

The Dark Night of the Soul

By Saint John of the Cross

On a dark night,
Kindled in love with yearnings
—oh, happy chance!—
I went forth without being observed,
My house being now at rest.

In darkness and secure,
By the secret ladder, disguised
—oh, happy chance!—
In darkness and in concealment,
My house being now at rest.

In the happy night,
In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught,
Without light or guide, save that which burned in my
heart.

This light guided me
More surely than the light of noonday
To the place where he (well I knew who!) was awaiting me—
A place where none appeared.

Oh, night that guided me,
Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,
Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover,
Lover transformed in the Beloved!

Upon my flowery breast,
Kept wholly for himself alone,
There he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him,
And the fanning of the cedars made a breeze.

The breeze blew from the turret
As I parted his locks;
With his gentle hand he wounded my neck
And caused all my senses to be suspended.

I remained, lost in oblivion;
My face I reclined on the Beloved.
All ceased and I abandoned myself,
Leaving my cares forgotten among the lilies.