

Back to the Tree

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I'm standing on a balcony that's way up in the sky
I sometimes can't remember how I got up here so high
I look across a wilderness with shadows long and tall
Then chance a glance down toward the ground, it makes me feel so small
The balcony it trembles underneath my tired feet
Then suddenly I am pelted with dark rains and bitter sleet
I take a step back from the ledge to get out of the rain
And find that even inside there is emptiness and pain
I cast my eyes out to the field as backward I retreat
And see a small light flickering with continual repeat
It wakes a mem'ry in my mind, I know that tiny flare
It's small white fruit that's on a tree in the darkness way out there

My soul begins to rumble like the building that I'm in
I'm hungry for that fruit, but my head is in a spin
The cement beneath my feet begins to crack a little bit
I turn and run to find some stairs, then fall into a pit
The people all around me, I guess they've been there all along,
Take notice of my wretched fall but still won't heed my song
"We cannot get you out—if we do you'll run away."
"You're better off here, trust us—it *has* to be this way."
I cast my eyes up to the sky, but the building blocks my view
I feel no hope, I'm in despair, I don't know what to do
I bow my head, hand on my heart, yet not sure how to begin
Then the building shakes, the ceiling cracks, and a little light gets in

My courage grows, I open my mouth and call out to the Lord
Then the building falls into an abyss, and I'm left hanging by a single cord
I get cradled by a warm south wind and it carries me to the ground
My feet touch down onto the earth, I don't even hear a sound
My hungering soul leads me forward—into a deep dark night
But my feet trudge through some dreary waste and I lose the small white light
I walk and walk for hours and collapse upon the dirt
And when I wake I find myself in red mud up to my shirt
Determined to press forward now that day at last has dawned
I cast my eyes fast forward where a dirty fountain spawns
I scarce can see a trace, of the white fruit through mist and trees
Unworthiness, it crushes me, and I sink back to my knees

And then, before I cast myself back on the filthy ground
I hear a glorious being say, "At last you have been found."
"I have left the flock to seek you. Please rise and take my hand."
"For I am here to lead you past the river and the sand."
Before I can look up, I feel sore tears upon my face
Then the Man-in-white He wipes them with His robes and with His grace

He bids me take His hand, then pulls me up off of the sod
Then strangely now He places my hand on a rusty iron rod
I take the metal in my hand, but I don't want to cling real tight
And after walking just a bit, the Man-in-white soon leaves my sight
I panic now and stop and look to see where He has gone
And I only see the iron rod, it's extensive, it is long

Yet, it's dark enough to see among the mists and all the fog
That seem to appear from nowhere, so I break into a jog
But in my haste, my hand breaks free from the solid metal rail
My feet twist up, I trip and fall, and muddy water hides my wail
I'm drowning now in a murky bog, it's bottom binds my feet
And suddenly, the rain is back, as is the cold, dark sleet
My limbs go numb and I curse myself, for letting go the rod
Why couldn't I have just slowed down and been satisfied to trod
Impatience was my downfall, and some carelessness, and fight
I was angry that I had been left by the Man I saw in white
Not ready yet to freeze to death I start paddling with my hands
I call for help, (pause) and there He is, (pause) to remove my selfish bands

"Hold to the rod, I promise you, it's strong and bright and true."
"Look past the rust and hold on tight, it'll safely guide you through."
I'm shivering now with cold, and I still feel a bit uptight
But I trembling stomp up to the rod while mumbling about my plight
Yet, casting my eyes forward I see through the mists a hole
And through that hole I see the fruit, it's flickering warms my soul
Clinging a little tighter, I walk forward next to the rod
It's sturdy, and it's iron, and I trod and trod and trod
I'm tempted very often to keep my eyes cast down and back
But as I trip and stumble I notice my hand begins to slack
Remembering the filthy bog, I grab tight to the cold rail
I raise my eyes and find the fruit, I'm determined not to fail

The mists are cold, the darts are sharp, it would be so easy to let go
And the building in the air is back, it's in the sun and all aglow
I see its people laughing, clinking glasses, and poking fun
They are pointing at me and my sodden clothes, and I suddenly want to be done
One hand pulls free from the iron rod, and for a moment I feel the warm
From the sun, and the building up in the sky, seep into that one arm
I start to cast off, to join the group, they beckon with hands to me...

Then I see the building shake a bit and my temptation is wrestled free
I remember how it crumbled and the treatment of its crowd
I remember how the Man-in-white heard my voice when I called out loud
I quickly grab back hold again of the rusty iron rod
But it looks a little more shiny to me, which I find a little bit odd

Hand-over-hand, I pull myself, with my eyes fixed upon the tree

The mists, they clear, and at last I see my family beckoning to me
A fire kindles in my soul and renewed hunger in my heart
I reach for their hands, and the offered fruit, and pull out a final dart
They pull me in, I feel ashamed, how had I forgotten they were here?
But they hold me tight and tend my wounds, and it's suddenly all so clear
When finally fed and rightly healed, I feel a pounding in my head
It's a mix of awe and gratitude and just a little dread
I turn my face toward the beautiful tree and see the Man-in-white
With arms outstretched, He calls to me, and I remember again my plight
I bow my head, in a mess of shame, as I think back on my past
Back then I didn't quite understand what it meant to get off the path

Then feeling the pull of His powerful gaze, I slowly raise my eyes
He beckons to me, I swallow hard, wishing I'd prepared my weak replies
"I lost my way but I've come back. I never forgot the light."
"I simply looked away too long, and doubt bedimmed my sight."
"When mists of darkness hid the way I sought the building in the sky."
"And then once there, I couldn't recall, how I'd gotten up so high."
"It wasn't until I found the courage to look back the way I'd come."
"Then, I saw the little light flickering, and I knew it was time to go home..."

With measured steps, I close the space between His feet and mine
When barely there, I fall to my knees, and say, "My will is thine."
The Man-in-white, He lifts me up, His hand beneath my chin
"Your will was all that I required so that I could cleanse your sin."