

Her 68th Easter

by Carl Santoro

It was the first Sunday after the spring equinox.
Like many other years before,
she walked into this night
carrying her candle, blanket,
cassette player and beads.

Tip-toeing as she got closer
she peered into the underpass,
a crude dark tunnel allowing safe passage
from one side of the tracks to the other,
She stared hard for any presence
of life inside. There was only the sound of crickets.

She took a careful, slow step
forward for a closer look.
Suddenly, the loud whoosh of the 12:05 train
sped by overhead, startling her as it
sent sparks showering down all around her.
She was still a little light-headed
from her Lenten fasting.

She proceeded along the gravel path inside,
stopped halfway in, and sat on the ground.
The April air hung damp with fog.
The now faint and distant clacking of train wheels
reminded her she was truly alone.

She lit the candle and set it before her,
pressed "Play" on the cassette deck and
a 1952 organ recording of Bach's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"
performed by Albert Schweitzer, made the walls come alive.

His playing was strong, yet beautiful.
To Schweitzer, and her, Bach's music
was a method of worship.
A conduit for harmonizing, conversing with their God.

The dramatic notes bounced off the hard concrete walls,
swirling repeatedly in continuous echoes,
uncannily blending feelings of sorrow with feelings of joy.
She found comfort in being shrouded in this partnership of sounds.
She felt as though in a cathedral. Now she need only to wait.
Again. As she does every year. Hoping.

Three hours passed.
She became cold, a slight breeze licked at
the dwindling candle flame.
She whispered a prayer with each new bead
she squeezed through her stiff fingers. The candle went out.

Something made her look to the opening to her left.
A silhouette could be seen floating through the fog
now at the very far end where moonlight
cast a bluish backlight. Could this be happening?
It seemed like a human form draped only in loose garb.
Suddenly the 3:05 whooshed overhead just as the figure
softly whooshed by her, leaving a thin bluish vapor in it's wake.

She watched the image as it traveled to the opposite end of the
tunnel,
ascending immediately after it cleared the end.
She stared, her gaze fixed on the opening.
Slowly she began a big smile.
She turned up the volume.
The candle became alive and the flame returned.

