

A Proper Passing

by D. Joseph Hetzer

I watched the man walk by me; his crooked back covered by a dark grey suit that became ever darker from the heavy downpour of rain. I had taken particular interest in his life. My demonic, ethereal form was hidden from humanity, yet his unassuming eyes would pierce through realms, and look me dead on. But for all this, the man was a fool. His long-aged face was ridden with lines brought on by a self-assumed lifetime of hardship and loneliness. The straight line that formed his mouth eternally showed a weary attempt for a smile, for it seemed his joy was hidden deep down under layers of external misery. However now just two weeks into retirement, there was a new aura about the man. His eyes had a devious twinkle to them. He knew something; something that those determined lips were not going to share with others. But of course I knew; he was going to die. His maker was calling and his life of sacrifice has led to this event being joyous for him.

I followed him as he walked into his home. Following routine, he hung his jacket on the single coat hanger and placed his keys on the nail in the wall. He pulled the bolt lock on the door and removed his shoes, placing them carefully to the side. As he bent to do this, his back gave him great reprisal. He winced but withheld his composure.

He trudged up the steep, antique, spiral staircase to his study. Many hours had been spent in the sanctuary of this room, studying, praying, sleeping; however, now his intentions were much different. I watched as he went to his favorite spot on the bookshelf and pulled out the large worn-out book. The monotony of its faded black color was broken only by the golden inscription on the spine that read "Holy Bible". His eyes lingered on the print as he let out a sigh from deep within his chest. Not a sigh of depression, but one of the purest relief. He stumbled over to his chair, tripping on the loose floorboard as he always had. Opening the book, he purposefully flipped to a page in second Timothy. His eyes flew over the page gleefully, and

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he underlined his reading with a shaky finger. He closed his eyes and rested his head back against the old, creaky chair. I watched as his chest fell up and down, and then stop. I let out a short bark of laughter. This man had let his life be consumed by instruction, and now died reading his book. I walked over to where the book lay in the deceased man's lap and brushed his hand away to read where his finger indicated "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

