

Failed Friendship

E. Victoria Grover-Swank

Sisters nod and smile,
inclining intimately toward her in the crowded room.
Years of testimonies shared and friendships deified
linger in the worn cushions and heavy curtains.
She brushes jostling shoulders, turns and feels
a burst of fire upon her face.
"Oh, Father in Heaven, dear Mother!"
The vacant smile starts a roaring in her ears
telling her she is betrayed again. Betrayed!
Her heart melts, cracks, vanishes in the flame:
"Dear God," she cries in silence, "I cannot breathe!"

Oh, how she longs to be wrapped in the cool, dark emptiness of space.
A rocky asteroid;
A shimmering dust mote in the rings of Saturn;
A shifting particle in the millennial billowing of nebulae;
A single hydrogen atom hanging between the galaxies.
Alone, alone, alone.
Light years from the familiar faces of the strangers sitting here beside her . . .
She gave everything!
Strength, compassion;
Time, talent, energy. Her secret heart!
Dear God! She gave her deepest trust!
Now she must share this community of Christ,
yet live a separate sisterhood again.

"Oh Mother," she prays, "where is my friend?"

Must she forever be a wandering comet,
drawn to the sea of worlds by the gravity of love,
then thrown away again by that same force?
Each time she leaves behind an icy piece of her heart,
thawed by hope, and burnt up in desire.
Diminished yet again, she returns to the void,
a frozen ball of flame and tears once more.

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