this wound's abyss
flailing with an anger
that clings like napalm.
Will its dark pigment
seep into my marrow?

How long will I wander
this desert of grief
lost in brambled confusion
grasping for a twig of meaning?

Sometimes I hear a sound so faint
I cannot sense its source.
Like the tinkling of a piano
or the first feel of pregnancy
and its hint of new life.

In the midst of my feeble efforts
to find the routines
that make a life bearable,
trying to delude myself
that I have control,
I have moments of light.

I see a little boy swinging a lantern.
He is patient and waits for me.
On both sides of my upward path
are shadowy fences.
The sticky fingers of death
poke through them.

Images of a child's squirmy life
pop into my head

soon to be drowned
by nightmares.

But still..

there is the twinkling
of that boy and his lantern up the lane.
My hand grips my lover's,
our eyes full of tears
that magnify the tinkling
spreading it in our fields
like seeds,
kernels of sacred fire
that inspire and invite
us beyond the darkness
that surrounds us.

Now I know

the only way
through this somber thicket
will be keen vision,
intentional listening,
determination to pause
and linger in the present moment,
in that sacred space
beyond fear and blame
beyond doubt and rage,
in the meadow
of the eternal now
of Being
in Love.

Author's Note: Dedicated to Lane Michael Leger [June 17, 2004 - May 27, 2005] and the parents, Jacob and Kelly, whom he left to help the rest of us see what it means to find light in the darkness. Kelly is my second cousin and she and her husband and family were coping with the tragic death of their 11 month old son, Lane. In the writing of this poem, I was trying my best to imagine what this horrible event might feel like to Kelly and Jacob. I know this is a perilous undertaking, but it helped me develop empathy for the parents. Thanks to Annie Dillard for the opening quote from her book: *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p. 31.

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