Ballade of a Street Door

Charles Williams
Ballade of a Street Door
'Two, darling,' said Marjorie, 'if you mean since you finished with me.'

'Four - no, six, since I finished the submarine,' her husband said. 'That wasn't bad, but I do better on land.'

'No.' Clarissa interrupted, 'it isn't so much that you do better, Jon, but one unconsciously expects the light effects in the sea and air and not so much in the earth. So it's more surprising, especially as it's not just translucent. It's - I don't know what it is.'

'The Je ne sais quoi,' said Jonathan. 'No, Clarissa. We had all that out in the last century but one. The French adored the Je ne sais quoi, and Hogarth laughed at them. He said it better, Jon, but one unconsciously expects the light effects in the sea and air and not so much in the earth. So it's more surprising, especially as it's not just translucent. It's - I don't know what it is.'

'He was quite right,' Clarissa answered.

Jonathan shook his head at her. 'No, no, my girl,' he said severely, 'he didn't mean what you're trying to make him mean; he was talking art, not religion. Learn from another great man, who said: 'I never travelled to heaven to gather new ideas,'"

'What he wanted to call it, Clarissa,' Jonathan said. 'Marriage, quite simply Marriage. Till I pointed out that a wild stretch of rubble and a few shadows under the name of Marriage might give quite a lot of people the wrong idea. Jon always thinks that people who look at his pictures will first of all see whatever he wants them to see.'

'So they will - in fifty years,' Jonathan said. 'All the same, once it has got into their heads, it would be the best thing said about marriage in our generation. But perhaps a little literary?'

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**BALLADE OF A STREET DOOR**

by Charles Williams

As I came up into the town
Wherein my father's house abide,
I met a man in tattered gown,
In ragged garment blowing wide,
With terror fleet and open-eyed;
Fear rose within me like a tide,
With terror fleet and open-eyed.

In shelter would obscurely hide.
'My soul became a wild dismay.
Wherein my father's house abide,
In shelter would obscurely hide.
Fearfully looked he back and cried:
'I pulled the bell and ran away!'

'Good sir, if thou hast held renown
Among this people, be my guide!
I from their welcome, not their frown,
In shelter would obscurely hide.
For when, being tired, a latch I tried,
Whence came a sound of revels gay,
In shelter would obscurely hide.

'Where through I heard, as they came down,
And torchlight through the chinks I spied:
For when, being tired, a latch I tried,
Whence came a sound of revels gay,
In shelter would obscurely hide.

'My soul became a wild dismay,
And as the doors began to slide
I pulled the bell and ran away!'