4-15-1983

The Dark Girl's Answer [Poem]

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Mythcon 50

Looking Back, Moving Forward
San Diego, California
August 2-5, 2019

The Dark Girl's Answer [Poem]
The Dark Girl's Answer
(To C.S. Lewis, "The Phoenix")

A falling star came plummeting to earth,
And, as it burned upon a distant tree,
You plummeted before me, mad with mirth.
"The fabled Phoenix lives! Come! Come and see!"
I dropped my wicker cages by the gate
And followed you in wonder, for I knew
The Phoenix as a name, and sensed the fate
And the strange chance that flung before us two,
And us alone, the knowledge he was real.
Hand in hand, we watched him play and preen;
Together, we had found the one ideal
That, separate, each had sought but never seen.
I turned to see what sort of soul was this
That threw its shadow long across my path,
But, as our glances met and sought to kiss,
You flung me off in sudden scorn and wrath
For watching you while your rapt gaze was turned
Upon the flaming glory of the tree
Where, unconsumed, the living Phoenix burned.
I hardly think that this was fair to me,
For I was born to weave with withes and reeds.
A bird was something kept inside a cage
Which these two hands had made. The shapes and needs
Of Phoenixes in this or any age
I knew but by report. But you who proved
The thing was real, and could have taught me more,
Took it amiss that my quick spirit loved
The heart that drew it through the long-sought door.
You claim me as carrion for a solemn rite,
But if your Phoenix is a golden crow
And I am nothing but a tasty bite
To offer for your sins, then let me go!
If you need me living, to perform
The tasks that I, and only I, can do,
My hands are yours, in sunshine and in storm,
And gladly will they work for Him with you.
If otherwise, I have a life to live,
Others who need me, urgent calls and cures,
Nor may I let you cage me here to give
My life to Him, unless He gives me yours.

Alice P. Kenney
Lure thy fantasy to its utmost scope

—Walter de la Mare

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