

THE EXCHANGE

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The pit was black, black as despair
Lightless, but radiating fear
Crowded, but empty of hope
Vibrating with guilt, upon shame it was built,
And the pit was packed with prisoners
They stood shoulder to shoulder, depressed beyond words
Their number slowly growing, shoved closer, squeezed tighter
Reminded of their punishment, choked by the fingers of justice

Then, like a sharpened knife, brightness pierced the blackness
A hatch was opened, a rope descended
And a girl climbed down who was dressed just as they
In torn, blood-stained rags, yet a joy lit her face
The rope dropped down lower, a harbinger of hope
And she held out her hand
But the prisoners shrank back, knowing any who grasped it
Would expose their guilty faces, and no longer be nameless
They'd reveal their sin and slaughter and show they'd been faithless

One captive wavered on the edge of shadow and light,
She beckoned, he fixed his eyes on her,
Willfully forgetting what all others would think,
Weakly reached for her hand and with strength she grasped his
It stung, burned, and purged, like alcohol in a wound
But it cleaned—he could breathe now
Suddenly, his spark of joy flickered out
He knew roll would be called, and his spot empty if he left
As he gazed back down in hopelessness, she smiled and sadly said,

“Look towards the light, cling to the rope, and you will be free”

And then she let go

The darkness swallowed her in one, large gulp

The sinner choked—this was the cost of freedom?

But he did as she said, climbing the rope,

Arms filling with strength as he neared the healing glow

As he pulled himself out, and blinked in the light of a new morning,

He glanced down, eyes clouded with tears

And saw a pale light glimmering where she had fallen

Hope had entered the pit, mercy had been shown, a sacrifice made

And soon the pit would be blazing with light